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Family and School: Educational Partnership

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Editorial

We are pleased to present the latest issue of our journal, *Family and School: Educational Partnership*. As the authors in this volume demonstrate, the themes addressed here are as timely as they are important. Collaboration between parents and schools is closely linked to children's educational outcomes. Furthermore, in today's rapidly changing world means that schools and families can fully achieve its aims without structured collaboration and partnership.

As the articles in this issue make clear, it is necessary to integrate educational activities that support the child's development so that young people can find their place in a transforming social reality, as well as achieve both academic success and success in life more generally. The authors emphasize that human potential does not unfold automatically, but in interaction with environmental factors that may direct, limit, or enrich it. Supporting development at different stages of life therefore requires enhancing or, in some cases, mitigating the influence of the environment and the relationships within it. Educational partnerships between schools and families make this possible.

This issue presents educational partnership as a relationship based on equality of rights and responsibilities for all participants. It also emphasizes mutual respect for competences, equal treatment, shared goals, collective responsibility, dialogue, trust, and openness. As Joyce Epstein noted, an educational partnership is an alliance among the family, the school, and the wider community, working to help the child realize their full potential while recognizing that such cooperation contributes to social progress.

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We hope that the articles in this issue will encourage further research and inspire practitioners to introduce innovative educational practices. We also invite you to read the contributions included in our *Miscellaneous Articles* section.

We hope that you will find this issue stimulating and lead you to interesting explorations.

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Thematic Articles

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From problem to mystery. How to approach family as a partner in education?

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): In current studies on the educational triangle of school, family, and local community, the distinct character of the family is generally assumed rather than explicitly articulated or critically examined. This study aims to fill this gap as a contribution to dealing with the difficulties of cooperation within the educational triangle.

Research methods: This study employs a critical cultural-philosophical analysis of contemporary tendencies in how families are approached in Western societies. This analysis clarifies the main trends in recent studies in pedagogy and educational sciences on educational partnerships between school and family. An investigation of personalist philosophical understandings of family is used to develop an alternative to current dominant views.

Process of argumentation: First, the research problem is defined by analyzing how recent pedagogical studies on the educational triangle approach family. Second, the problem is placed in a broader perspective of current social tendencies in viewing the family: either with suspicion or appreciation. Third, the reasons for this dual evaluation are discussed and shown to lead to an impasse: the family is expected to be both opened up and protected and is often instrumentalized, while its specific character remains assumed rather than clarified. Fourth, an alternative approach is explored through the personalist philosophical perspectives on family offered by Gabriel Marcel and Jean Lacroix. They distinguish between approaching the family as "problem" and as "mystery." The conclusion indicates the value of the mystery approach for addressing the risks inherent in the current impasse regarding how to deal with family, including as a partner of schools.

***Keywords*:**
school–family partnership, family, problem, mystery, Gabriel Marcel, Jean Lacroix

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Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The impact of the findings on educational sciences is presented in relation to four acute risks arising from the impasse, which are also relevant in school–family relations:

1. The risk of overlooking the family's distinct character.
2. The risk of asking too much of the family.
3. The risk of judging the family.
4. The risk of overly negative, one-sided evaluations of the family's strong influence.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The findings lead to the following recommendations:

1. In schools' interactions with families, the unnamable distinctiveness of the family must be respected.
2. To prevent the erosion of the family through excessive external demands, families must be granted adequate non-instrumental space to develop and sustain their own specific identity
3. This distinctiveness should be protected through restraint in judging whether a family is "good."
4. This also requires restraint in intervening in families from the outside.

Introduction

The idea that strong and positive relationships among schools, families, and communities are crucial for children's development is widely accepted in pedagogy and educational sciences (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 1; Johnson, 2015, p. 77; Swindler Boutte & Johnson, 2021, p. 167). There is extensive scientific evidence supporting this view, and educational policies are developed accordingly. However, this does not mean that such educational partnerships function well on a broad scale. As a result, there is ongoing discussion among academics about how to improve partnerships within this educational triangle.

Two issues stand out in the academic literature addressing these improvements, particularly in how the family is approached. First, the distinct character of the family—especially in comparison with school and community—is usually assumed rather than explicitly articulated or critically

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examined. Second, the family is portrayed both as an obstacle to education and as a unique, valuable contributor to it. Consequently, there are pressures to make the family more open to the broader community and to schools, while at the same time preserving its unique value. These tendencies of suspicion and appreciation in relation to the family extend far beyond educational research. Because they contradict each other, they create an impasse: How can we respect and support the family's distinct value in education, while also encouraging interaction with other communities?

This study aims to address the lack of critical exploration of the family's distinct character and to move beyond the impasse created by these dual approaches. It does so through a somewhat unconventional method within educational science: a critical, conceptual, and evaluative analysis of major contemporary tendencies, combined with a constructive proposal for alternative approaches based on personalist philosophy. The personalist perspective is chosen because it offers a better understanding of both the need and the difficulty of articulating what family might mean. Central to this perspective is the distinction between approaching the family as a *problem* and approaching it as a *mystery*. The value of this distinction lies in making space for the family's distinct character and its particular role in education, while also acknowledging that this distinctiveness cannot be fully captured through general definitions or functional descriptions. This contribution brings a new dimension to current debates on the educational triangle, which tend to begin from—and remain focused on—the perspective of the school.

Family in recent studies of the educational triangle

A key focus of recent academic discussions on improving educational partnerships among schools, families, and communities is the need to better account for the diversity of family forms and the differences in how they are embedded in wider communities (Sheldon & Turner-Vorbeck, 2019, pp. 9–138). In particular, the distinctiveness of urban

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settings compared with suburban and rural contexts deserves greater attention (Johnson, 2015; Swindler Boutte & Johnson, 2021).

When families are discussed, earlier research has tended to view them primarily in negative terms, with suspicion, namely, as obstacles to a successful school career. This has been described as the "deficit approach" (Johnson, 2015, p. 2). A "strengths-based approach" is often presented as an alternative, with Joyce Epstein's extensive work from the 1990s onward as its leading example (Epstein et al., 2019). However, Epstein's appreciative approach has also been criticized for allowing the school's perspective to dominate and for suggesting that school and family are equivalent partners in education. Critics argue that her approach pays too little attention to ideology (Johnson, 2015, p. 8), to what parents actually do for their children (Sheldon & Turner-Vorbeck, 2019, p. 4), and to how they wish to be involved in their children's schooling (Swindler Boutte & Johnson, 2021, p. 180).

Negative approaches to the family overlook the tremendous effort that low-income families, in particular, invest in providing daily necessities and striving to participate fully in society. As a result, concerns about inclusion (Kroeger, 2019) and families' freedom to bring their own character to their children's upbringing are not sufficiently addressed. In short, recent critical discussions of collaboration within the educational triangle emphasize the importance of reciprocity in the relationship between schools and families. Epstein, for instance, advocates a "family-like school" and a "school-like family" (Epstein, 2010, p. 83). Others refer to "bringing home learning to school and school learning home" (Sheldon & Turner-Vorbeck, 2019, p. 4). This call for reciprocity is further nuanced by closer attention to the complexity of family life, especially families' struggles with discrimination based on race and ethnicity, unequal access to learning opportunities, and non-mainstream family forms (Sheldon & Turner-Vorbeck, 2019, p. 4).

Underlying this shift is a self-critical recognition that the school's perspective has long dominated the conversation, whereas the distinctive character of the family has received far less attention. Yet in practice, the turn toward reciprocity has led less to an examination of what

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characterizes the family as such, and more toward documenting the specific pressures that families face due to discrimination and limited—especially financial—resources. What exactly is "family-like" about the struggles is largely assumed rather than made central to the analysis. Family thus often comes to stand primarily for acknowledging each person's uniqueness as well as for intimate, longstanding relationships between its members, whereas the school's defining feature is that it recognizes children primarily as students. Families are then expected to support this role by emphasizing the importance of schooling and helping to shape related activities such as homework.

It is remarkable that these approaches in favor of stronger partnerships do not give more attention to the distinct character of the family as a phenomenon. Clearly, the family is a different kind of community from the school or the neighborhood. To name just a few distinguishing aspects, family relationships are usually marked by a greater degree of givenness and enduring connectedness than those found in school or neighborhood settings. Being born into a family places all relatives in certain predetermined roles: child, sibling, (grand)mother or father, aunt, uncle, and so on. These positions usually imply strong responsibilities toward other members. This givenness takes shape in the specific culture of a family. Such a culture is not just the result of socioeconomic, ethnic, or religious factors: every family has its own distinctiveness in language, customs, physicality, and more and these differences are often difficult for outsiders to understand or evaluate. This contributes to a certain closedness or seclusion characteristic of families. The givenness of relationships, strong mutual responsibilities, and a distinct closed character are not nearly as prominent in school or neighborhood communities, where relationships tend to be much more functional and individuals can, in principle, be replaced by others with the same competence.

These differences among the communities of family, school, and neighborhood also help explain the dual evaluation of the family that is visible in literature on the educational triangle. The opposing approaches of suspicion and appreciation can easily be understood in light of the givenness, interdependence, and seclusion just mentioned. These aspects

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carry both positive and negative potential, value and risk. Greater attention to these basic characteristics of the family and their dual evaluation seems important for improving reciprocity within the educational triangle. However, education is not unique in its ambivalent assessment of the family. This duality is widespread across Western societies. This wider climate of evaluating the family is important to consider as a backdrop for how it appears in education. Let us first examine the more general negative views of the family.

Suspicion of family

A suspicious attitude toward family often stems from the harm that it can cause to its members. In a very direct sense, this includes abuse. The majority of sexual abuse occurs in families. Psychological manipulation, especially of older people, also frequently takes place there. More broadly, families can transmit problems across generations: poverty, unemployment, limited integration into society, illiteracy, addiction, or criminal behavior. Finally, harm can arise from the moral demands that family places on its members to care for one another. Family is the context of "informal care," ranging from physical assistance, medical support, cleaning, or shopping to psychological help or assistance with schoolwork. Such care includes raising one's own children, with all the educational responsibilities that entails, as well as caring for aging parents. It may also take the form of more demanding long-term care for relatives with chronic illnesses or disabilities. Family care does not come only from parents for children or children for parents, but also for aunts, uncles, cousins, and nieces. Although in many countries part of this care is provided by professionals, much of it still takes place informally, and many governments take this for granted.

Although this care often benefits people and brings them satisfaction, its risks are clear. It is care that frequently takes place out of sight and for which there is no financial compensation. As a result, the appreciation people receive for it is often limited—both from society and

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within families themselves. Caregiving is hard work and can partly alienate people from one another. It can also simply become overwhelming, especially when combined with paid employment, the well-known "second shift," and the "third shift" that women in particular tend to shoulder. Family therefore becomes a troublesome factor for critics because of the taken-for-granted expectation that it should provide unpaid, invisible care. The family, in this view, perpetuates an unjust system of caregiving.

These concerns are real. Of course, much good happens in the family sphere: people find joy, recognition, and fulfilment there. But precisely in the characteristic assumption of "selfless caring" lie certain dangers. Family, in general, has a "preserving" character; it tends to reinforce the status quo. Because human beings are familial creatures, they never start from scratch. Trauma, addictions, and illnesses are passed down through generations. In modern societies that try to give individuals as many opportunities as possible, family therefore becomes an object of suspicion. Legal systems ensure that wealth is inherited by family members, regardless of whether they actually need it. Put bluntly, thanks to family structures, people with substantial resources keep getting richer, while those with limited means remain poor. This suggests that the family circle should be opened up and made more transparent so that the unseen can come to light. Inequality, injustice, and abuse should be confronted, and the responsibility for care should be shared more broadly by society as a whole.

Appreciation of family

While these negative evaluations stem from the family's presumed tendency to preserve inequality, opposite approaches also exist. These often arise from a broader dissatisfaction with a one-sided, emancipatory emphasis on individual freedom and opportunity. As a result of this individualist focus, people may lose trust in government and democracy and feel compelled to fight for their own rights. Government institutions, including schools, come to be viewed as service providers for individual comfort and well-being, rather than as common goods in which citizens

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also have a duty to invest, even when the benefits are not immediately visible. Liberal individualism can indeed be empowering in the struggle for equal opportunities, but it can also mercilessly attribute people's circumstances to their own failings and leave them to fend for themselves.

Beginning from these concerns about the limitations of individualism, the family is then presented as the alternative. The very aspects considered risky or problematic in negative evaluations are now seen as revealing something essential about human nature: the fact that we have family ties shows that we are not isolated individuals. We cannot survive without the care of others. The specific character of the family reveals that human beings are relational creatures, naturally oriented toward social connection.

A concrete example of an educational practice that proceeds from this conviction is homeschooling. It often begins with dissatisfaction with rigid and ideologically charged public education (Greenwalt, 2021, p. 365). This dissatisfaction concerns the values conveyed in schools or the narrow mold of "good behavior" and learnability that schools tend to enforce. Another example, found in social work, is Family Group Conferencing (FGC) or Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). These methods seek to involve a wider kinship network when an individual is in distress, instead of relying solely on professional support. Their underlying assumption is that, when provided with accurate information and adequate resources, families are capable of protecting their members—especially children—in ways that public institutions cannot (Doolan, 2012; Marsh & Crow, 1998, pp. 37–38). Research shows that these practices are evaluated positively: families feel heard, feel that they have a voice and can manage their own affairs, rather than being silenced and rendered helpless as often happens under the traditional welfare strategies of the modern interventionist state (De Jong & Schout, 2013; Pennell, 2006).

Thus, positive approaches begin with the assumption that the family is a distinct sphere that reveals the relational nature of being human and highlights the value of family relationships for a wide range of purposes: parenting, education, care, and more. These approaches, however, do not in themselves explain what makes the family distinctive. Instead,

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the family is often treated as an instrument for solving social or individual problems. What precisely constitutes the family's distinctiveness in these solutions is not an obvious or central question. Nor do these approaches encourage critical reflection on the possible risks or weaknesses of family life.

An impasse in approaches to family

What emerges from this broader analysis of contemporary suspicious and appreciative approaches to family is a contradictory picture which parallels the dual evaluation of family in the literature on the educational triangle. Family is said to possess unique value in raising children or providing care in times of difficulty, yet it remains unclear how this value relates to the negative aspects of inherited problems or the risk that caregiving responsibilities may overburden people. It is also unclear how one can both open the family to outside scrutiny and professional involvement—for tasks such as education and care—while simultaneously respecting and nurturing the family's distinctive nature. In short, there seems to be an impasse in approaches to family, both in educational discussions and more broadly. Suspicious and appreciative perspectives sit side by side, yet they lead to contradictory courses of action. Moreover, across these approaches, the distinct character of the family is assumed rather than thoroughly examined, which increases the risk of treating the family primarily as an instrument: something valuable only insofar as it serves other aims.

To move beyond this impasse, we turn to a different kind of reflection on family—one that cannot be easily classified as either negative or positive. Such reflections are found in the philosophical and political movement of personalism beginning in the 1930s (Bréchon, 1976, pp. 149–167). Personalism emerged as a countermovement to the dominant ideologies of that period: fascism, communism, and capitalism. It stresses that human beings should be valued as persons: unique, irreplaceable beings. From this comprehensive perspective, the value or meaning of human beings

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should never be reduced to their membership in a community or to their role in an economic system. At the same time, a personalist view holds that this uniqueness becomes visible and can flourish only in relationships with others. People cannot be seen as self-contained; they are always embedded in relationships. For this reason, personalism gives particular attention to intimate relationships as they take shape in the family. This does not, however, imply an uncritical appreciation of family. Rather, its attention to the family's distinct character includes recognition of its risks and weaknesses. Finally, the comprehensive approach of personalism includes a spiritual or transcendent dimension. With this in mind, let us take a closer look at how family is understood in the work of Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) and his younger contemporary Jean Lacroix (1900–1986).

Marcel: Family as mystery

Marcel approaches the family as a "mystery" (Marcel, 2010, pp. 62–117). *Mystery* is a central term throughout his work. He uses it to describe a way of engaging with reality that must be distinguished from approaching it as a "problem" (Marcel, 2010, p. 62). A problem approach is detached; it seeks objectivity by analyzing issues in commonly understood terms in order to arrive at a solution acceptable to all. Yet not all matters can be grasped in such a detached way. For Marcel, the best example of something requiring a mystery approach is the topic of family (Marcel, 1950, pp. 197–219). Of course, one can identify concrete problems related to family: divorce, having children, or obligations toward parents. But focusing only on such issues easily loses sight of family as a comprehensive phenomenon (Marcel, 2010, p. 62). A mystery approach seeks this "constant element" (p. 93). Studying it is difficult because it is bound up with our own experience; it is something in which we are ourselves involved (p. 63). Family is "consubstantial with me, and I with them" (p. 65). For this reason, it cannot be fully objectified. It is difficult to analyze what family is. Yet family carries strong meanings that also motivate action (Marcel, 1950, p. 212). Often, people are not fully aware of these meanings, nor do they articulate

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them. Consider the naturalness with which people care for family members. One simply does it, without needing reasons.

Marcel uses spiritual or religious language to express this mystery approach. In the family, he suggests, we encounter what he calls "life"—an experience of life as gift or creation, something that human beings receive and pass on (Marcel, 2010, pp. 78–82). It is an experience of participating in a life that is larger or deeper than one's individual existence. The family shows us, for instance, that we live from what we have inherited from those before us, and that we, in turn, pass on. Family places us in a posture of receptivity and gratitude for what befalls us. Passing on life also requires humble availability. We express this concretely when we assume responsibility for our own lives and for the lives of others as part of this wider community, becoming creative with the gift of life that we encounter there. According to Marcel, this mystery of the family receives decreasing recognition in his time, which leads to the domination of the public sphere (Marcel, 2010, pp. 66–67).

Lacroix: Reticence and confession

In his book entitled *Force et faiblesses de la famille* (Lacroix, 1948), Lacroix also approaches family as a mystery. He distinguishes this view from the dominant negative and positive approaches, as well as from instrumentalizing ones (pp. 7–8), which treat the family as an object. To approach the family as a mystery is to understand it as something of which the reflecting subject is a part. Moreover, the individual becomes a person through belonging to this particular kind of community. The family shows that we owe our personhood to others (pp. 49–52). The meaning of this specific community experienced in family life is "non-public": family ties may be invisible to others, they do not need to be named, and may remain implicit. A certain seclusion from the public sphere is precisely what allows this special intimacy to emerge. This non-public character is what Lacroix calls the "diffidence" of the family: its modesty or reticence (*pudeur*, p. 49).

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"Reticence" echoes Marcel's characterisation of the family as mystery: both involve inscrutability or unnameability. This does not mean nothing can be said about what characterizes family. Lacroix identifies one act as particularly distinctive of family: confession (*aveu*, p. 43). Confession is twofold: of love and of guilt (pp. 54–55). Those who confess guilt seek reentry into the social world. In the public sphere of justice, this occurs through a complex legal process of judgement and punishment, which never fully restores what was broken (pp. 59–60). In the family, however, such a confession can be received differently. The restoration of relationships and the recognition of the person as more than their fault become possible here, sometimes even without explicit expression. The same applies to the confession of love. This does not arise in the public sphere, where relationships are often shaped by the general human struggle rooted in the desire to possess another (pp. 58, 66). In the family, by contrast, this can be transformed into a confession *to* the other, placing the other first and making oneself available in service. It is precisely in this way, Lacroix argues, that one becomes a person.

Mystery as critical potential

Clearly, Marcel and Lacroix speak highly of the family, and the danger of idealization therefore looms. Yet both aspects—the mysterious nature of the family and the reticence expressed in confession—also illuminate the risks or, in Lacroix's words, the weaknesses of family. Its inscrutable and non-public character brings with it a seclusion that can become fertile ground for abuse. The family can become too close-knit (Lacroix, 1948, pp. 112–113) and isolated, turning in on itself and becoming an end in itself. A counterweight to this must come from a higher aim that can, paradoxically, only be experienced within the family: "there is something that goes beyond every human community, and that cannot be denied without failing to recognize the community and degrading it" (p. 116). Like Marcel, Lacroix uses religious terms—"life itself," "the Other," "the Absolute," "God"—to indicate this higher aim. Openness to

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this dimension also means openness to other communities (p. 117). Moreover, it guards against the idealization and absolutization of the family.

Approaching family as mystery, then, for these two personalist thinkers, means drawing attention to the depth of existence that can be encountered in family life. Family is the place where new life can emerge, which evokes awe and wonder. Here, life is experienced as something that has a past and a future, and that is embodied in people with whom one can live in relationships of love and service. Having such experiences requires a certain seclusion, which always carries the risk of becoming enclosed in itself and losing a sense of connection to the transcendent and to others beyond the family. Yet it is precisely that connection to transcendence that can act as a critical force that always calls the family toward openness again (Schaafsma, 2023, pp. 277–278).

Conclusions

We turned to these personalist thinkers on family because of the impasse visible in current approaches to family in discussions of the educational triangle. This impasse stems from a lack of attention to the family's distinct character, from the dual and contradictory evaluations of the family, and from its instrumentalization. The result is a set of incompatible tendencies: on the one hand, a push to open the family to wider communities such as schools because of its limitations in educating children; on the other, a desire to preserve the family because of its supposedly unique contribution to education. Approaching family as mystery offers a counterbalance to four risks arising from this impasse—risks that are also directly relevant to how schools engage with families. These four counterbalances elucidate the impact of a mystery approach on the development of educational sciences:

1. Risk of overlooking the family's distinct character: We observed that in many reflections on family and education, the family's unique character is assumed rather than examined. Approaching family as

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mystery makes one more emphatically aware of this distinctiveness and of why it is so hard to articulate. It draws attention to the difficulty of naming what family might mean. But it also clarifies that this difficulty stems from the deep experiences of "life itself" that take place in the family. Making space for such experiences requires a certain degree of seclusion. Educational partnerships should respect this seclusion insofar as it is necessary for the family to be a family. This distinct character of family implies that mutual cooperation within the educational triangle will never be entirely smooth; it will always involve some friction.

2. Risk of asking too much of the family: When the distinct character of family is understood in terms of its relationship to the depth of existence, this can guard against a one-sided instrumental focus on the family's usefulness for tasks such as education. Such a focus risks undermining or eroding the family, as much is expected from it while its distinct character is neither nourished nor supported in these functional roles. A mystery approach stresses the importance of time spent together without any particular purpose. An awareness of "life itself" cannot be scheduled or produced on demand; it often arises precisely in the unstructured, seemingly useless activities of sharing everyday life. Without this, the family becomes eroded and loses its distinctive value.
3. Risk of judging the family: Improving cooperation within the educational triangle is often envisaged as a matter of increasing reciprocity. A mystery approach draws attention to the fact that reciprocity is only possible up to a point. An outsider can never experience what family means in the way its members do. The mystery of what it means to be "among us" is something a non-family member cannot fully grasp and, as noted above, even family members themselves often struggle to put it into words. Furthermore, families today take increasingly diverse forms, including same-sex parents or parents who come from disrupted family backgrounds and form new family units. This growing diversity may make mutual understanding and recognition across families even more difficult, and even more so between families and

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schools. It takes effort to step outside one's own assumptions about what is "normal." Yet this is necessary in order to create space for others to experience the depth of existence in their own specific family circumstances. Approaching every family as involving a dimension of mystery therefore calls for restraint and humility when judging the family life of others.

4. Risk of overly negative, one-sided evaluations of the strong influence of family: Precisely because of its mystery character, family is a community shaped by powerful impulses arising from a mode of connection that presupposes a relationship with "life itself." The impact of this kind of community on an individual is different from that of school or the local community. It produces a distinctive kind of moral experience: one marked by strong feelings of responsibility and indebtedness to others. This is what Lacroix highlights through the family's characteristic confessions of love and guilt. The moral appeal felt within the family often seems inescapable. It can generate deep loyalty, especially between children and parents. From the standpoint of schools or neighborhoods, this attachment is not always easy to understand. It can come across as overly demanding on the individual and thus a reason to intervene in family life. Of course, it is important to remain alert to this danger. Yet meaningful critical discussion, or possible intervention, becomes possible only when one first fully acknowledges the family's distinct way of being connected. Only with this recognition in place can the individual be protected from a moral appeal that risks becoming oppressive.

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Parental public pedagogies: The perspective of two case studies?

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Abstract

Research objectives and problem(s): The aim of this article is to analyze parental public pedagogies from the perspective of two case studies.

Research methods: This case study adopts a qualitative case study design and uses narrative interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Process of argumentation: The article begins with a discussion of the theoretical foundations of public space, public pedagogies, and issues related to parental involvement. This is followed by a presentation of the research design, the findings, and a discussion of the forms of public pedagogies demonstrated in both cases.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The people at the center of both case studies interrupt and disrupt the public space of which they are a part. Their interruptions express disagreement with what Gert J. J. Biesta describes as an "egological" form of existence: one focused solely on the individual self. Through their ongoing engagement with subjectivity, both participants—as parent and as teacher—develop a pedagogy of interruption.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The article concludes with reflections, including forward-looking ones, drawing attention to the role of networks of parent–researchers in public space in strengthening the subjective representations of both parents and researchers.

***Keywords*:**
parents, public space, public pedagogy, parental public pedagogy, interruption

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Introduction

The concept for this text emerged in response to an invitation to participate in the international conference *"Word in Education," 11th Edition: Family, School and Local Community – Educational Partnership*, held at Ignatianum University in Krakow on September 26–28, 2024.

Initially, I wanted to prepare my conference presentation in a way that would engage potential researchers in the proposed issue of parental public pedagogy and encourage them—by becoming researchers who support one another within the research networks presented—to help disseminate this idea. Later, while drafting the article and keeping these aims in mind, I focused on describing the forms of parental public pedagogies that emerged from my research. Above all, it is through these research results that I hope to achieve these goals.

I have organized the argument in this text on the basis of the research results presented below. In general, the milestones are as follows:

1. Parents create their own pedagogies, and these are forms of public pedagogies.
2. Parents do so in cooperation with teachers and local communities.
3. This cooperation responds to current challenges, which often takes the form of jointly practiced public pedagogy that is sensitive to social and cultural contexts.

With this in mind, I will structure the text by moving from a presentation of the concept of public pedagogy to a discussion of the methodological aspects of my research, followed by the research findings and prospective conclusions that emphasize the importance of networks of scholars studying parents in schools, society, and related contexts.

My research-based presentation of parental public pedagogies is inspired by two studies. The first focused on Dorota Łoboda, a well-known leader of the parental movement in Poland (a case at the national level). The second examined the work of a teacher, Krzysztof Rześniowiecki, who won the Gdańsk "Teacher of the Year" competition (a case at the local level).

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In developing the research conclusions about the important role played by networks of researchers working with and among parents, I will conclude by presenting examples of such associations, including the International Network of Scholars on School, Family, and Community Partnerships (INET) (traditionally based in the US, but essentially global); the European Research Network About Parents in Education (ERNAPE) (conventionally European, yet in practice global); and the Polish Research Network Parents in Education – ERNAPE-PL.

To conclude this introduction, the most important aim of this text is to present the "parental public pedagogy" that I have observed—offered here in an outline form, grounded in empirical research and inspired by it. Because carrying out this intention requires substantial theoretical reflection, the text ultimately takes the form of a research-based theoretical essay that sketches the concept of parental public pedagogy.

In this text, I focus on manifestations of parental pedagogy in the public spaces of schools and their social environments, linking these manifestations to Gert J. J. Biesta's concept of public pedagogy and thereby shaping the contours of the concept proposed here.

Starting point: The concept of public pedagogy

The concept of public pedagogy is based on the premise that pedagogy—centered on the subject and on education—focuses on events that take place in public space, *between people*. What happens between people in the public space that they co-create has both an educational and a political character (cf. Dewey 1916; Giroux 1998, 2003; Biesta 2012, 2014, 2017). Such pedagogy raises questions about the relationships that constitute it—relationships that "take place" (Biesta 2017, pp. 14–15; cf. 2012, 2013). One of the main creators of contemporary concepts of public pedagogy, Gert J. J. Biesta, argues that we do not simply exist in the world but constantly move toward it, and it is *there*—in public space—that we establish and maintain relationships with others. These relationships co-create the public sphere (Biesta 2012; 2014, 2017).

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In light of my previous studies on "the public" in the context of parental engagement as power (Mendel 2020a, 2020b; 2022) and my recognition of the role of space and place (cf. Mendel 2019), I adopted Biesta's approach as essential to my understanding of public pedagogy.

Biesta sees public space, constituted through politically and educationally formed relationships (and sensitive to aesthetic relations), as the very space of public pedagogy. Public space *is* the space of public pedagogy. He defines public pedagogy as an expression of the relationship (or intersection of influences) between education and politics. At the same time, he emphasizes the obvious fact that pedagogical approaches are present not only in institutional education but also outside it, taking over its functions and assuming various forms (Biesta 2014). Therefore, public pedagogy involves and concerns everyone, regardless of age, status, etc. Within this framework, Biesta identifies three types of public pedagogy:

1. Pedagogy for the public — a "top-down," dedicated pedagogy directed at people whom we believe ought to be taught how to be or act in public space (Biesta 2012, pp. 683–697).
2. Pedagogy of the public — an "instructors' pedagogy," the pedagogy of those who shape public space but, contrary to their declared intentions, risk objectifying others by teaching them how to achieve freedom out of a supposed concern for their freedom (Biesta 2012, pp. 695–696).
3. Pedagogy as concern for "publicness" — that is, for togetherness, commonality, and good coexistence; also described as "public pedagogy in the interest of publicness," which Biesta treats as the preferred and recommended form (Biesta 2012, pp. 683–697).

Given my research interests, I focused most on the third type. Biesta describes this pedagogy as being together in the public space "where action is possible and freedom can appear" (Biesta 2012, p. 693). Following Hannah Arendt, the author repeats this statement multiple times, treating it as a kind of signpost for this optimal version of public pedagogy (Biesta 2012).

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If this preferred form of public pedagogy is to be grounded in the possibility of action and freedom, then the possibility of interruption must play a key role. Interruption is understood as an intentional act, undertaken out of concern for the quality of shared space: an expression of *dissensus*. What might such interruptions look like? How might they be practiced?

Biesta's thinking confirms the assumptions—following Jacques Rancière (2005)—about the effectiveness of interruption (or, in Rancière's terms, fissures, ruptures, disruptions) that interfere with the existing public space, that is, the current and seemingly unacceptable configuration of relationships that constitute the public sphere. Assuming that becoming part of public space, and thus co-creating it, depends on the quality of interpersonal bonds, Biesta points to the constant possibility of educational interruption; for example, an interruption enacted through the staging of one's disagreement, a public performance of what is unacceptable within the shared space. Such interruption means "to introduce an incommensurable element—an event, an experience and an object—that can act both as a test and as a reminder of publicness" (Biesta 2012, p. 697).

On research design: Methodological points

With this in mind, I assumed that public pedagogy exists wherever interruptions take place in public space. Therefore, in my research, whose aim was to identify these enacted, parental public pedagogies, I was attentive to interruptions in all their possible forms and variations.

The research on which I base my argument consists of two case studies (the first conducted in 2020, the second in 2023), both of which use narrative interviewing (individual and group) and document analysis. The results of the first study have been published (Mendel 2023). Maintaining the qualitative orientation of this work, I focused on producing a description well-grounded in the material gathered in both cases, from 2020 and 2023. The specific aims for me were:

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1/ to describe the generalized experience of the research participants' educational and political activities in public space;
2/ to present an image of what striving for the common good and democratic equality in a shared space looks like.

With these aims in mind, I posed the following key question: Do the respondents interrupt the relationally understood public space and, if so, in what way (how, where, etc.)?

In the first case, I concentrated on the activity of Dorota Łoboda, a mother of two daughters and a well-known leader of the "Parents Against Education Reform" movement. This movement brings together over a million participants, active across the country and protesting in various forms against the government's reform initiatives. Łoboda also runs the "Parents Have a Voice" foundation as its president. She is active in the feminist movement as well and serves on the Program Council of the nationwide "Congress of Women." Recently, she was elected to the Polish Parliament (Sejm).

I conducted my interview with Łoboda in May 2020 (by phone due to pandemic restrictions), having obtained her consent to publish the interview and her name. The transcript of that interview served as the main research material for this case study. In the original study, I also analyzed additional documents, such as parliamentary materials on parent-proposed solutions, minutes from parliamentary sessions, and press and online articles concerning parental activities in the context of Polish education and society. In this article, I keep that material in mind as background, but I rely chiefly on the interview data.

In the second case study, I focused on a high school art teacher who won a local "Teacher of the Year" competition. "Krzysztof Rześniowiecki is a passionate and dedicated teacher. He works wonderfully with parents," as the award laudation stated. The aim of the Gdańsk Teacher of the Year competition is to select educators who are creative and effective leaders in their local environment—those who inspire the entire community, especially the educational community, and who undertake important and valuable work for the benefit of Gdańsk and its residents,

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particularly in the spirit of citizenship, solidarity, responsibility for the common good, and freedom. In 2023, awards were given for achievements in the area of Dialogue (https://www.trojmiasto.pl/nauka/Gdanscy-nauczyciele-i-dyrektorzy-roku-2023-wybrani-kto-wygral-n183902.html, accessed 20-08-2024).

All of this encouraged me to use this case study to examine public pedagogy and the interruptions that Rześniowiecki may enact within it. To do so, I visited and observed the school several times and conducted individual and focus-group interviews with him and his colleagues, including the principal and other teachers, as well as with the students that he teaches. Through them, I was also able to gain insight into parents' roles and relationships with the school.

Findings: Case 1. Dorota Łoboda (cf. Mendel 2023)

Let us begin with Łoboda's beginnings and the path that she traveled through education, politics, and a fragile community toward resistance. As she said:

> I felt that parents didn't have enough influence and that we, as parents, could offer a lot to the school and help make it a more child-friendly place. And that's really where it all started. (…) I had the sense that our fragile community, something we had managed to build in my daughters' school, would simply collapse under the pressure of what the authorities had imposed on us, and I was deeply convinced that these schools would change for the worse after the reform.

Parents in this movement came together in opposition to decisions made at the political level: decisions that shape school life and steer society in a controversial direction. Resistance became the primary foundation of this movement. Łoboda and other parents (acting in alliance with teachers) disrupted the existing public space; there were fissures and ruptures that interfered with that space. What did this interruption look like?

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> And this social activity of mine also sort of entered wider waters then; I started organizing **demonstrations**. And then it somehow just naturally turned out that I would be running in local government elections, because this role of educational activist and social activist really leads you up against a wall at some point, right? (all emphases in interview excerpts are mine)

The demonstration was the first and most frequently used form of interruption by Łoboda. Her public pedagogy could be described as a *pedagogy of demonstration*: a pedagogy of manifesting opposition to "what the authorities impose on us." As she said:

> the conditions we're living in, especially in Poland right now, make (…) a large group of parents rebel against what the authorities impose on us and what we see happening in schools. And of course, this didn't start with the Law and Justice government. (…) And the way it is—in my opinion—is that people are much more active when they're fighting against something, unfortunately. I regret that, because I would like us to be active in doing something positive. But on the other hand, the greatest surge of energy always comes when someone tries to impose something on us and we **rebel**.

In this way, Łoboda conceptualizes rebellion through the lens of politics and the pedagogy of interruption. On the one hand, she speaks about the conditions that make the existing public space unacceptable—where the authorities' imposition of particular educational frameworks and content amounts to a denial of citizens' freedom. On the other hand, she stresses the educational power of resisting such imposition, which results in "building a movement of people who do not agree" and "growing up in rebellion."

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Findings: Case 2. Krzysztof Rześniowiecki

The character of this teacher is captured well in the following excerpt from an interview with the principal of the school where he works:

> he's not only a teacher and school pedagogue—**he's actually the spirit that holds our school together**. How does he do it? He has an extraordinary talent for writing. I don't know if you know this, but he's on Wikipedia. Students always joke that "We have to meet the guy who wrote Tabaluga," which is an animated series which he wrote the lyrics for. (…) He doesn't brag about it, but he's written a lot of lyrics for cartoons and various songs. So sometimes when we have a school quiz and the question is, "Who wrote the song in Tabaluga?" well, they all know it was Rześniowiecki. And whenever we have any kind of school celebration (…), it's always: "Krzysiu, write something for us." Not even two hours go by and Krzysiek shows up with… well, practically a poem! (…) Krzysiek is simply invaluable! (…) **And everybody knows him, too. Like I said, everyone crosses paths with him. And all the parents come into contact with him. When we ask about a student, he always knows, he knows the name, and he'll say, "Oh yes, yes. That parent wrote to me. I wrote back about this." He's just… well, that's… a personality! (…) He's really an absolutely outstanding personality**. (Interview with the school principal)

The Teacher of the Year competition materials detail many of Rześniowiecki's activities, including: an annual inaugural letter to the parents of first-year students; around twenty **letters** each school year on pedagogical and supportive themes over the past four years; the establishment of a "**telephone bridge**" with parents in 2019; annual **art installations** at the school; **exhibitions of students' work**; **field trips to art exhibitions** as a platform for dialogue about art; and yearly meetings with students at a **team-building camp**, which he has attended for thirty years (https://www.trojmiasto.pl/nauka/Gdanscy-nauczyciele-i-dyrektorzy-roku-2023-wybrani-kto-wygral-n183902.html, accessed 20-08-2024).

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The interruptions initiated by Rześniowiecki are illustrated most strikingly in his concept of telephone bridging, which he titled *"The Bridge."* The starting point for these interruptions was his disagreement with the conditions created by the pandemic, specifically, with how the pandemic altered the nature of relationships.

> I came up with the name ("The Bridge") so that it would sound like something. But when the pandemic came and the lockdowns started (…) well, you know… And an actual conversation, even over the phone, hearing someone's voice, is somehow so much more valuable than just typing on a keyboard. **I had to come up with something.** I decided to use my database—I have an accessible database of parents who put their phone numbers in there themselves—to make daily check-in calls, I don't know, to two or three people from each class, to the parents of students in each class, to ask how they were doing, how the parent and the student were coping, how the family was coping, how they were feeling, what their situation was, and what they might expect from us, etc. And I always got such warm, friendly reactions from the parents. They were happy that someone cared about them. I even heard in one conversation, "You're the only teacher who even asked how we're feeling. Because even during pre-pandemic school no one ever asked us that." And that gave me the courage to keep this *Bridge* going, to send parents the signal that we're here, that we're living teachers, that we think about you, that if something happens, have the courage to call or reach out.

Rześniowiecki's interruptions became inspirations for others. His public pedagogy engages parents and other participants in the social world that he inhabits. Moreover, his method provokes and encourages parental interruptions: their own practice of parental public pedagogy.

In interviews, he repeatedly said, "Let's get to know each other; let's do something together." Other teachers, the principal, and students quoted these words often. Rześniowiecki had a clear vision of parents participating in the life of the school and the local community, and he

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refused to let that vision remain hypothetical. Instead, he mobilized everyone around him to bring it to life:

> Recently, Mr. Rześniowiecki said (…) that parents should share their hobbies. For example, they send links, and we know where these parents perform at concerts. So it's like we also know something more about these parents (…) This helps us a lot in our work. (Interview with the school principal)

Thanks to Rześniowiecki, it has become standard practice for everyone to exhibit in the school's exhibition spaces: students, parents, and teachers. It is normal. The school gallery sometimes extends beyond the school, and sometimes exhibitions come into the school from the outside. It is mainly the parents who organize themselves, and as a result, both the school and the city have a richer calendar of artistic and cultural events. But **all of this began with Rześniowiecki's initiatives** or inspirations (paraphrase: group interview).

Discussion and Conclusions

Dorota Łoboda and Krzysztof Rześniowiecki interrupt and they do so on the basis of their belief in the constant possibility of educational interruption, through actions that resemble staging their own disagreement, by introducing "an incommensurable element … that can act both as a test and as a reminder of publicness" (Biesta 2012, p. 697). With their consistent focus on subjectivity, Łoboda as a parent and Rześniowiecki as a teacher both appear to develop what Biesta calls a pedagogy of interruption (Biesta 2012; 2013; 2017). Their interruptions expressed their disagreement with what Biesta terms the *"egological"* form of existence—one focused on the individual self (cf. Biesta 2017, p. 14). They moved beyond the egological way of being together in a public space. They turned their interruptions into socially shared activity, extending far beyond their immediate surroundings. Their actions demonstrated a capacity to spread

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and take root; they inspired other teachers, parents, students, and local communities and contributed to the collective construction of a better public space for all.

In light of the discussion and the analysis of these two cases, several conclusions emerge:

1. **Parents interrupt—and in doing so, they create their own public pedagogies.**
2. **They do so in cooperation with teachers and local communities.** In some cases, it is the teacher, such as Rześniowiecki, who inspires parental public pedagogy, resulting in a jointly practiced form of public pedagogy.

Parental public pedagogies do not arise in isolation as the product of a single person's interruption. This is also evident in the relationships formed during research, such as during interviews. As I know from both respondents at the center of these case studies, my appearance in their professional lives mattered to them:

> Thank you very much. **This conversation with you today is very important to me. I am very willing to cooperate**, so if I can help you with anything or be useful, please let me know. (Interview with D. Łoboda)

> Well, **in general it is important to me, and I am very pleased that the University of Gdańsk—that you are interested in me, that you came to the school and really took an interest in our school** so attentively. (Interview with K. Rześniowiecki)

This research observation seems to support a prospective conclusion: the researcher and the researched jointly create subjective representations. For those being studied, parents and teachers implementing their public pedagogies, this becomes a space of mutual support. A researcher who takes interest in parents or teachers in the public sphere strengthens their subjective presence in that space.

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Conversely, for researchers studying parents (in public space, "parents in education" etc.), support takes the form of organizations: research networks, associations, and collaborative communities. With this in mind, I will present examples of such networks, which provide the groundwork for such support. The research presented here seems to lead naturally to a recommendation: strengthen these networks.

International Network of Scholars on School, Family, and Community Partnerships – INET. In 1991, Joyce L. Epstein and the late Don Davies founded this network. Every other year, INET meets during the American (World) Educational Research Association conferences (AERA, WERA), bringing together researchers from many countries—more than 300 scholars from over 30 nations—to share their studies on all aspects of family and community engagement. INET organizes its International Roundtables on School, Family, and Community Partnerships (co-sponsored by the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University; the Family, School, Community Partnerships Special Interest Group (SIG) of AERA; and the Johns Hopkins University School of Education). INET works in close cooperation with the European Research Network About Parents in Education (ERNAPE). The conferences of both organizations are held every two years, alternating between them (e.g., ERNAPE 2025, INET 2026).

European Research Network About Parents in Education – ERNAPE (www.ernape.org). In October 1993, with financial support from the European Commission, a group of researchers working on issues related to parents in education across different parts of Europe met in Glasgow to debate how to strengthen connections across Europe, exchange knowledge about evolving research, and stimulate studies on parents in education at all levels — including intercultural European research. The group decided to establish ERNAPE, the European Research Network About Parents in Education. The term "parents in education" encompasses parents' relationships to school systems as well as parents' and families' contributions to children's learning outside of school. ERNAPE is open, with ongoing membership through participation (attending conferences makes you a network member).

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ERNAPE is relevant to anyone conducting research in education, educational administration, educational psychology, educational sociology, and related fields. It is also of interest to parents, teachers, and their organizations. ERNAPE is an independent body, unaffiliated with any political, religious, or ideological groups. Its journal, the *International Journal about Parents in Education* (www.ijpe.eu), invites researchers, parents, and teachers to publish scientific articles.

Polish Research Network About Parents in Education (Polska Sieć Badawcza Rodzice w Edukacji) – ERNAPE-PL (www.ernape.pl – since 2026: https://ernapepl.ug.edu.pl). In 2017, under the patronage and with the organizational support of the Social Pedagogy Team of the Committee of Pedagogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), my invitation to join a research network bringing together scholars working on parenting issues was circulated. For years, I had wanted to create such a network in Poland, organizing it as a national branch of the European one, ERNAPE-PL. The invitation prompted numerous applications from Polish researchers. The first conference was held in Gdańsk in the spring of 2018, where the foundations for further cooperation were laid in the form of submitted declarations. Currently, the fourth conference—this time an extended and unusual edition—is underway, consisting of webinars and collaboration among researchers within four thematic "study circles" (May–December 2024). The network is open (ongoing invitation) and continues to grow. It brings together researchers, both academics and practitioners, who connect their research interests with parents and education. At present, several dozen people collaborate in research (with nearly 70 sharing their data on the network's website). ERNAPE-PL is expanding, making use of the opportunities offered by ERNAPE, such as conferences, the *International Journal About Parents in Education* (IJPE), and other forms of scientific exchange and cooperation. The network was established at the University of Gdańsk (Institute of Pedagogy: Department of Social Pedagogy), which remains its main institutional home. Thanks to effective cooperation with Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, since 2024 these two universities have jointly served as ERNAPE-PL's affiliations.

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Education of the child as part of parental duties – Comparative legal analysis of national reports submitted to the Commission on European Family Law[1]

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Abstract

Research objectives and problems: The author conducts a comparative analysis of the legal regulations of 21 European countries concerning children's education in the context of parental responsibility/authority.

The guiding questions are: *Is a child's education considered part of parental responsibility/authority? What is the legal source of this right and obligation? Does the law give children any ability to decide about their education? Do the national reports refer to compulsory schooling or education duty?*

Research methods: The author performs a comparative legal analysis of reports submitted by 21 countries[2] to the Commission on European Family Law on the subject of parental responsibility.

[1] This article is one of several thematically related pieces on the comparative analysis of the scope of parental responsibility in selected European countries. The previous article (Prucnal-Wójcik, M. (2024). *Religious Education of the Child as Part of Parental Duties – Comparative Legal Analysis of National Reports Submitted to the Commission on European Family Law. Multidisciplinary Journal of School Education,* 13(1(25)), 113–130. https://doi.org/10.35765/mjse.2024.1325.06) concerned the issue of the religious upbringing of children, while the present article focuses on the issue of child education.

[2] The author has selected those countries that have submitted their reports to the Commission on European Family Law.

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Process of argumentation: Drawing on the provisions contained in the domestic legislation of 21 European countries, as documented in the reports submitted to the Commission on European Family Law, the author presents the legal solutions governing children's education in the context of parental responsibility/authority.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The analysis shows that in all 21 legal systems examined, a child's education is regarded as an element of parental responsibility/authority/care/custody. The most common legal sources of the parental right and duty to provide a child's education are provisions found in children's/family/parental responsibility acts or codes, constitutions, civil codes, and education laws. National legislation generally grants children an indirect right to influence their educational path. Most reports also outline, at least in general terms, the scope of compulsory schooling or education duty in their respective countries.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The discussion offers a concise overview of the regulations in 21 European countries and serves as an introduction to a more detailed analysis of the issue of children's education.

Introduction

The principle that parents play the primary role in the education of their children is reflected in numerous international legal instruments. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); Protocol No. 1 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1952); the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the European Parents' Rights Charter (1992); and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2010).

Article 26(3) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* grants parents the right to choose the kind of education that their children will receive. Article 2 of *Protocol No. 1* to the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* underscores the right of parents to ensure that their children are brought up and educated in conformity with the parents' own convictions. The *Convention against Discrimination*

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in Education likewise recognizes the right of parents to educate their children in accordance with their personal convictions (Article 5(1)(b)). Article 13(3) of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* emphasizes parents' freedom to choose schools other than public institutions for their children and to ensure that their children receive an education consistent with their convictions.

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* affirms the primary role of parents in raising and educating the child (Article 5), in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child set out in Article 3. Article 18(4) of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* requires State Parties to respect the freedom of parents […] to ensure that their children are raised and educated in line with their own convictions. The *European Parents' Rights Charter* recognizes parents as the "first educators" of their children. It grants them the right to choose an educational path that is closest to their beliefs and the values that they deem most important for their children's development, as well as the right to influence the educational policies implemented in their children's schools. Article 14(3) of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* emphasizes that "the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of such freedom and right."

This article is based on a legal analysis of reports from 21 countries concerning parental responsibility as regulated in their national laws, submitted to the Commission on European Family Law. The study focuses specifically on the education of the child. The author seeks answers to the following questions: *Is a child's education considered part of parental responsibility/authority? What is the legal source of this right and obligation? Does the law give children any ability to decide about their education? Do the national reports refer to compulsory schooling or education duty?*

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Analysis of legal solutions in European countries

AUSTRIA

According to Sec. 144 of the Austrian Civil Code (CC), parental responsibilities include, among other things, the education of minor children. Under Sec. 146(1) Austrian CC, the term "education" refers to "the development of the child's physical, mental, psychological, and moral strengths, the fostering of his or her aptitudes, abilities, inclinations, and developmental capabilities, and his or her education in school and in an occupation" (Roth, 2004). Parents are obliged to register their child for school at the age of six. Under Sec. 146(3) Austrian CC, the scope of the child's education depends on the financial capacity and social position of the parents.

BELGIUM

Parental responsibilities include parents' authority and care over the child, which encompass, among other things, the right to decide on the child's type of education, school, and profession (Arts. 203 and 374 Belgian Civil Code). Parents who jointly exercise parental responsibilities must agree on the child's education. If they cannot reach agreement, the competent authority will decide in accordance with the child's best interests (Pintens & Pignolet, 2004). Under Art. 203 Belgian CC, parents are obliged, according to their means, to contribute to the child's education. This obligation continues until the child completes his or her schooling and, in some cases, extends beyond the age of majority.

BULGARIA

According to Art. 47 § 1 of the Bulgarian Constitution of 1991, parents have both the right and the obligation to care for and bring up their children until they reach the age of majority. Under Art. 68 of the Bulgarian Family Code, parents are required to prepare children for "socially useful activity," which is understood as a parental duty to provide for the child's education (Todorova, 2004).

Pursuant to Art. 53 § 2 of the Bulgarian Constitution, parents must educate their child until the age of 16. If the child continues his or her

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education beyond the age of majority (18), parents are required to support the child. Under Art. 47 of the Bulgarian Public Education Act, parents must enroll their child in school and ensure regular attendance. Until the child reaches the age of 14, parents have the right to decide on the type of school and education that the child receives (Art. 9, Bulgarian Public Education Act) (Todorova, 2004).

DENMARK

The Danish Act on Parental Authority and Contact of 1995 does not explicitly mention a child's education as part of parental duties; however, providing the child with a suitable education is generally considered an aspect of parental care. As Lund-Andersen & Gyldenløve Jeppesen de Boer (2004) note, "it follows from the *travaux préparatoires* that the holder(s) of parental authority has/have a duty to provide education taking into account the child's abilities and interests."

According to § 76 of the Danish Constitution of 1953, all children are entitled to free education in a state school. Parents are required to provide education for their child from age seven. They may choose either school-based education or home education. Under Art. 34(1) of the Act on State Schools of 2003, the compulsory education requirement ends once the child has received nine years of schooling.

ENGLAND & WALES

Parental responsibility includes, among other things, providing for a child's education in accordance with the child's intellectual needs and abilities (Love, 2004). Under Sections 7–8 of the Education Act 1966, parents of children aged 5 to 16 must ensure that their child receives "efficient full-time education suitable (a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he/she may have" (Love, 2004). Parents may choose education at a state or independent school or home education. Under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, a child who is not receiving education may be made subject to an education supervision order, and under Section 443 of the Education Act, criminal proceedings may be brought against parents who fail to ensure their child receives "efficient full-time education."

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FINLAND

In Finland, the main legal concept governing parental rights and duties toward the child is *child custody*. Custodians are entitled to make decisions concerning the child's education. According to Sec. 1 para. 2 of the Finnish Child Custody and Right of Access Act of 1983, a child "should receive an education that corresponds to his or her wishes and talents." Under Sec. 16 of the Finnish Constitution of 1999, every child has the right to free basic education, which usually lasts nine years and begins in the year the child turns seven (Kurki-Suonio, 2004).

FRANCE

Education is part of parental duties. Parents have the right to decide on the type of school and the child's future professional direction. Under Law No. 75-620 of 11 July 1975, children are subject to compulsory schooling from ages 6 to 16, and parents are responsible for ensuring the child's education until the child reaches majority or is emancipated. Failure to meet this duty may result in criminal prosecution (Art. 222-17, French Criminal Code). According to Art. 371–2 of the French Civil Code (2016), parents must contribute to the child's education and maintenance in proportion to their means and the child's needs (Ferrand, 2004).

GERMANY

One aspect of parental custody is personal care of the child, which includes, among other things, the child's education. Under § 1631(1) of the German Civil Code (1986), parents are both entitled and obligated to educate their child and to choose the type of schooling. In exercising this right, they must take into account the child's abilities and inclinations. Germany does not have a single nationwide period of compulsory school attendance; the specific duration is determined by the public law of each *Land*. Parents are responsible for ensuring that the child attends school. Failure to fulfill this obligation may lead to administrative proceedings and the imposition of educational measures (Dethloff & Martiny, 2004).

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GREECE

One aspect of parental responsibilities in Greece is *parental care* (the other being guardianship), which includes, among other things, the child's education (Art. 1518(1) of the Greek Civil Code of 1940/46). According to Arts. 1511, 1648, 1518(3) and 1606 of the Greek Civil Code, parents are both entitled and obliged to decide on their child's education, taking into account the child's best interests, individual capabilities and aptitudes, as well as the child's own views and level of maturity. In fulfilling this duty, parents must cooperate with school authorities and, when necessary, with competent public services (Koutsouradis, 2004).

HUNGARY

In Hungary, a child's education falls under *child care*, which is one of the components of parental responsibility (The Hungarian Child Welfare Act of 1997; The Hungarian Family Act of 1952; The Hungarian Order of Guardianship of 1997). Both parents are entitled and responsible for decisions regarding their child's education. They are also required to respect the child's views, taking into account the child's age and maturity. Once a child reaches age 12, his or her participation in educational decisions becomes mandatory (Weiss & Szeibert, 2004).

IRELAND

The Irish Constitution of 1937 underlines the primacy of parental authority in decision-making regarding, among other matters, a child's education. Article 42 states that "the primary and natural educator of the child is the family" and affirms that parents have both an inalienable right and a duty to provide for their child's education. Under the Irish Education (Welfare) Act 2000, parents are required to ensure that their child attends a recognized school regularly. Exceptions exist, for example, when a child is being educated outside the recognized system or outside the State (Shannon, 2004).

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ITALY

In Italy, parents and the State share responsibility for the education of children. According to Art. 30 §1 of the Italian Constitution of 1947 and Art. 147 of the Italian Civil Code of 1942, parents are obliged to educate their children, "taking into account the children's capacities, natural inclinations and aspirations." This obligation must be exercised in the child's best interests. Parents of younger children are entitled to choose their education (in line with the child's capacities, natural inclinations and aspirations). A minor aged 14 or older is granted greater freedom in choosing an educational path (Patti et al., 2004).

Under Art. 34 of the Italian Constitution, the State is required to provide institutions that support parents in fulfilling their educational responsibilities towards their child and to supervise parental compliance with those obligations (Patti et al., 2004).

LITHUANIA

Arts. 26 and 40 of the Lithuanian Constitution of 1992 and Art. 3.155 of the Lithuanian Civil Code of 2000 specify parents' right to educate their children. Under Art. 3.165 of the Civil Code, parents have a duty to ensure appropriate learning conditions for their children during the period of compulsory schooling (up to age 16). According to Art. 21 of the Law on Education of 1991, parents must send their child to school at age six or seven. They are also required to "create living and studying conditions for their children that guarantee sound and secure development of their mental and physical abilities" and to "cooperate with educational institutions in matters concerning their child's education" (National Report: Lithuania, 2004).

THE NETHERLANDS

Under Art. 1:247 of the Dutch Civil Code of 1992, parental responsibilities include the right and duty to foster and guide the child in the development of his or her personality. One aspect of this guidance is the child's education (Boele-Woelki et al., 2004).

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NORWAY

According to Art. 30 sec. 2 of the Norwegian Children Act of 1981 (NCA), one element of parental responsibility is the obligation to ensure that the child receives an education suited to his or her interests and abilities. This duty must be carried out in accordance with the child's best interests and needs. Under Art. 32 NCA, once a child reaches age 15, he or she has the right to make all decisions concerning education without parental consent (Lødrup & Sverdrup, 2004).

POLAND

According to Art. 70 sec. 1 of the Polish Constitution of 1997, education is compulsory until the age of 18. Under Art. 70 sec. 3, parents have the freedom to choose schools other than public schools for their children. The 1964 Polish Family and Guardianship Code (PFGC) does not refer specifically to education. However, Art. 96 §1 identifies, as one element of parental authority, the obligation to care for the child's development and to prepare the child to work for the good of society in accordance with his or her abilities, which is understood as a parental obligation to ensure appropriate education (Mączyński & Mączyńska, 2004).

According to Art. 95 §4 PFGC, before making decisions on important matters concerning the child (such as education), parents should listen to the child if the child's mental development, health and degree of maturity allow it, and should take the child's reasonable wishes into account to the extent possible. Under the Education Law of 2016, "a child's school duty begins at the beginning of the school year in the calendar year in which the child turns 7 and lasts until completion of primary school, but no longer than until the child turns 18." This Act defines the scope of parental responsibilities relating to the implementation of both school and education duties.

PORTUGAL

According to Art. 1878 No. 1 of the Portuguese Civil Code of 1966, a child's education is one of the principal elements of parental responsibility. Under Arts. 1885 Nos. 1 and 2 of the Portuguese Civil Code, the level

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of a child's education depends on the child's talents and abilities, as well as the parents' economic capacity (De Oliveira Rosa Martins, 2004).

RUSSIA

Under Art. 28(2) of the Russian Constitution of 1993 and Art. 63 of the Russian Family Code (FC) of 1995, a child's education is one element of parental responsibility, regarded as both a right and a duty of the parents. According to Art. 63(3) FC, parents are entitled to choose the type of school and form of education for their child, and must respect the child's opinion in exercising this right. Art. 63(2) FC further provides that parents are obliged to "ensure that the child receives basic general education." Parents may fulfil this obligation personally or by temporarily entrusting education to others, such as family members or educational institutions (kindergarten, etc.) (Antokolskaia, 2004).

SPAIN

According to Article 27 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, education is one of the fundamental rights of every person. Under Art. 154 of the Spanish Civil Code of 1889, education is one of the duties encompassed within parental responsibility. As González Beilfuss (2004) notes, in Spain "the right of parents to educate their children according to their religious and moral convictions is derivatively limited by the right of the child to attend school. The state must ensure that this right is not infringed by parents. There is even an obligation imposed on school teachers and directors to notify public child protection bodies if a child does not habitually attend school […]. School non-attendance justifies intervention by public child protection bodies." (González Beilfuss, 2004)

SWEDEN

According to Chapter 6, Sec. 2 of the Swedish Children and Parents Code of 1949 (SCPC), ensuring that a child receives satisfactory education generally falls to the custodial parents. This obligation must be exercised in line with the best-interests principle (Chapter 6, Sec. 2a SCPC)

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and with regard to the child's "age, development and other circumstances" (Chapter 6, Sec. 2 para. 2 SCPC) (Jänterä-Jareborg et al., 2004).

SWITZERLAND

Under Art. 302 of the Swiss Civil Code of 1907, parents are obliged to ensure both general education and appropriate vocational training for the child. They must exercise this duty with regard to the child's welfare, abilities, predispositions, age and the parents' economic circumstances. If necessary, parents are required to cooperate with the school and relevant public or community services (Arts. 301 and 302 Swiss CC) (Hausheer et al., 2004).

Research findings

The study made it possible to answer the questions posed at the outset.

Q1: *Is a child's education considered part of parental responsibility/ authority?*

The analysis of the legal provisions governing children's education indicates that in all 21 legal systems examined, education is considered an element of parental responsibility/authority/care/custody. In the reports from six countries, additional regulations were identified concerning the implementation of parents' duty to ensure their child's education, particularly those indicating that the scope of the child's education may depend on the parents' financial capacity:

- Austria: The scope of a child's education depends on the financial capacity and social position of the parents.
- Belgium: Parents are required to contribute to their child's education according to their means.
- France: Parents must contribute to the education and support of the child proportionally to their means and to the child's needs.
- Lithuania: Parents are obliged to "create living and studying conditions for their children that guarantee the sound and secure development

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of their mental and physical abilities" and to "co-operate with educational institutions in matters concerning their child's education."
- Portugal: The level of a child's education is dependent on the parents' economic resources.
- Switzerland: Parents must ensure the child's education with due regard to their economic situation.

Q2: *What is the legal source of this right and obligation?*

The most common legal sources of the parental right and duty to provide a child's education in the legal systems analyzed are provisions found in:

- children/family/parental responsibility codes or acts (Bulgaria, Denmark, England & Wales, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, and Sweden);
- constitutions (Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, and Spain);
- civil codes (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland); and education acts (Bulgaria, Denmark, England & Wales, Ireland, Lithuania, and Poland).

Q3: *Does the law give children any ability to decide about their education?*

Most reports indicate an indirect right of the child to influence his or her educational path. Parents, who are responsible for providing the child's education, are often required to take into account: "the child's aptitudes, abilities, inclinations, and developmental capabilities" (Austria), "the child's abilities and interests" (Denmark), "the child's age, intellectual needs, abilities and aptitudes" (England & Wales), "the child's wishes and talents" (Finland), "the child's abilities and inclination" (Germany), "the child's best interests, particular capabilities and aptitudes, his or her own opinions and maturity" (Greece), "the child's views, based on his or her age and maturity" (Hungary), "the child's capacities, natural inclinations

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and aspirations" (Italy), "the child's interests, abilities, best interests and needs" (Norway), "the child's reasonable wishes" (Poland), "the child's talents and abilities" (Portugal), "the child's opinion" (Russia), "the child's age, development and other circumstances" (Sweden), "the child's welfare, abilities, predisposition and age" (Switzerland).

Only four reports indicate a direct right of the child to decide on his or her education. In Hungary, when a child reaches 12 years of age, his or her participation in decisions about education is mandatory. In Italy, a minor aged 14 or older is granted greater freedom to choose his or her educational path. In Norway, when a child reaches 15 years of age, he or she is entitled to make all decisions concerning education without parental consent. In Poland, before making decisions regarding the child's education, parents must listen to the child (if his or her mental development, health and maturity allow it) and take the child's reasonable wishes into account.

Q4: *Do the national reports refer to compulsory schooling or education duty?*

Most reports describe, in general terms, the extent of compulsory school attendance or education in their countries. In Austria, parents must register the child for school at the age of six. In Bulgaria, parents are obliged to enroll the child in school and ensure school attendance; the parental obligation to educate the child continues until the age of 16. In Denmark, when a child reaches seven years of age, parents are required to provide education at school or at home for at least nine years. In England & Wales, parents must ensure that children between the ages of 5 and 16 receive "efficient full-time education," either at school or at home; failure to fulfill this duty may result in criminal proceedings. In Finland, every child is entitled to basic free education, which usually lasts nine years beginning in the year the child turns seven.

In France, children are subject to compulsory schooling between the ages of 6 and 16, and parents are responsible for ensuring their education until the child reaches majority or is emancipated. Non-compliance with this obligation can result in criminal prosecution.In Germany, the extent

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of compulsory school attendance is defined by the public law of each *Land*. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child's education at school. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in administrative proceedings and can lead to educational measures. In Ireland, parents are required to ensure that their child attends a recognized school on a regular basis.

In Lithuania, parents are obliged to send their children to school at the age of 6 or 7 and to provide adequate learning conditions throughout the period of compulsory education (up to age 16). In Poland, a child's school duty begins at the start of the school year in the calendar year in which the child turns 7 and continues until the completion of primary school, but no longer than until the child turns 18. Parents are fully responsible for ensuring the child's regular attendance at school. In Russia, parents are obliged to ensure that the child receives "basic general education," although the report does not explain the precise meaning of this term. In Spain, teachers and school principals are required to notify public child protection authorities if a child does not habitually attend school. School non-attendance justifies intervention by child protection services.

Conclusions

The analysis of legal provisions regulating children's education indicates that in each of the 21 legal systems examined, education is considered an element of parental responsibility, authority, care or custody. Thus, the national legislation of these countries confirms the principle of the primacy of parents in educational decision-making.This principle is universally recognized and affirmed in international legal documents.

Due to editorial limits on the article's length, the author has restricted the analysis to a general overview of the regulations in 21 European countries, intended as an introduction to a more in-depth examination of issues related to children's education. In the longer term, a more detailed analysis of the legal provisions discussed, as well as other aspects of education, such as compulsory schooling, the scope of parental obligations, parental liability for non-compliance, school systems, types of schools,

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curricula, forms of cooperation between parents and teachers, and reasons for differences in national regulations appears both justified and necessary.

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Parental involvement in school education as a factor determining a child's academic success

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participation;
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academic success

Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The aim of this article is to describe parents' participation in their children's educational processes and the optimal conditions for its implementation. The research problem was defined as follows: What are the basic conditions and principles of parental participation in educational processes that give students a chance to achieve academic success?

Research methods: A literature review on the subject was conducted.

Process of argumentation: The issue of parental involvement in school life, as well as the analysis of their role and the quality of school–parent relations, is still relevant. The family and the school have been, are, and will continue to be the primary educational environments. Their activities must be integrated because their influences overlap. High-quality cooperation between parents and schools supports students' educational success and well-being. The conditions and principles of parental participation in their child's education, based on educational partnership and its benefits, have been identified.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The findings show that parents and schools must cooperate on the basis of educational partnership due to formal and legal requirements and the child's well-being. On the one hand, parental involvement in education is an individual right; on the other hand, it is a social necessity that increases a child's chances of success at school. Furthermore, given contemporary social developments, schools and families cannot fully perform their functions without close cooperation.

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Conclusions and/or recommendations: The task of modern education is to prepare children for life in a rapidly changing world. This responsibility lies primarily with schools and families; thus, it is important for these two fundamental environments to work together consistently. This cooperation is a duty and a necessity, as well as an opportunity to support children's educational success. However, certain rules and conditions must be observed in this collaboration. Therefore, it is necessary to educate students, school personnel (beginning at the university level), school leadership, and parents about the value of cooperation and the ability to build partnership-oriented relationships.

Introduction

Polish schools face a variety of challenges today. The overriding value of school education should be to ensure the proper, holistic development of students. Schools must therefore be safe and supportive environments where students have opportunities to prepare for the demands of the labor market, to engage in lifelong learning and self-development, and to cope with constant change and crisis. Parents should be involved in creating a school that provides conditions for students to grow into independent adults because it is essential to integrate the activities of the various entities whose influences intersect (Mazurkiewicz, 2016; Socha-Kołodziej, 1999–2000–2001). The family and the school have been, are, and will continue to be the primary educational environments. Consequently, collaboration between schools and families has long been an area of interest for researchers. The first discussions of this topic appeared at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries (Vegio and Vives). In the 20th and 21st centuries in Poland, scholars such as Helena Radlińska, Mikołaj Winiarski, Aleksander Kamiński, Mieczysław Łobocki, Ryszard Wroczyński, Henryk Smarzyński, Krzysztof Jakubiak, Bogusław Śliwerski, and Maria Mendel, among others, addressed this issue (Olechowska, 2017).

The aim of this article is to present the principles and conditions of parental participation, one of the three key groups engaged in everyday school life and directly involved in their children's educational progress. In pedagogy, it is widely held that high-quality cooperation between parents and schools supports the educational success and well-being of the

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youngest generation. Therefore, the following research question was posed: What are the basic conditions and principles of parental participation in educational processes that give students a chance to achieve academic success? The literature analysis method was used.

Cooperation between parents and schools, educational partner-ship and participation –definitions

In the literature on the relationship between parents and teachers, many terms are used: cooperation, collaboration, partnership, and participation—often as synonyms, even though each carries slightly different shades of meaning. Cooperation is understood as a process in which the parties involved (teachers and parents) actively work together, exchanging information, sharing experiences, and undertaking joint activities to support a child's development and education (Musiał, 2024, p. 128). It is a concept broader than collaboration, which refers to activities carried out jointly to achieve a common goal and is based on mutual trust and loyalty. It involves constructive interaction in which both parties make shared efforts to stimulate and support the child's development and education at every stage of life (Gulczyńska et al., 2020).

According to Ewa Musiał (2024), partnership (in the field of education) refers to the equality or equivalence of the parties—partners working together to achieve goals related to a child's education. All participants take part in dialogue, mutual assistance, and joint decision-making on an equal footing. Mieczysław Łobocki (1985) noted that partnership should be conceived as one of the principles of cooperation between teachers and parents, since both are equally responsible for the child in terms of rights and obligations.

Educational partnership is a model of cooperation (Karbowniczek, 2016; Mendel, 2000) based on joint activity among the family, school, and local community. It is founded on trust, autonomy, respect for the independence of each community, and the development of both the individual and the collective. It involves granting equal rights and responsibilities

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to all parties, respecting one another's competencies, treating each other as equals, pursuing a common goal, and sharing mutual responsibility for the task at hand. It is based on equality and reciprocity in relationships and interactions between the parties and comprises three levels:

1. The level of attitude, which involves openness and respect, wisdom and perseverance, understanding and reciprocity, voluntariness, solidarity, integrity, and a recognition of each participant's subjectivity;
2. The level of action, which requires effort and commitment, goodwill, co-decision-making and cooperation, maintaining boundaries of common sense, prudence and tact, pursuing shared goals, jointly seeking solutions in line with expectations and resources, and meeting both individual and community needs;
3. The level of relationships, in which mutual acceptance, authenticity, cooperative communication and dialogue, empathy, willingness to compromise and negotiate, a positive emotional climate, and the pursuit of stable and secure relationships are essential. Partnership is a relationship in which both parties interact and shape the educational process by sharing knowledge, experience, and perspectives (Mendel, 2000). All of this is aimed at increasing the chances of academic success and promoting the mental well-being of children and young people.

The concept of *participation* is described as unclear (Kołodziejczyk, 2011, p. 180). In a narrow sense, it refers to involvement in decision-making processes that affect the future situation of those who make the decisions, while in a broader sense it refers to the planning and implementation of specific policies (Mendel, 2002). Jakub Kołodziejczyk (2011, p. 181) identifies several ways of understanding and practicing participation, "arranged hierarchically, from those accompanied by the lowest level (or lack) of power and responsibility to those with the full range, for example, listening, supporting the presentation of a point of view, taking a point of view into account when making decisions, inclusion in the decision-making process, having the power to make decisions, and taking responsibility."

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There are various dimensions of participation. The first is the formal–organizational dimension, which refers to the accepted or imposed conditions that determine the procedures for the participation of different groups in school management. The subjective dimension concerns the identification of groups that are granted participation rights (e.g., teachers, parents, students, the local community), while the objective dimension relates to the specific areas of school functioning within which individuals and groups participate in decision-making. The final dimension is the competence dimension, which determines the extent to which individuals and groups can participate in decision-making based on their rights (Kołodziejczyk, 2011; Mendel, 2002).

The Education System Act (1991, as amended) guarantees parents the right to participate in decisions on fundamental aspects of school functioning. The state's requirements for schools do not include any direct references to parental participation in school processes. However, there are indications of the need for active involvement. In the section on the role of the school or institution in the local community, we find the expectation that "Parents are partners of the school," which includes the following requirements:

1. the school or institution obtains and uses parents' opinions about its work (parents share their opinions about the school and the teaching process; parents' opinions influence the school's activities);
2. parental support in upbringing (the school supports parents in upbringing; parents are informed about their children's development); and
3. parents have a voice in matters concerning the school or institution and participate in activities undertaken (parents participate in activities organized by the school; parents participate in decisions concerning school life) (Regulation of the Minister of National Education, 2009, as amended).

Although the 2009 regulations have been revised, these changes have been evolutionary, and the provisions concerning consultative and

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decision-making participation, as well as parental involvement in school activities, have remained unchanged. Thus, parental participation stems chiefly from formal and legal regulations. However, research shows that creating favorable conditions for cooperation between schools and parents in Poland is still in its early stages (Kołodziejczyk et al., 2012; Kołodziejczyk & Walczak, 2021).

Katarzyna Socha-Kołodziej (1999–2000–2001, p. 762), pointing to types of participation by parents and teachers in the joint education and upbringing of children, distinguished between active and passive parental participation. The first type occurs when parents voluntarily engage in school and classroom activities, and the family becomes an environment that supports the child's learning: parents help, explain, and monitor schoolwork. In this case, teachers are involved by parents. The second type refers to situations in which parents are involved by the teacher, and the school becomes the main learning environment. Teachers voluntarily participate in this cooperative process, encouraging parents to take action by providing information and inviting them to participate in decisions about school or class matters.

Parental involvement in everyday school life as a form of participation

Parental involvement in school life is conceived in many ways. In the literature on the subject, it most often refers to parents' participation in educational processes and school experiences, as well as their efforts to support their children in the learning process. Emphasis is placed on parents' agency, along with their subjectivity and partnership in the school–home relationship (Kołodziejczyk & Walczak, 2021). According to Anna Górka-Strzałkowska (2019), involvement indicates identification with a given area, incorporation of it into one's sphere of interest, and demonstrates a strong and lasting motivation to be active, associated with the adoption of shared values and ideals. Full engagement is expressed through a specific way of thinking, experiencing, evaluating, and acting

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toward the child, which changes depending on the stage of development. Parental engagement refers to parents' participation in their children's education and aims to support their academic and social success.

In discussing parental involvement, a distinction is made between *involvement* and *engagement*. According to Joanna Kołodziejczyk and Bartłomiej Walczak (2021, p. 50), parental involvement indicates an asymmetrical relationship between the school and parents, in which the school controls the relationship and the flow of information provided to parents. Communication is therefore usually one-way: the school informs parents of its expectations and initiates the situations in which parents participate (e.g., meetings). Parental engagement, by contrast, constitutes a partnership between the school and parents, with communication based on dialogue. It also involves joint activities, with the possibility for cooperation initiatives to come from parents as well. In this model, parents enjoy greater autonomy and influence over their child's education.

Parental involvement in everyday school life is a process that usually begins with parents as passive recipients of information and participants in school events. Over time, they begin to engage in cooperation and dialogue with teachers, forming a partnership through which they can jointly make decisions about their children's education, supporting their development while also developing themselves. Joyce L. Epstein (2001) argues that involvement should be considered from three interrelated perspectives: school, family, and local community, within which partnerships are built. Parents are viewed as important partners for the school, with the capacity to create grassroots initiatives. Epstein developed a synthetic classification of six types of parental involvement in children's education:

- Type I: Parenting – support provided by the school to assist parents in their child's education, along with parents' commitment to creating favorable learning conditions at home;
- Type II: Communicating – communication between the school and parents, including various forms of information exchange and discussions concerning the curriculum and the child's academic progress;

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- Type III: Volunteering – parents' voluntary activities within the school;
- Type IV: Learning at home – parents' participation in homework and in supporting their child's learning at home;
- Type V: Decision making – involving parents in school decision-making, including school management processes and conflict resolution;
- Type VI: Collaborating with the community – identifying and integrating local community resources, incorporating the contributions and needs of local businesses and institutions into educational programs, and making the school available to local communities after school hours.

This model is valuable because, on the one hand, it acknowledges multiple areas of parental involvement—from the most basic, the home, to the school and the local community—without which it is practically impossible to raise the youngest generation today, given the rapid sociocultural changes occurring worldwide and the new challenges that they generate. On the other hand, it emphasizes parental involvement in school life as well as the possibility for parents to take initiative and become active partners, implementing grassroots ideas to increase their child's chances of success.

Parental participation in education – principles, conditions, and benefits

For parental participation in education to be successful, certain rules and conditions that are conducive to cooperation and support the development of an educational partnership must be met. First, it is necessary to identify all the possibilities and resources of those involved in the cooperation, which includes teachers' acceptance of parents as potential advisers and experts, as well as openness to parents' expectations regarding their children's education and respect for their right to co-decision. An important condition for cooperation is viewing parents as allies of the school and teachers and recognizing them as the primary educators of their

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children. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the school should serve as a support to the family. It is extremely important to select a variety of traditional (e.g., parent–teacher conferences, lectures) and innovative (e.g., RUN meetings, class blogs, Service Learning, tutoring) forms of collaboration. These should be carefully considered, properly planned (with respect for time), jointly agreed upon, and satisfactory for both communities (Nadolnik, 2014; Zyzik, 2011).

The teacher's role is crucial in processes of cooperation and partnership: teachers are facilitators in creating a culture of collaboration. They are responsible for engaging parents in the educational process and should initiate cooperation, create favorable conditions for its implementation by building an appropriate climate and relationships, and consolidate shared knowledge and experience (Musiał, 2024). At the same time, cooperation between the school and the family requires allowing space for independence, creativity, and initiative on the part of parents. The real influence of parents on the functioning of the school and its outcomes is also emphasized.[1]

An important element of success in this area is the school's openness to parents and its willingness to enter into dialogue with them to establish common goals and values, identify areas of mutual interdependence, and recognize shared benefits. This approach leads to the development of a sound and fruitful culture of cooperation (Mendel, 2000). An essential condition is the acceptance by all parties of the norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that guide cooperation with others: mutual support, the joint search for solutions to shared problems, the collective celebration of successes, and learning from others and through the experiences of others (Tłuściak-Deliowska & Dernowska, 2016). A culture of cooperation is strengthened by adhering to certain principles, such as mutual trust, positive motivation, partnership, unity of action, and active, systematic collaboration (Łobocki, 1985).

[1] Such opportunities arise from the establishment of a School Council, which provides a chance to truly recognise and respect individual and common interests, and allows parents to participate in decision-making and influence the course of everyday school life (Socha-Kołodziej, 1999-2000-2001).

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A shared concern for creating a favorable learning environment at school and at home, one that provides positive emotional conditions for acquiring knowledge and skills and in which everyone feels valued and understood, becomes an important goal of joint family and school efforts and a catalyst for healthy parent–teacher relationships. Andragocentrism (an excessive emphasis on adults), which sidelines or minimizes the child's role in these processes, can pose a threat to such relationships. The goal of cooperation is always the child's well-being. It should also be noted that many myths and stereotypes exist between schools and families that disrupt partnership relations. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness and shift the mindset of those involved in cooperation, moving beyond entrenched patterns and stereotypes. The source of such change and the means of overcoming obstacles in this area lie in the knowledge and education of all participants (Mendel, 2000).

The implementation of educational partnership in practice and the specific involvement of parents in education bring measurable results. Through contact with teachers, parents gain more information about their children, which leads to a better understanding of them, increased trust in them, and a reduction in disciplinary measures. It also strengthens parents' sense of agency in their parental role, their sense of security and understanding in interactions with teachers, their parenting skills, and their sense of being important and needed at school. Cooperation also makes parents more likely to seek help in difficult situations. Understanding the mutual expectations of parents and teachers makes it easier to develop a shared vision for the child's education at home and at school.

Teachers, like parents, gain more knowledge about the child, which promotes understanding of the child's situation and facilitates teaching and educational efforts. Cooperation also contributes to a greater sense of security, better understanding of teachers' actions by parents, the ability to adjust educational practices, better responsiveness to children's needs, and the development of their interests. It provides opportunities to obtain parental support in bringing out a student's individual potential, taking joint action in difficult situations, and overcoming educational problems. Moreover, involving parents in school life, including preventive and

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compensatory activities, helps them understand what is happening at school and increases their trust in teachers, building a positive atmosphere in the classroom. Cooperation between teachers and parents facilitates the resolution of conflicts and misunderstandings, increases their sense of responsibility toward the student and the class as a whole, and promotes shared responsibility for the educational process. It also gives both groups the opportunity to extend the continuity of their own learning and development.

Children also benefit from this cooperation. Effective collaboration allows them to discover and develop their potential and to better understand their abilities and skills. A positive perception of the parent–teacher relationship enhances the child's relationship with both parent and teacher. Children become more willing to ask for help, adapt more quickly to new situations, and are more open to new challenges. Such cooperation fosters positive attitudes toward school, a willingness to attend and support it, a sense of being heard and valued. It strengthens concentration, improves learning outcomes, boosts motivation to study and fulfill school responsibilities and contributes to better behavior (Musiał, 2024; Zalewska-Bujak, 2020).

School success of pupils in the context of parental involvement in education

Research shows a clear relationship between students' educational outcomes and their parents' cooperation with the school (Mendel, 2000; Musiał, 2024; Zalewska-Bujak, 2020). Good relations between the family and the school create opportunities for teachers and parents to continuously improve as educators responsible for the comprehensive development of students and their satisfaction with learning. Since school and home are the two primary educational environments that most strongly influence the youngest generation, cooperation should begin when the child first enters school and continue regularly throughout the entire period of education. Therefore, the more often parents and teachers work

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together—agreeing on the scope and nature of school expectations, as well as on how these expectations are to be met, consulting about the child's progress, and coordinating educational measures—the more beneficial it is for the student's development and academic achievements. Joint activities help develop the student's potential, sustain their cognitive engagement and motivation to learn, and increase their chances of success. Children are also more willing to attend a school where they feel that they have the opportunity to succeed (Szempruch, 2005).

What is academic success? Traditionally, it is defined as meeting the requirements of the education system, which includes acquiring knowledge, developing new skills, and achieving academic competences (Musiał, 2017). In everyday school life, success is measured by grades, exam results, promotion to the next grade, attendance, and participation in competitions and school contests. Success varies depending on the stage of education, the student's characteristics and individual traits, the support provided by the family environment, and the interaction between these two spheres. The school environment is also an important factor.

Another approach describes academic success in objective and subjective terms (Nikel et al., 2024). Objective (subject-specific) academic success occurs when a student is able to meet the expectations set by the school. From this perspective, academic success is characterized by clearly defined educational requirements that focus on the development of knowledge and academic skills. It is also quantifiable (allowing for progress assessment and comparison) and is largely dependent on students' innate abilities and their environmental resources (e.g., family). The most common measure of academic success is the grades that a student receives. Assessing a student's progress enables more effective teaching tailored to their strengths and weaknesses.

The subjective dimension, on the other hand, refers to the student's individual perspective on school and the tasks performed there: how they feel in the school environment and how they perceive it. A defining feature of this form of success is that the student determines what success means for themselves. The effort that a student puts into acquiring knowledge can be an indicator of school success. In this dimension, success

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includes developing one's potential and abilities, meeting individual needs, maintaining positive relationships with peers and teachers, and experiencing well-being at school. It takes into account the student's emotions and perceptions in the school setting. Furthermore, success is defined as taking on challenges regardless of the final result; therefore, it can be achieved by students with varying levels of ability. It may also be expressed as overcoming difficulties and experiencing well-being at school.

These two dimensions of school success overlap, so it is important to consider both when working with students. Doing so enables them to develop more fully and derive greater satisfaction from learning (Nikel et al., 2024). The family situation, including parental involvement in education and their influence on the child, plays a significant role in the child's approach to learning. "The atmosphere in the family and the sense of security that it provides largely determine the direction of development and the goals that a child sets for themselves. It is the parents who shape their child's attitude toward acquiring knowledge about the world, teach them independence in action and thinking, and pass on patterns of behavior in difficult situations. (…) A particularly important task for parents is to develop the need to learn" and to support the child in developing motivation to act and a sense of influence over their environment (Ochojska et al., 2017, pp. 236–238).

Conclusion

The contemporary task of the school is to educate individuals in ways that prepare them for life in a rapidly changing world and for creative participation in society. Therefore, schools must become more open to creating conditions that allow students to achieve substantive educational and social outcomes. This applies not only to exceptionally gifted students but also to entirely average ones, because all learners want, and should be able to, achieve academic success commensurate with their resources and abilities (Musiał, 2017). Achieving success helps children

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function better in their roles, strengthens their self-esteem and self-worth, increases their motivation to work, and enhances their sense of agency and competence.

Creating an optimal environment for every student to achieve academic success also requires systematic, timely, and transparent cooperation between the family and the school, involving parents in the daily life of the school. A child's potential does not develop automatically; it unfolds in response to environmental stimuli that guide, expand, and, when necessary, set limits. This is why it is so important for these two fundamental educational environments to work together consistently on the basis of educational partnership.

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Educational partnership in primary schools in light of the experiences of parents of students in grades 1–4

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school–family partnership, family, problem, mystery, Gabriel Marcel, Jean Lacroix

Abstract

Research objective: The pilot study aimed to gather parents' opinions on the implementation of the educational partnership concept in selected schools.

The research problem and methods: The research problem was formulated as follows: How do parents of students in grades 1–4 perceive the implementation of the educational partnership concept in primary schools? A diagnostic survey was conducted using an original questionnaire with a 5-point response scale. The research material was analyzed using statistical methods.

Structure of the article: The introduction refers to the humanistic principles underlying contemporary educational concepts. The essence of educational partnership is discussed, with an emphasis on the relationship between the school and parents. The subjects of cooperation, determinants of partnership relationships, and factors that may pose a threat to them are identified. The discussion is situated in the context of partnership models developed by Joyce L. Epstein and Urie Bronfenbrenner. The following section presents the methodological assumptions, statistical analysis results, and a discussion of the findings and conclusions.

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Research results and their impact on the development of pedagogical sciences: Parents positively evaluate educational partnership across all key components (communication, cooperation, trust, and the nature of the relationship). They trust the school, feel like co-decision-makers in matters concerning their child, and receive the necessary support from teachers. Communication with teachers takes the form of dialogue. The findings expand knowledge in the field of educational partnership and serve as a reference point for further comparative studies.

Conclusions, innovations, and recommendations: Although the results confirm the implementation of educational partnerships, it should be noted that some parents expressed less positive assessments. This indicates the need to continue efforts to optimize school–parent relationships and to identify parents' needs regarding communication with the school.

Introduction

The transformations currently taking place in Polish schools, following the adoption of humanistic principles that promote ideas of subjectivity, freedom, and attention to students' needs, have contributed to the democratization of relationships between teachers, students, and parents. Implementing the postulate of supporting the comprehensive development of the student, which is the primary goal of education, requires engagement from both the school and the child's wider environment. The possibility of a child's full and uninterrupted development lies in the coordination of the school's educational efforts with those of its environment. This premise underlies the concept of educational partnership.

The essence of educational partnership

Educational partnership refers to the network of interactions among three educational entities: students, teachers, and parents, united by a shared goal (Karbowniczek, 2016; Janke, 2002; Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000) and carried out at the intersection of two social systems: the school system and the family system. The objective is the child's comprehensive development. Partnership is a particular way of organizing mutual relationships:

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its principles are realized through activity, multidirectional communication, and negotiation (Mendel, 2009). It may take the form of joint action or the inclusion of one party in the initiatives of the other (Janke, 2002), although the optimal form is collaborative action by both partners, based on co-decision-making and the development of constructive solutions in pursuit of agreed-upon goals.

Partnership is defined by the nature of interpersonal relationships among the entities involved. In the school environment, such relationships exist 1) between teachers and students, 2) between teachers and parents, and 3) between parents and children. A prerequisite for building constructive relationships is a pedagogical orientation toward the developmental well-being of the student (Kunowski, 2004). An optimal partnership between school and family is supported by trust, cooperation, shared goals, and co-decision-making. Collaboration mainly concerns school matters, such as agreeing on requirements and conditions for their fulfillment, determining educational strategies, and providing information about the child's progress (Szempruch, 2009).

The course of the partnership is shaped by a positive emotional attitude among those involved, the demonstration of respect, a willingness to cooperate, and a sense of responsibility (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000). The nature of communication is especially important. Sandra Christenson et al. (2009) emphasize that true partnership is based on the exchange of information between teachers and parents and on dialogue aimed at developing beneficial modifications to interactions with children, taking into account cultural differences and overcoming barriers (such as stereotypes, limited communication skills, and assigning blame instead of seeking solutions).

A partnership relationship is not facilitated by one-way communication from teachers, such as sending notes or information focused only on the child's (often negatively assessed) behavior, nor by prioritizing one's own concerns while disregarding the needs of parents and children (Christenson et al., 2009). Other factors identified as threats to partnership include rivalry, dominance, directiveness, reactivity, irregular contact, entitlement, authoritarianism, rigidity, lack of openness to dialogue,

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monologic and transmissive communication models, fear, stress, limited communication skills, and difficulty organizing meetings (Karbowniczek, 2016).

Selected models of educational partnership

In the school–family partnership model, the student is placed at the center, viewed as an autonomous subject who shapes their own school experience (development, achievements, success). Joyce L. Epstein (1992, 1995; Epstein & Sheldon, 2019), in developing a model of partnership among the family, school, and local community, identifies six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the local community. Support in the area of parenting involves helping families create an optimal home environment. It includes educating parents about parenting practices, assisting with learning and the development of the child's abilities, and raising awareness of the ways in which the school and family are interconnected.

Communication concerns the forms and techniques used to exchange information between the school and the family about the child's school situation: educational needs, achievements, social functioning, developmental paths, as well as programs and forms of instruction. Volunteering involves organizing opportunities for parents to assist at school, at home, or in other settings, such as picking up students, helping organize field trips, and supporting school events. The area of learning at home concerns providing parents with information about academic requirements and guidance on how to support learning, exam preparation, and other curriculum-related tasks.

Decision-making involves including parents in processes related to matters concerning their children, such as school safety initiatives. Collaboration with the community focuses on identifying and integrating resources and services available in the local environment to strengthen the implementation of school programs (Epstein, 1992, 1995; Epstein

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& Sheldon, 2019). According to Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, child development is viewed through the lens of environmental influences. Educational partnership encompasses interactions that occur at the level of the microsystem, the setting closest to the child and parent. According to Bronfenbrenner, the effectiveness of educational partnership depends on:

1. Mutuality, meaning the sharing of experiences, joint efforts in building a community of relationships and actions for mutual benefit, and the development of relationships based on equality, understanding, trust, and shared goals;
2. Reciprocity, meaning the equal exchange of "goods"—feelings, actions, benefits, information—through a balanced and fair exchange of care, attention, and effort; it includes reciprocating respect and acknowledging the competencies of one's interaction partner;
3. Shared decision-making.

In light of these assumptions, partnership is understood as a relationship in which parents and educators value each other's contributions to the child's development and recognize the role of each party, sharing observations and striving for a multidimensional understanding of the child's needs. It is based on trust and joint decision-making through open communication, with mutual respect for all interaction partners (Rouse & O'Brien, 2017).

Research assumptions

The study was pilot in nature, and its subject was the implementation of the concept of educational partnership in contemporary schools. An attempt was made to define this concept from the parents' perspective. It was assumed that the key determinant of partnership is the nature of the relationships established between the school (teacher/educator) and the parent. This refers to the pedagogical relationship, which

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presupposes intentional collaboration aimed at supporting the child's (student's) personal development (Jeziorański, 2022).

The aim of the research was to determine how parents of early-grade students assess the implementation of the principles of educational partnership in their collaboration with the school, particularly in relation to their children's education and school experience. The research problem was formulated as follows: How do parents of students in grades 1–4 perceive the implementation of the educational partnership concept in primary schools?

Variables and indicators

Independent variables included in the study:

- Parent-related variables: gender, age, education (primary, vocational, secondary, higher)
- Child-related variables: gender, grade level
- Place of residence

Dependent variables: forms of communication, communication quality, cooperation, trust, and the nature of relationships. Indicators are presented in the description of the research results.

Methods, techniques, research tools

A diagnostic survey method was used, employing a questionnaire as the research technique. An original tool was developed: a questionnaire for parents of students in grades 1–4. It contains 32 single-response items formulated as affirmative statements, with a five-point response scale:

1 – completely disagree,
2 – disagree,
3 – no opinion,

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4 – agree,
5 – completely agree.

The reliability of the tool was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, α = 0.923.

The research was conducted online using a Google Forms questionnaire, which was distributed through the electronic school journal.

Sample characteristics

The respondents were parents of students in grades 1–4, n = 125. Demographic characteristics are shown in the tables below.

Table 1. Gender, age, and place of residence of parents, n = 123

Variable	Gender			Age				Place of residence			
	Woman	Man	No data	Under 30 years old	30-40	40-50	Over 50	Rural area	Small city	Medium city	Large city
n	108	15	2	3	74	44	4	95	6	16	8
%	86	12	1.6	2.4	59	35	3.2	76	4.8	12	6.4

Table 2. Parents' education, n = 125

	Primary education	Vocational	Secondary	Higher education
Mother	3	6	37	79
Father	NA	23	48	54
n	3	29	85	133
%	1.2	11.6	34.0	53.2

Table 3. Grade level and gender of the child, n = 125

Variable	Child's gender		Grade			
	Girls	Boys	1	I2	3	4
n	56	69	34	37	23	29
%	44.8	55.2	27.6	30.1	18.7	23.6

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Statistical procedure

The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis. Basic descriptive statistics were used to characterize the variables. Comparisons of grade levels based on the scores obtained for each indicator were performed using the Kruskal–Wallis H test. The Mann–Whitney U test was used to examine differences between two groups, as the assumption of normal distribution was not met.

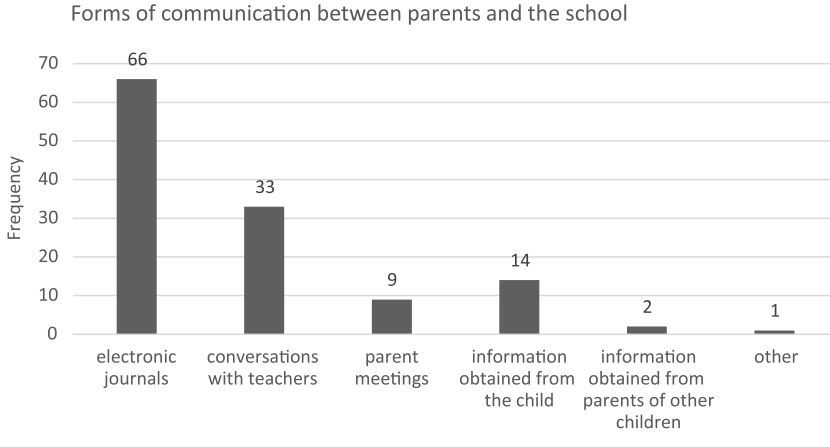
Implementation of educational partnership in parents' assessments – research findings

The implementation of the idea of educational partnership was evaluated based on parents' assessments of its four components: communication, cooperation, trust, and the nature of the relationship.

Communication between the school and the parent

Respondents were asked about the forms of communication used with the school. The results are shown in Chart 1.

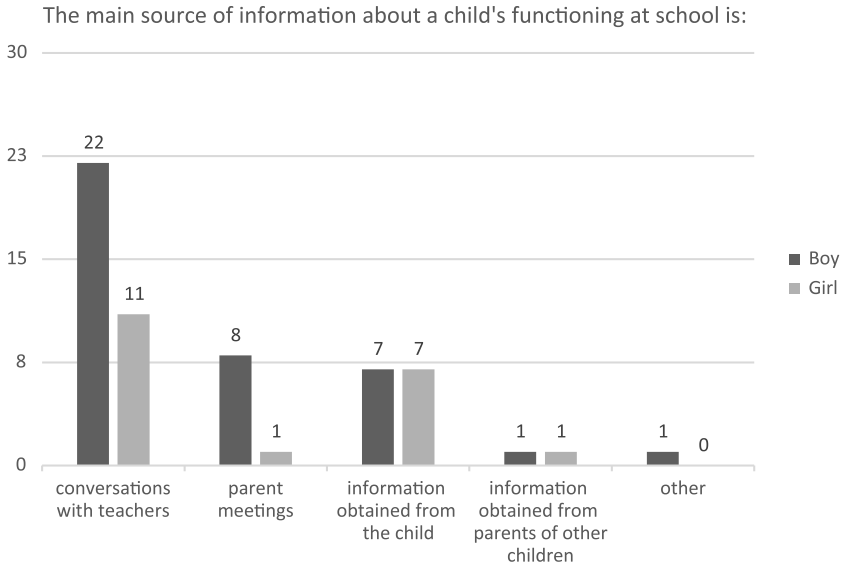
Chart 1. Forms of communication between parents and the school



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Two main sources of information about the child's functioning in the school environment were identified: electronic journals (66 respondents) and conversations with teachers (33 respondents). Analysis using the Mann–Whitney rank-sum test showed that the scores of parents of boys were higher (M_{rang}= 68.41) than those of parents of girls (M_{rang} = 56.34), with the differences being statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Parents of boys are more likely to contact the teacher directly (e.g., by phone) compared with parents of girls (see Chart 2).

Chart 2. Sources of information versus the child's gender, n = 125

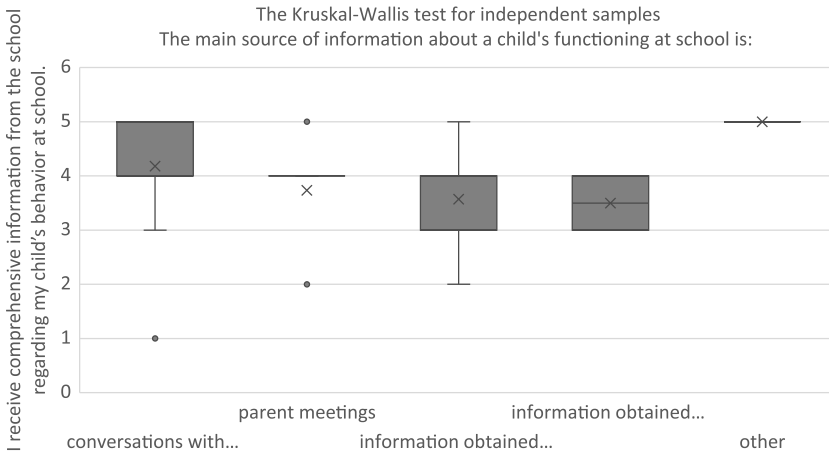


To test for differences between the type of information about the child and the source from which it was obtained, the Kruskal–Wallis test for independent samples was conducted. Significant differences were found between the number of indications for the electronic journal and for conversations with teachers, $p = 0.001$ (after applying the Bonferroni correction). Information is obtained more often through conversations with teachers than through the electronic journal.

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Chart 3. Type of information about the child vs. source of information



The quality of communication between the parent and the school was assessed using the following indicators:

1. the provision of information about the child's school situation (educational achievements, needs, social functioning);
2. whether communication is one-way or two-way;
3. the provision of information about school programs, methods and forms of instruction, and the rules for assessing and verifying knowledge.

Parents evaluate communication with the school positively when it comes to obtaining information about their child's school situation. This is borne out by the mean values obtained for each indicator and in the left-skewed distributions, which indicate that most responses are above the average (Table 4).

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Table 4. Provision of information about the child's school situation

Descriptive statistics		a.	b.	c.	d.
N	Valid	125	125	125	125
	No data	0	0	0	0
Average		3.81	4.05	3.74	3.86
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Dominant		4	4	4	4
Standard deviation		1.090	.958	1.069	.877
Skewness		-1.051	-1.329	-.637	-.806
Standard error of the skewness		.217	.217	.217	.217

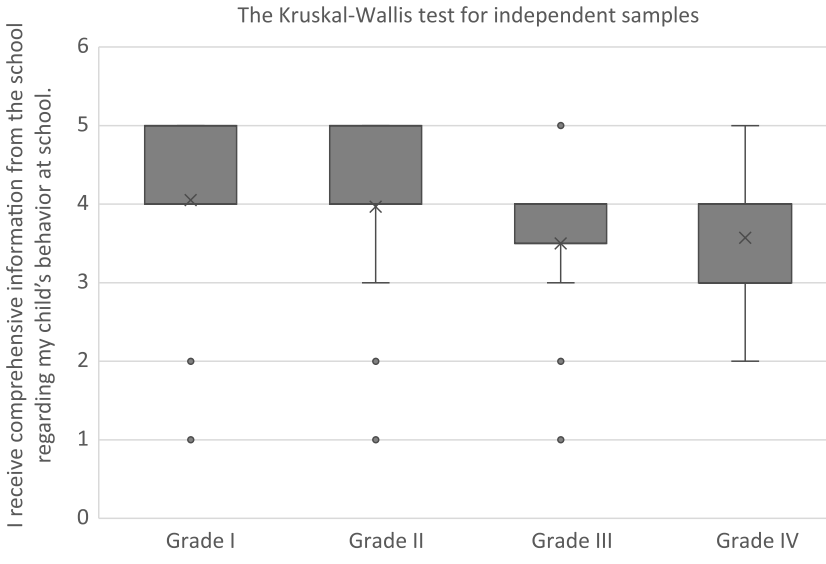
a. I receive comprehensive information from the school regarding my child's behavior at school,
b. I receive comprehensive information from the school regarding my child's academic performance,
c. I receive comprehensive information from the school regarding my child's learning difficulties,
d. I have a good understanding of my child's school-related matters through cooperation with the educator/teachers.

Comparisons between grade levels made using the Kruskal–Wallis test for independent samples revealed significant differences in parents' assessments of information received about their child's behavior in 1st and 4th grade: $p < 0.05$ (after applying the Bonferroni correction). Parents of first-graders rated the information that they received in this area more positively than parents of fourth graders (Chart 4). These differences may result from the transition in the form of instruction—from integrated teaching to subject-based teaching. The increase in the number of teachers working with fourth-grade students, along with the change of homeroom teacher, may contribute to a weakening of parents' contact with the school (although this hypothesis requires separate research).

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Chart 4. Reporting on a child's school behavior – comparison of mean values across grade levels



Significant differences also appeared in the evaluations provided by parents of first- and third-grade students regarding the receipt of comprehensive information about their child's academic performance, $p < 0.05$ (after the Bonferroni correction). Parents of first graders gave higher ratings than parents of third graders.

The results for the remaining indicators of the variable *parent–school communication* are summarized in Table 5.

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Table 5. Descriptive statistics

Variables		One-way, one-sided communication		Providing information on school programs, methods of teaching and testing knowledge, and rules of assessment		
Descriptive statistics		a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
N	Valid	125	125	125	125	125
	No data	0	0	0	0	0
Average		3.22	2.77	3.60	3.40	3.50
Median		3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Dominant		4	3	4	4	4
Standard deviation		.999	.917	1.070	1.063	1.104
Skewness		-.120	.033	-.666	-.451	-.594
Standard error of the skewness		.217	.217	.217	.217	.217

a. The school mainly contacts me about difficulties concerning my child.
b. In their interactions with me, teachers focus on their own needs and preferences in the teaching process.
c. The school keeps me informed about both my child's successes and failures.
d. I receive comprehensive information from the school regarding the curriculum being implemented.
e. I receive comprehensive information from the school on how my child's achievements are assessed.

Parents view communication with the school positively when it comes to receiving information about the school curriculum, as well as the methods and rules for verifying knowledge and assessment. This is demonstrated by the mean values for the indicators—"I receive comprehensive information from the school regarding the curriculum," "I receive comprehensive information from the school regarding the methods of assessing my child's performance," and "The school informs me about both my child's successes and failures", and by the left-skewed distributions, which indicate that most responses fall above the average.

Parents' opinions on the direction of communication are less favorable. Most respondents stated that the main reason that the school contacts them is their child's difficulties: their responses clustered around 3 ("neutral") and 4 ("agree"), and the left-skewed distribution again shows that most responses are above the average. This suggests the presence of one-way communication from the school, usually initiated only when problems arise.

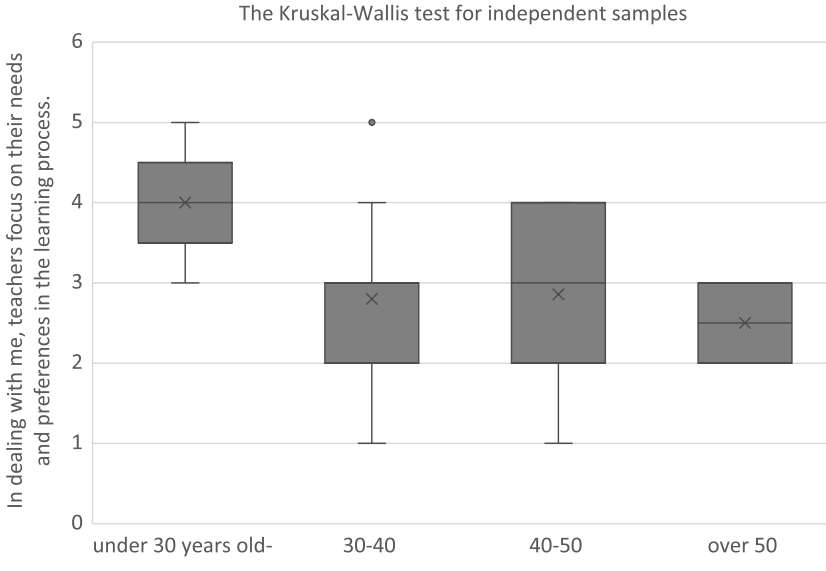
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In contrast, for the statement "In their interactions with me, teachers focus on their own needs and preferences in the teaching process," most respondents selected 3 ("neutral") or 2 ("disagree"). The mean score was 2.77, and the right-skewed distribution indicates that most responses fall below the average. Still, a smaller portion of respondents explicitly disagreed with the presence of one-way communication: 37 people (29.6%) answered "disagree," and 10 respondents (8%) answered "strongly disagree."

It was also found that the variable *age* differentiates parents' responses to the statement "In their interactions with me, teachers focus on their own needs and preferences in the teaching process": $p < 0.05$. Respondents under the age of 30 were more likely to notice this attitude in teachers; however, this group was not representative (n = 3) (Chart 5). No significant differences were found between grade levels.

Chart 5. Parent age vs. views on teachers' focus on their own needs and preferences in the teaching process, n = 125



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Cooperation between the school and parents

Another component of the educational partnership analyzed in the study was cooperation. To determine parents' assessments, four indicators were used:

1. parents' involvement in decision-making regarding their child's education,
2. cooperation in providing educational support for the child,
3. cooperation in providing social support for the child (in interactions with peers), and
4. cooperation in organizing school events.

The descriptive statistics indicate that parents view their cooperation with the school positively in all of these areas (Table 6). The left-skewed distribution suggests that most ratings fall above the average.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for indicators of the "cooperation" variable

Descriptive statistics		a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
N	Valid	125	125	125	125	125
	No data	0	0	0	0	0
Average		3.34	3.58	3.50	3.42	3.46
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Dominant		4	4	4	4	4
Standard deviation		1.219	.977	1.021	1.226	1.195
Skewness		-.472	-.503	-.613	-.488	-.485
Standard error of the skewness		.217	.217	.217	.217	.217

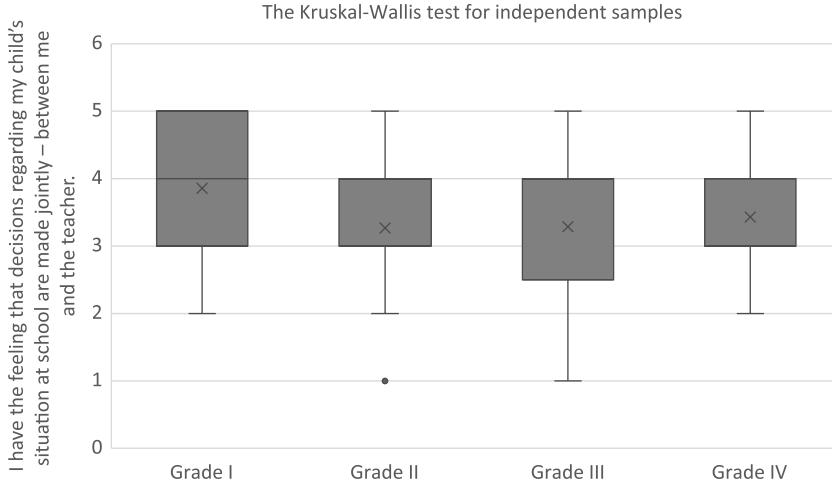
a. I influence the choice of the supplementary forms of education offered by the school (concerts, performances, exhibitions, trips, etc.).
b. I feel that decisions regarding my child's situation at school are made jointly—between me and the teacher.
c. I cooperate with the school in organizing various events.
d. I receive the necessary information from the school about ways to help my child with learning (meth ods of working with the child, material to review or supplement).
e. I receive the necessary information from the school about possible ways to support my child in interactions with peers.

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The child's grade level differentiates respondents' answers on the following indicators: "I feel that decisions regarding my child's situation at school are made jointly between me and the teacher" ($p < 0.05$)—parents of first-grade students are more likely to agree with this statement compared to other parents (see Chart 6); and "I receive the necessary information from the school about possible support for my child in interactions with peers" ($p < 0.02$)—parents of second-grade students are more likely to agree with this statement than other respondents (Chart 7).

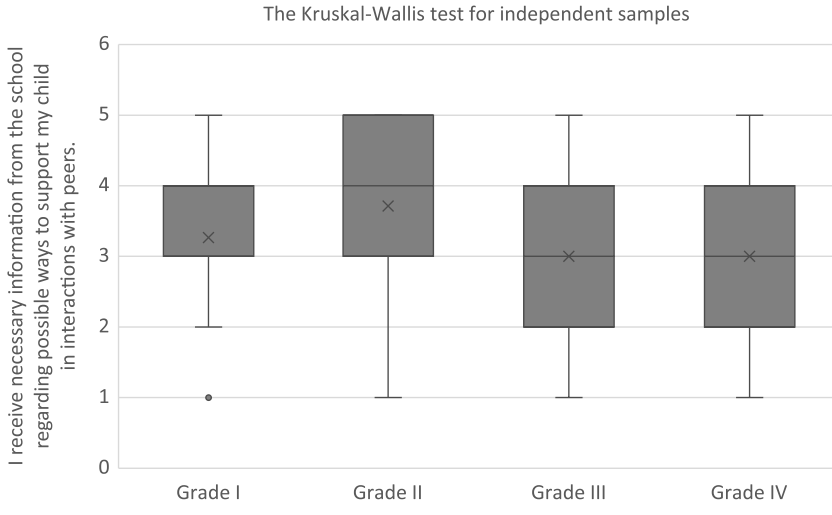
Chart 6. Grade level and agreement with the view that decisions concerning the child's school situation are made jointly by the parent and the teacher, n = 125.



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Chart 7. Grade level and parents' views on receiving the necessary information from the school about ways to support the child's interactions with peers, n = 125.



Trust of parents in the school

An important determinant of educational partnership is the trust that parents place in the school. Trust was assessed using four distinct indicators:

1. the extent to which parents feel fear in interactions with the school,
2. their sense of freedom in expressing their point of view,
3. their declared trust in the school/teachers' methods/assessment practices, and
4. their declared lack of trust or attribution of blame.

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Table 7. Descriptive statistics for the indicators of the trust variable

Descriptive statistics		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
N	Valid	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125
	No data	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average		2.34	2.96	4.15	3.55	3.52	3.68	3.59	2.22
Median		2.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	2.00
Dominant		2	4	4	4	4	4	4	2
Standard deviation		1.031	1.081	.934	1.058	1.013	.964	1.033	.885
Skewness		.585	-.270	-1.397	-.429	-.576	-.744	-.809	.765
Standard error of the skewness		.217	.217	.217	.217	.217	.217	.217	.217

a. Contact with teachers is stressful for me.
b. I feel anxious when the school contacts me.
c. I am convinced that I can talk to the class teacher about all matters concerning my child.
d. I am convinced that I can talk to all teachers about all matters concerning my child.
e. I am convinced that I will always receive support from the teachers.
f. I am confident that my child is being assessed fairly.
g. I trust the school.
h. I sometimes blame teachers for my child's failures instead of working toward a joint solution.

The results indicate that parents trust the school: they feel confident about the possibility of having a dialogue with the class teacher and other teachers regarding their child, receiving the necessary support, and the fair assessment of their child. The average values for the trust-related indicators are high (Table 7, c–g), and the left-skewed distribution suggests that most responses fall above the average. For a significant portion of respondents, contact with the school is not stressful. Furthermore, most parents do not blame teachers for their children's failures—the average values for these items show that the majority selected negative responses. The right-skewed distribution indicates that most responses fall below the average (Table 7, a, h).

Despite the declared trust in the school, some parents feel anxious when the school contacts them. The left-skewed distribution shows that most responses were above the average (Table 7, b), which means that more respondents chose "agree" or "strongly agree."

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A comparison of averages across respondent groups revealed that the variable "grade level" differentiates responses in the following indicators at a statistically significant level:

- "I am convinced that I can talk to the class teacher about all matters concerning my child," $p < 0.05$
- "I am convinced that I will always receive support from teachers." $p < 0.05$
- "I am convinced that my child is graded fairly." $p < 0.01$
- "I trust the school." $p < 0.05$

Significant differences were found between parents of first-grade students and parents of fourth-grade students regarding opinions on fair assessment, $p < 0.05$ (after applying the Bonferroni correction) (Table 7).

Table 8. Grade level of the child and parents' declarations regarding fair assessment by teachers, n = 123.

Grade level of the child		I am convinced that my child is graded fairly					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
Grade 1	Count	0	1	5	21	7	34
	%	0.0%	2.9%	14.7%	61.8%	20.6%	100.0%
Grade 2	Count	1	3	5	18	10	37
	%	2.7%	8.1%	13.5%	48.6%	27.0%	100.0%
Grade 3	Count	2	2	7	10	2	23
	%	8.7%	8.7%	30.4%	43.5%	8.7%	100.0%
Grade 4	Count	0	7	7	13	2	29
	%	0.0%	24.1%	24.1%	44.8%	6.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	13	24	62	21	123
	%	2.4%	10.6%	19.5%	50.4%	17.1%	100.0%

The variable "father's education" significantly differentiates the results for the statement: "I sometimes blame teachers for my child's failures

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instead of trying to work toward a joint solution," $p < 0.03$ after applying the Bonferroni correction. Fathers with vocational education are more than four times as likely to report assigning blame (17.3%) compared to fathers with higher education (4%). See Table 9.

Table 9. Education level and fathers' tendency to blame teachers for their child's failures, n = 123

Father's education		I sometimes blame teachers for my child's failures instead of working towards a joint solution.					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
Vocational	Count	1	11	7	3	1	23
	%	4.3%	47.8%	30.4%	13.0%	4.3%	100.0%
Secondary	Count	9	26	10	2	1	48
	%	18.8%	54.2%	20.8%	4.2%	2.1%	100.0%
Higher education	Count	13	28	9	4	0	54
	%	24.1%	51.9%	16.7%	7.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	23	65	26	9	2	125
	%	18.4%	52.0%	20.8%	7.2%	1.6%	100.0%

Age differentiates respondents' beliefs, and the differences are statistically significant for the following indicators:

- "I am confident that I can talk to the class teacher about all matters concerning my child," $p < 0.01$ – parents under the age of 30 do not share this belief, in contrast to the other respondent groups (Chart 8). However, it should be noted that this group is not representative ($n = 3$).
- " I am convinced that my child is graded fairly." $p < 0.05$ (Chart 9).
- "I tend to blame teachers for my child's failures instead of working toward a joint solution." $p < 0.05$ – as age increases, parents are less likely to agree that they blame teachers (Chart 10).

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Chart 8. Age and confidence in being able to discuss all child-related matters with the class teacher, n = 125

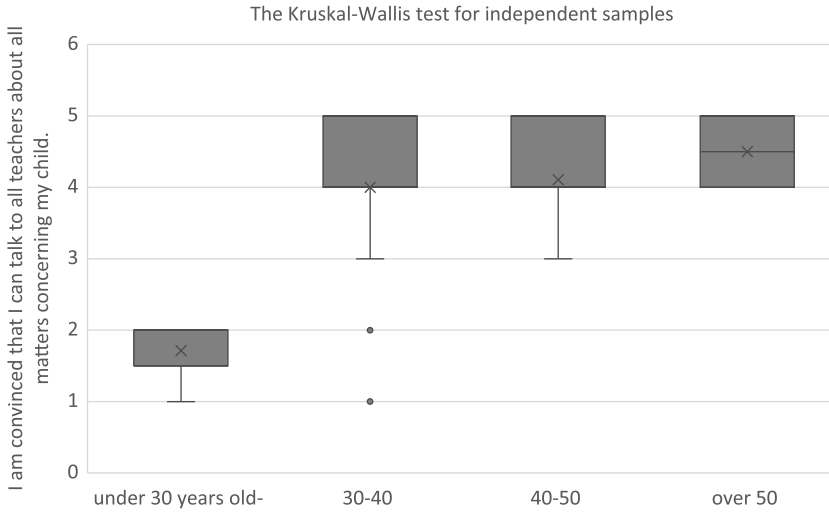
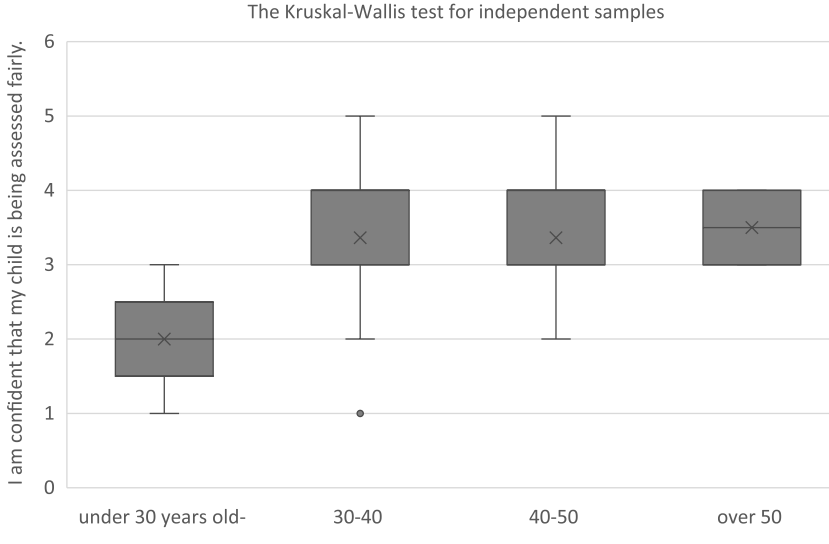


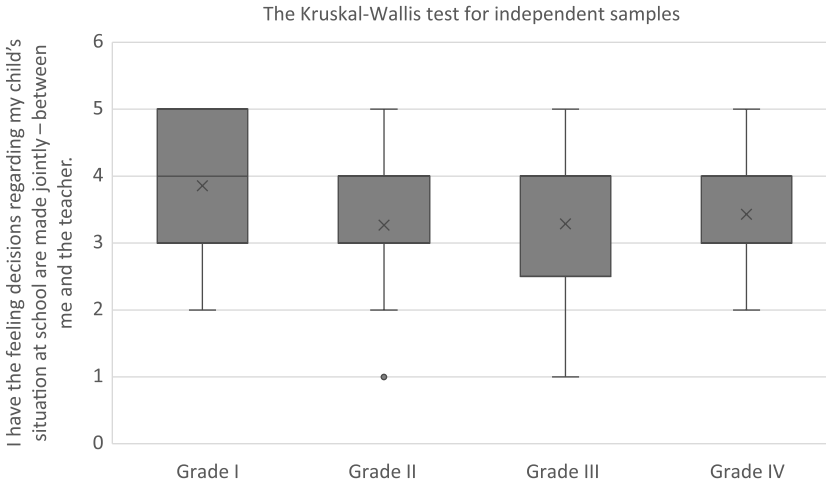
Chart 9. Age and confidence that the child is graded fairly, n = 125



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Chart 10. Age and the tendency to blame the teacher for the child's failures, n = 125



Nature of the relationship

The final component of educational partnership examined was the nature of the relationship: partnership vs. directive. Two indicators were used to assess this aspect:

a) My conversations with teachers always take the form of a partnership-based dialogue.
b) In conversations with teachers, I can freely share my observations and my point of view regarding my child's school situation. (Table 10)

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Table 10. Descriptive statistics – nature of the relationship (partnership/directive)

Descriptive statistics		a	b
N	Valid	125	125
	No data	0	0
Average		3.71	3.68
Median		4.00	4.00
Dominant		4	4
Standard deviation		.878	1.052
Skewness		-.779	-.931
Standard error of the skewness		.217	.217

a. My conversations with teachers are always characterized by a partnership-based dialogue.
b. In conversations with teachers, I can freely share my observations and points of view regarding my child's school situation.

Most parents evaluate their communication with the school as collaborative. This is evidenced by the high average values obtained. The left-skewed distributions indicate that most responses were above the mean. No significant differences in mean values were found among the analyzed groups for the examined variables.

Discussion of results and conclusions

The analyses allow for the formulation of conclusions about how parents perceive the school's implementation of educational partnership principles. These findings reflect the tendencies expressed in the respondents' assessments. Respondents evaluate educational partnership positively across all four components examined. The majority report good communication with teachers and homeroom teachers regarding all matters related to their child. They also give positive assessments of their cooperation with the school. Parents feel like co-decision-makers in matters related to their child's education and believe that the school works with

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them to support both learning and social interactions. Collaboration is bidirectional—parents also declare their involvement in organizing school events.

Parents trust the school and teachers; communication is described as dialogue-based, and the overall nature of the relationship with teachers is perceived as partnership-oriented. Although most parents state that contact with the school is not stressful, some report feeling anxious when the school reaches out. Given that several parents believe that the school contacts them mainly when difficulties arise, it can be assumed that this anxiety may stem from concerns that their child has been injured or has violated school rules. Independent variables such as gender, age, parental education, the child's grade level, place of residence, and the child's gender generally do not differentiate the results regarding partnership. The exceptions are that grade level differentiates assessments related to cooperation and trust, and parental age differentiates assessments related to communication and trust.

The findings indicate that the principles of educational partnership are being implemented in the lower grades of primary school; however, it should be noted that some parents provided negative evaluations. This suggests the need for continued efforts by schools to strengthen partnership relations and, most importantly, to identify parents' communication needs in their interactions with the school.

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Passion and resilience as important areas of family–school partnership

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passion, resilience, students, partnership, school and family

Abstract

Research aims and problems. Understanding the relationship between passion and resilience may help identify protective factors for well-being and strengthen family–school partnerships. The main objective of the study was to determine the relationship between resilience and passion. The research questions were (1) How strong is the correlation between resilience and passion in its three dimensions (personal benefits, origin, and balance with life) among students? (2) To what extent do passion and its three dimensions account for variability in students' resilience? (3) Does gender moderate the relationship between resilience and passion and its three dimensions?

Research methods. A cross-sectional study of 579 students was conducted. The main outcome measures were the Self-Report Passion Inventory (SRPI) and the Brief Resilience Coping Scale (BRCS).

Process of argumentation. The argument proceeds from an analysis of the theoretical framework (the Dualistic Model of Passion) to an examination of empirical data, and finally to conclusions regarding the importance of passion for students' resilience.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences. There were statistically significant positive correlations between the variables, but gender did not moderate these relationships.

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Stepwise regression analysis indicated that passion explained 56% of the variance in resilience. The results may be applied in the development of support programs for students at all education levels, including the earliest stages. Collaboration between teachers and parents in recognizing students' passions from an early age may be an important factor in strengthening their interests.

Conclusions and/or recommendations. As the study results show, cultivating students' passionate activities could support their well-being and resilience. This approach could also strengthen partnerships between families and schools.

Introduction

The partnership between family and school is an important form of collaboration in contemporary education (Bukola, 2021). This relationship can be crucial for supporting students' success and well-being (Willems et al., 2018). By working together with students' families, schools can create a supportive environment that encourages students' motivation to learn (Deeba, 2021). Family–school partnerships can also foster more effective communication between parents and teachers. Collaboration between family and school helps meet students' social and emotional needs: families can provide insight into their child's needs, while schools can offer resources and support (Anazia et al., 2025). Through such partnerships, schools and families can work together to identify the academic, social, and emotional needs of each student, ensuring a more personalized and effective approach to education. When families and schools share similar expectations and values regarding academic performance, students benefit from a consistent approach that reinforces positive learning outcomes (Hannor & Donnell, 2021). Schools that engage families can also create opportunities for parents to participate in school activities and decision-making processes, which can lead to a stronger sense of community (Anazia et al., 2025).

Understanding the relationship between passion and resilience can help identify protective factors that may contribute to students' psychological resilience in the face of academic and life difficulties (Datu, 2021; Rahimi et al., 2023). Findings from correlational research may support the

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development of more effective support strategies for students, which in turn can contribute to improved mental health and overall well-being (Fisher et al., 2018; Dalpé et al., 2019). Research on students' passion and resilience can also provide insight into the mechanisms that lead to academic success (Lee & Herrmann, 2021). Passion can act as a motivating and mobilizing force in the pursuit of personal goals, while resilience enables individuals to cope with difficulties and setbacks encountered along the way (Kunat, 2015; Halonen & Lomas, 2014). Such research can provide a starting point for developing support programs that promote healthy engagement with passions and strengthen resilience among young adults, including students. This strategy may contribute to better academic performance, a greater sense of fulfillment in students' lives, and the prevention of early mental burnout.

Resilience as a process. In resilience models (Masten, 2001), the emphasis is placed on the importance of a multidimensional approach to examining resilience. Resilience has individual, family, and social dimensions (Luthar, 2006; Wagnild & Young, 1993). The capacity for resilience may be shaped by interactions among these dimensions and by contextual environmental factors such as culture, community, and support systems. Having a passion as an autonomously motivated activity seems to be an important element in developing resilience to difficult situations because challenges and adversities are usually present during the long-term pursuit of a passionate activity (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

The concept of passion. Over the last two decades, the Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP) developed by Robert Vallerand (2008, 2015) has been widely researched. Passion is defined as "a strong inclination toward activities that people love, find important, and invest time and energy in." Passion can fuel motivation, enhance well-being, and provide meaning in everyday life. However, passion can also evoke negative emotions, lead to inflexible persistence, and interfere with achieving a balanced, successful life (Vallerand et al., 2003, pp. 756–757). Based on previous studies (Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand et al., 2006; Marsh et al., 2013), two types of passion have been distinguished: harmonious and obsessive. Harmonious passion is a state in which an individual experiences balanced

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involvement in a passion that is consistent with their values and life goals (Vallerand, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2021; Balon et al., 2013). Obsessive passion is a state in which engagement in a passion becomes unhealthy and dominant in an individual's life, leading to conflict and disruption in other areas of functioning (Marsh et al., 2013). People with obsessive passion tend to have an imbalance between their passion and other aspects of life, which can lead to conflicts and adaptation difficulties (Kunat, 2015).

Passion and resilience in students - short research review

Most available research on the relationship between passion and resilience focuses on adult participants. However, reviewing these findings provides a basis for considering how they might be applied to enhance school–family partnerships at earlier stages of education. In this paper, the results of research involving university students are treated as evidence of the link between passion and resilience, and the school–family partnership is considered a potential beneficiary of these findings.

The study conducted by Virginia Paquette's team (2023) consisted of two cross-sectional projects involving $n = 283$ and $n = 275$ students and one longitudinal project involving $n = 238$ students ($M = 24.02$; $SD = 5.01$ years). The research aimed to determine the role of passion for learning and emotions in the process of building resilience in education and life. The findings showed a positive relationship between harmonious passion and the experience of positive emotions in students with strong learning outcomes, such as satisfaction with studies, and both subjective and objective academic performance. Obsessive passion was associated with a lower level of general functioning. Harmonious passion supported a high level of resilience in all areas of life, whereas obsessive passion not only failed to promote mental resilience but could significantly reduce it. Only students with harmonious passion experienced an increase in subjective vitality over a one-year period; those with obsessive passion and those with no passion did not differ from each other.

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The results suggest that passion contributes positively to mental and physical well-being as long as it is harmonious in nature, which means that it is balanced with other life activities (Paquette et al., 2023). This may influence students' ability to cope with academic and life challenges (Li et al., 2020; Byra & Boczkowska, 2022).

It was also found that students with higher levels of resilience were more likely to develop and sustain their passions. These relationships indicate that passion and resilience are interconnected, although it is unclear whether the relationship is causal. Having a harmonious passion can lead to the development and strengthening of mental resilience as individuals face difficulties while pursuing exciting activities. Resilience, in turn, provides a strong foundation for developing passion, but only when the passion takes a harmonious form. Research on the negative impact of passion on resilience may help explain how unhealthy engagement with a passion can affect students' ability to cope with difficulties (Spiridon, 2022). Being overly involved in a passion can lead to increased stress and difficulty coping with challenges (Sverdlik et al., 2021). Obsessive passion was found to lead more frequently to burnout, heightened stress, and reduced resilience related to work and education.

The aim of the other study (Philipe et al., 2009) was to identify differences in well-being between people with and without passion in four age groups ranging from 18 to 90 years old. The total number of participants was 782 (M = 33.43 years, SD = 17.08). On average, they engaged in their passionate activities for 9.16 hours per week. The results supported the hypothesis that being harmoniously passionate about an activity may significantly contribute to well-being, whereas obsessive passion or a lack of passion does not substantially enhance well-being.

Based on this brief research review, the aim of our study was to investigate the correlation between passion and resilience in students and to determine the extent to which passion accounts for the variability in students' resilience. Following the DMP, it was assumed that passion would play a significant role in increasing students' resilience.

There were three research questions:

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1. How strong is the correlation between resilience and passion—considering its three dimensions (personal benefits, origin, and balancing with life)—in students?
2. To what extent do passion and its three dimensions account for the variability of resilience in students?
3. Does gender moderate the relationship between resilience and passion and its three dimensions in students?

Method

Participants and procedure. The research was a cross-sectional study based on self-reports. The online study included 584 students from six public universities in Poland. Five sets of questionnaires were excluded from the analysis due to missing data. In total, the study included 579 students: 498 (86.01%) women, 74 (12.78%) men, and 7 (1.21%) who identified as another gender. The inclusion criterion was being a student at a Polish university. Participants' average age was 23.30 years (SD = 5.46). A link to the study was emailed to each respondent individually. All applicable institutional and governmental regulations concerning the ethical use of human volunteers were followed. Encoded data were stored in accordance with current personal data protection regulations.

Measures. *Self-Report Passion Inventory (SRPI)* was created by researchers from the Passion Research Group at UMCS, Lublin, Poland (Byra et al., in press). It contains 9 statements representing three factors: 1) personal benefits of passion; 2) balancing passion with life; 3) the origin of passion. Responses are given on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = definitely disagree and 5 = definitely agree. In this study, the scale demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .62 to .84. The decision to use the SRPI instead of the Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003) was related to the need to examine the relationship between passion and its subjectively perceived benefits. In the SRPI, the "personal benefits of passion" factor covers the following areas of gain: a) psychological flow, b) sense of

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freedom, c) meaningfulness, d) creativity, and e) personal development and growth.

The Brief Resilience Coping Scale (BRCS) by Vaughna Sinclair and Kenneth Wallston was used in the Polish version (Piórkowska et al., 2017). The scale consists of 4 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = definitely does not describe me and 5 = definitely describes me. The scale measures resilience as a process. The Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .64.

Statistical data analysis. Data were analyzed using SPSS 29. Harman's single-factor test was used to assess the presence of common method bias in the measures. A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between resilience and passion. A stepwise regression analysis was then performed to examine the contribution of the independent variable (passion) in accounting for the dependent variable (resilience). Finally, using PROCESS in SPSS with 5000 bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval, we tested whether gender moderated the relationship between resilience and passion.

Results

Harman's single-factor test confirmed the absence of common method bias. All scale items were entered into an exploratory factor analysis and examined using an unrotated factor solution. If a single component explained less than 50% of the total variance, this indicated no common method bias. The test revealed one factor accounting for 23.36% of the total variance, confirming the lack of bias. Descriptive statistics for the analyzed variables and the correlations among them are presented in Table 1. To compare levels across the individual dimensions of passion, each participant's total score in each subscale was divided by the number of items in that subscale.

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Table 1. Correlations between passion and resilience in the study sample (n = 579)

Variables		*M* (*SD*)	Item (*M*, *SD*)	1	2	3	4
Passion	1. Resilience	50.33 (7.18)	-	-			
	2. Personal benefits of passion	22.14 (3.29)	4.43 (0.66)	.61**	-		
	3. The origin of passion	5.28 (2.20)	2.64 (1.10)	.27**	-.08*	-	
	4. Balancing passion with life	6.55 (1.60)	3.28 (0.80)	.44**	.23**	.01	

Source: own study; *p < .05; **p < .01

Participants scored the highest on personal benefits of passion and the lowest on the origin of passion. Using the sten norms of resilience, three categories of results were distinguished—low, average, and high—among the surveyed students (Piórkowska et al., 2017). The largest group of students (n = 245; 42.42%) had a high level of resilience, about one-third (n = 183; 31.64%) had a low level, and 150 students (25.94%) showed an average level. All dimensions of passion were found to be positively correlated with resilience. The strongest association was observed between the personal benefits of passion and resilience.

The next stage of the analysis involved examining whether passion plays a predictive role in students' resilience. A stepwise regression analysis was performed (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of the stepwise regression analysis explaining resilience in the study sample (n = 579)

Resilience Adjusted R2 = .56, F = 248.24, p < .001					
Predictors	***B***	**SE**	**β**	***t***	***p***
1.Personal benefits	1.22	0.06	0.42	19.77	.001
2.Balancing passion with life	1.42	0.13	0.32	11.16	.001
3.The origin of passion	1.02	0.09	0.31	11.33	.001

Source: Own study

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The regression equation for resilience, including all dimensions of passion, accounts for 56% of the variance in this variable. Resilience was most strongly explained by the personal benefits of passion. Higher levels of personal benefits, balancing with life, and origin of passion were associated with higher levels of resilience.

In the next stage of the analysis, using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (version 3.5) and the bootstrapping method, the moderating role of gender in the relationship between passion and resilience was examined. Three moderation models were tested. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The magnitude and statistical significance of the effects of passion on resilience in the study sample (n = 579) – gender as a moderator

Variables		*B*	SE	t	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Resilience	Constant	13.918	5.342	2.605	.009	3.426	24.410
	Personal benefits	1.556	.241	6.453	.001	1.083	2.030
	Gender	6.002	4.517	1.329	.184	-2.869	14.873
	Benefits x Gender	-.195	.205	-.949	.343	-.598	.209
Model 1: R2 = .38, F(.901) = 116.580, p < .001							
Resilience	Constant	34.498	3.414	10.105	.001	27.793	41.204
	Balancing passion with life	2.366	.486	4.868	.001	1.412	3.321
	Gender	2.509	2.877	.872	.384	-3.142	8.160
	Balancing passion with life x Gender	-.336	.402	-.835	.404	-1.125	.454
Model 2: R2 = .20, F(.697) = 47.326, p < .001							
Resilience	Constant	43.554	2.243	19.415	.001	39.148	47.960
	Origin of passion	1.028	.410	2.507	.012	.223	1.834
	Gender	1.828	1.815	1.007	.314	-1.737	5.392
	Origin x Gender	-.125	.338	-.370	.712	-.787	.538
Model 3: R2 = .08, F(15.845) = .137, p < .001							

Source: Own study

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All models were found to be significant and accounted for 8–38% of the variance in resilience among respondents. None of the models revealed a moderating role of gender.

Discussion

The results confirmed the predictive role of passion for resilience in students. Significant positive correlations were found between passion and resilience, and all dimensions of passion predicted resilience. The factor "personal benefits of passion" was a strong predictor of the variance in resilience in the study group. The relationship was not moderated by gender. Students' resilience levels increased as their levels of balancing passion with life increased. This is consistent with earlier results presented in the literature on the role of harmonious and obsessive passion in resilience and well-being (Vallerand et al., 2022; Paquette et al., 2023).

The results of the study complement existing knowledge by empirically demonstrating the substantial contribution of passion in explaining variability in resilience among students. An added value of the study lies in the use of a new instrument for assessing passion, the SRPI, which makes it possible to examine dimensions of passion not analyzed in previous studies, such as the personal benefits of passion and the origin of passion. It is also worth noting that earlier findings on the negative role of obsessive passion in resilience were likewise confirmed, as shown by the association between low resilience and passion that is poorly balanced with life, which is characteristic of obsessive passion (Vallerand, 2015; 2022).

The personal benefits of passion appear particularly important in the context of the relationship between passion and resilience. Awareness of the subjective benefits of passion, such as experiencing flow, a sense of freedom, the meaningfulness of passionate activities, personal growth, and creativity, was positively correlated with resilience. Although these findings are new and require further research, they may have the potential to encourage young people (including students) to develop their passions (e.g., a passion for studying; Mudło-Głagolska & Larionow, 2023).

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The SRPI dimension "the origin of passion" correlated weakly with resilience, which confirms the intuitive belief that the source of a passion is not particularly important for its development or its connection to resilience. In the moderation analysis, gender did not prove to be a moderator of the main relationship between passion and resilience. This may be explained by the universal nature of passionate activities, which appear to contribute similarly to resilience and well-being regardless of gender. As the study results indicated, the subjective perception of the benefits of passion was far more important.

Limitations and further research

The number of female participants greatly exceeded the number of male participants; therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited. A larger male student sample would be beneficial for future research. The present study examined passion as a factor. Although important, passion alone is not sufficient to fully explain resilience. Future studies should therefore investigate additional variables, such as students' well-being, academic performance, types of passionate activities, self-esteem, and others. Because the research was conducted with university students, who are not directly affected by school–family partnerships, the findings must be interpreted with caution. Conducting similar research among primary school students, who are much more influenced by this type of partnership, would be advisable.

Conclusion

The results obtained on the role of passion in students' resilience may lead to several practical considerations, such as (1) better understanding the connection between passion and resilience; (2) developing support strategies for students based on this relationship; and (3) designing student support programs that take into account the importance of passion,

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resilience, and their interrelations, especially at younger ages and earlier stages of education. Such activities may strengthen the partnership between families and schools and could become a useful tool in this area.

It is important to emphasize that, in this study, the research findings on the relationship between passion and resilience were treated as an indication of the importance of this connection and its potential use in building partnerships between schools and families at earlier stages of education. Although the study did not focus on primary or secondary school students, passion and resilience are areas that can be developed early in life, and both schools and families can play a significant role in this process.

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Parents' perspectives on the (non)presence of educational partnership in parent–teacher relationships: Research report

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early childhood education, school, partnership, parents, teachers, pedagogical support

Abstract

Research objectives and problems: Guided by the belief that recognizing parental subjectivity is essential for students' effective functioning in school, this qualitative study sought to examine how parents of early school-aged children conceptualize educational partnership with teachers and how they experience it in practice. The research focused on identifying factors such as the types of communication between teachers and parents, teachers' perceptions of parents' competencies, areas of shared parent–teacher interaction, and both parties' attitudes toward educational support. In parents' view, these factors shape—and often determine—the quality of their educational partnership with teachers.

The main research questions guiding the study were:

1. What meanings do parents attribute to the concept of educational partnership in early school education?
2. How do parents experience educational partnership in the school setting?

Research methods: The study is situated within an interpretive qualitative paradigm and employs individual, open-ended interviews with parents of early school-aged children. Analysis of the research material involved identifying and describing thematic categories emerging from the statements of the respondents to illustrate how parents understand the essence of parent–teacher educational partnership and how it is enacted in practice.

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Process of argumentation: The article begins with an analysis of theoretical concepts and empirical studies concerning the participation of educational stakeholders, demonstrating the importance of educational partnership in the parent–teacher relationship for enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and upbringing. The need for pedagogical support and parent education is emphasized. The issue of educational partnership is examined from a subjective and constructivist perspective, according to which partnership interactions should involve knowledge exchange, negotiation, collaborative problem-solving, and the joint optimization of educational and developmental processes in both school and family environments.

Research results and their impact on the development of pedagogical sciences: The findings indicate that parents are well aware of the importance of their participation in their children's school education. In their view, the presence and quality of an educational partnership depend primarily on how teachers build and shape relationships with parents. The response categories identified during the analysis reveal varying conceptualizations of educational partnership, as well as diverse ways in which parents experience such partnerships in practice. This article contributes to a line of research aimed at transforming early childhood education practices to create space for parents' full participation in their children's learning—supported by both teachers and the school.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The analysis allowed for formulating several actions that schools and teachers must undertake to create conditions for an effective educational partnership with parents. The study underscores the importance of teachers adopting a dialogical, open, and creative stance when shaping communication with parents. The conclusions presented here may support efforts to develop new solutions to implementing the idea of teacher and parent subjectivity in the education of young children.

Introduction

Contemporary life is characterized by great diversity, complexity, instability, and relativity. As Monika Miczka-Pajestka (2013) notes, "the pluralization of the socio-cultural sphere reveals more and more possibilities for functioning and 'being' in the world, along with new styles and ways of living, which together pose a significant challenge for individuals as subjects" (p. 59). Such a reality generates daily difficulties, uncertainty about the future, and a constant need to manage ongoing changes and make constant choices.

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This also applies to parents, who face a number of challenges, problems, and questions. The socio-cultural space absorbs a wide range of ideas and values, which are constantly reshaped through interaction. Both parents and teachers encounter a pluralized vision of reality in which they form relationships and communication patterns based on the values that they have learned and embraced. In a culture lacking a stable paradigm and marked by diversity, this process becomes especially difficult.

There is no doubt that "contemporary families reflect the changes in the world, and because reality is difficult and complicated, these difficulties also occur in families" (Kochanowska, 2007, p. 145). For this reason, families require professional, multi-level educational support. From the earliest stages of schooling, teachers play a pivotal role in providing such support. The effectiveness of teaching and upbringing depends largely on teachers' ability to build strong relationships with students' parents and their willingness to engage in mutual cooperation.

Theoretical studies and empirical research on the participation of educational stakeholders—namely parents and teachers—in various aspects of school and family life underscore the need for the democratization of the school environment (Gawlicz et al., 2014; Śliwerski, 2014; Tłuczek-Tadla, 2022), as well as the need to strengthen student, parent, and teacher participation in school life (Kołodziejczyk, 2011). These studies also highlight the importance of raising awareness among parents and teachers about shared responsibility and cooperation in supporting children's educational achievements (Loughran, 2008; Suryani, 2013). The expectations of parents and teachers regarding collaboration constitute a frequently investigated area of research (Cankar et al., 2023).

Research aimed at capturing the scope of cooperation, the nature of parental involvement in children's education, and the forms in which such involvement occurs usually reflects a positivist trend in studies on the family–school relationship. These studies seek to define the extent of cooperation and identify its constituent elements. Researchers also analyze the conditions and potential obstacles that impede the development of constructive collaboration between parents and teachers (Epstein, 2007; Kołodziejczyk et al., 2012).

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As Marta Wiatr (2019) observes, "in this dominant normative discourse, the lack of cooperation with the school or the lack of parental involvement in the form expected by the institution is interpreted in terms of insufficient cultural resources in the family environment, individual pathologies and deficits, or lack of willingness and misunderstanding of the task. As a result, the parent is treated as a 'partner without resources'" (p. 210). Theoretical analyses and studies often overlook the psychosocial context of parent–teacher cooperation and may attribute failures in building positive family–school relationships solely to family-related causes.

In contrast, some researchers point to socio-psychological and socio-political factors that influence the capacity of families and schools to support the child's learning. A distinctly different perspective emerges in the critical–emancipatory discourse, which demands that parents be recognized as competent partners in their relationship with teachers, partners who not only know their children very well but also have the right to express views about their children's development and the school's activities (Wiatr, 2019).

Cooperation between parents and teachers involves jointly pursuing shared goals and participating in collective decision-making. However, such cooperation should not be understood as merely satisfying each party's expectations; rather, it requires a collaborative search for solutions to existing problems related to teaching, learning, and child development (Dubis, 2016). According to Bogusław Śliwerski (2004), in a democratic school, based on a subjective, personalistic approach to cooperation, mutual relations among educational actors demand autonomous participation, openness to individual needs, and formal equality before the law, along with respect for these principles in the system of collaborating partners.

The unique relationships among teachers, parents, and children—who "share a common goal accepted by all three parties, maintain a positive emotional attitude toward one another, uphold mutual respect, cooperate, and assume joint responsibility"—are defined as an **educational partnership** (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000, p. 144). As Janke (2004)

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notes, the principle of educational partnership requires clearly defining the duties, areas, and framework of cooperation. The optimal model of such cooperation is built on the idea of acting *for* the child and *with* the child. One of the most crucial conditions for partnership is the openness of both parents and teachers to joining collaboration and to coordinating their efforts in a shared direction, one that shapes students' attitudes, behaviors, and value systems (Karbowniczek, 2016).

The purpose of this article is to present educational partnership with teachers from the perspective of parents. The qualitative research conducted for this study made it possible to shed light on how parents of early school-aged children conceptualize the essence of this partnership in their relationships with teachers, as well as how they experience it in everyday school practice.

Teacher–parent relationship and creating space for educational partnership: theoretical context

One of the most neglected areas of cooperation between teachers and parents is pedagogical support and parental education. In this context, scholars emphasize that in light of sweeping social changes taking place in almost all areas of life, parents often confront challenges that exceed their abilities and skills. These difficulties concern, among other things, the fulfillment of their educational role—an area in which intuitive action and the experience gained in one's family of origin are often insufficient. Marzena Banańczyk describes this situation as follows:

> Parents often ask themselves what to do and how to raise a child properly. Today, parents base their educational practices mainly on their own childhood experiences. The knowledge of previous generations is no longer adequate for proper upbringing, therefore parents frequently express confusion and helplessness in matters of raising children. Thus, we are currently witnessing an educational crisis in the family (2011, p. 7).

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Henryk Cudak shares similar concerns:

> In modern times, parents, even with higher levels of education, are often unable to influence their children's development, upbringing, and socialization in a way consistent with good pedagogical practice. Their educational actions tend to be spontaneous, not intentional, which frequently leads to undesirable outcomes. (…) For this reason, the school, as an institution of care, upbringing, and education, should carry out pedagogical tasks in a planned and purposeful way (2011, p. 9).

Contemporary living conditions increasingly underscore the need for parent education. This stems from the fact that "today's social and cultural reality creates difficult conditions for the child's adaptation process and therefore requires parents to possess additional knowledge and educational skills" (Skreczko, 2001, p. 175). Parents begin preparing for their role in their own family of origin. This preparation is shaped by everyday knowledge, the experiences and behavioral patterns of their parents, and their pedagogical culture; it is later modified by their own reflections, intuition, and subsequent exposures and experiences. It is also impossible to overlook the media as an important source of information for contemporary parents.

On the one hand, parents actively seek knowledge and information that may help them resolve educational problems, but on the other hand, they often perceive school initiatives as criticism of their parenting efforts. Teachers, in turn, report that only a small number of parents take part in organized pedagogical activities, which leads schools to discontinue such efforts. School administrators are also reluctant to adopt broader parent education programs because their implementation involves additional financial outlays.

Parents often avoid seeking extra knowledge out of fear that doing so will be interpreted as an admission that they are struggling to fulfill their educational responsibilities toward their child. Even when they recognize the need to support their children, they often do not know where or how to access the necessary resources (Balukiewicz, 2008; Kopeć, 2014). It also

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seems that the low level of parental engagement in this form of cooperation may stem simply from a lack of awareness both of the opportunities available and of their rights in this respect. Parents often do not know what their rights are. They may be unaware that they can receive support from the school, what that support entails, or who is responsible for providing it (Kochanowska, 2007).

Parents who recognize the need to support their child's school education expect teachers to assist them in this process, for example, by offering guidance or advice on improving the child's learning skills at home or addressing educational difficulties (Śliwerski, 2001). Research (Christopher, 2004) shows, however, that the possibility of establishing an educational partnership is significantly weakened by the persistent belief that the sphere of education—including content, standards, and teaching methods—belongs exclusively to teachers. Teachers often defend what they see as their didactic (methodological) territory. They believe that this space formally belongs to them and should not be subject to external interference. Many view the didactic domain as an area of their exclusive competence and professional preparation, validated by formal qualifications and a diploma.

In some cases, a teacher may interpret a parent's natural interest in their child's academic difficulties as an unwarranted intrusion into their professional sphere. As a result, they lose the opportunity to gain the parent as an ally in their actions and efforts. Instead, they may weaken or even erode the parent's sense of shared responsibility for effectively finding solutions to the child's problems. Parents who encounter such attitudes often develop emotional distance or even negative feelings toward the teacher and may become increasingly passive.

A lack of mutual understanding between teachers and parents can give rise to negative behaviors and patterns, such as distrust and reluctance, mutual accusations, blaming each other for the child's academic difficulties, or competing for influence (Mendel, 2004; Zalewska-Bujak, 2020). Research by Barbara Lulek (2012) shows that although school principals do not explicitly distance themselves from cooperation with parents, many are nonetheless satisfied with parents' attitudes of detachment

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or indifference toward their children's education. The traditional division between "competent professional teachers" and "less competent parents" continues to function in many schools, where strong partnerships among participants and co-participants in the educational process are rare.

The issue of educational partnership in teacher–parent relationships is rarely examined from subjective and constructivist perspectives, in which teachers are not viewed solely as educators of parents, but parents themselves are recognized as valuable sources of knowledge about their children, their upbringing, and their developmental needs. In a genuine partnership, interactions should include the exchange of knowledge, negotiation, collaborative problem-solving, and the joint optimization of the educational and upbringing process in both the school and the family environment. As Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak writes:

> The process of emancipation of the school and the culture of education does not occur because of "experts" and politics, but despite "experts" and politics. It is specific to a given school culture, whose subjects share a common vision of the school as a space for the development of rational, critical thinking, courage and responsibility, mutual trust, and respect for the right to honest and open communication. (2018, p. 241)

Such communication becomes possible through a **culture of cooperation and dialogue**, characterized by spontaneity and voluntariness, but also by a certain degree of unpredictability. This culture is created primarily by teachers themselves, emerges from their needs, gives them professional satisfaction, and promotes the development of personal initiative. It is based on the shared understanding and values of teachers, the school principal, students, and parents. Cooperation takes place in both formal, goal-oriented contexts and informal interactions (Gołębniak, 2004).

In such a school, friendly relations exist among all educational stakeholders, accompanied by a commitment to mutual understanding and respect for each interaction partner. As Roland Meighan points out, recognizing the role of collaboration among participants in the educational

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process, in which each person is "at once a learner and a source from whom others learn" (2005, p. 82), is an essential element of parent–teacher cooperation. Sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas, offering systematic help, and creating opportunities for reflection on the activities of all educational partners heighten awareness of the potential for community and multifaceted engagement. Participation in shared activities forms the most beneficial system of connections between the elements of the educational and upbringing environment (Dubis, 2019).

Although each school represents a distinct space in which community members form particular relationships, dependencies, and roles, in all cases it is only relationships based on a **subject-centered educational paradigm** that make an authentic educational partnership among teachers, parents, and students possible.

Research method and procedure

Grounded in the belief that recognizing parental subjectivity is essential for students' effective functioning in the school environment, this qualitative study sought to reconstruct the ways in which parents experience educational partnership in their relationships with early-grade elementary teachers. The aim was to examine how parents conceptualize the essence of educational partnership and to determine how—and whether—they experience such partnership at school. Particular attention was given to the initiators and inhibitors of partnership, as well as the factors that parents perceive as determining its quality, including types of teacher–parent communication, teachers' perceptions of parents' competencies, areas of shared interaction, and the attitudes of both parents and teachers toward educational support.

Guided by the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research, the study sought to capture the various ways in which parents of early school-aged children understand educational partnership and participate in their children's schooling. The findings presented here are preliminary and exploratory; the study will be continued. By making parents' educational

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partnership the focus of analysis, the article contributes to a research trend aimed at transforming early childhood education practices to create space for parents' full participation in their children's learning.

As Neuman notes, the most important aspect of the interpretive approach is the systematic analysis of the social meanings that people create in their natural settings, aimed at understanding and interpreting how people construct and make sense of the world in which they live (1994, p. 162). In the interpretive approach, words constitute the primary research data. Participants' statements and narratives allow researchers to gain insight into the meanings that informants attribute to the events in which they take part (Zwiernik, 2015). The decision to employ this method of data collection stemmed from the belief that it makes it possible to access the respondents' lived worlds: their everyday experiences (Kvale, 2004).

The research problems were formulated as the following questions:

1. What meanings do parents attribute to the category of educational partnership between parents and teachers in early school education?
2. What picture of parents' experiences of educational partnership with teachers emerges from their statements?

The research was conducted using individual, open-ended, semi-structured interviews, which made it possible to gain insight into parents' experiences of educational partnership. As Earl Babbie explains, an open-ended interview is "an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interview has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in a specific order" (2008, p. 342). A semi-structured interview, by contrast, is characterized by a small set of core questions that directly address the essence of the phenomenon under study, the subjective meaning of which, present in the mind of the interviewee (in this study, the parent), the researcher seeks to uncover in the research process (Męczkowska, 2002, p. 24).

An integral part of the research procedure involves the interviewer asking for clarification or elaboration during the recorded conversations. Thus, several basic key questions were prepared in advance, along with

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a list of supplementary questions that could be used as needed. The basic interview questions included:

1. Do you experience a sense of partnership in your child's education, and to what extent? What does this partnership mean to you?
2. How do you assess your relationship with the teacher when discussing instructional or educational issues concerning your child?
3. Do you want to be involved in matters related to your child's education at school and beyond, and if so, in what ways?
4. Is there anything you would like to change in your relationship with the teacher regarding your child's education?
5. What do you believe stands in the way of achieving a collaborative learning partnership between teachers and parents? How do you experience this?

Auxiliary questions were formulated during the interview to help respondents articulate and thematize their experiences. The research was conducted with twenty-two parents—mothers and fathers—of early school-aged children attending urban and rural schools in the Silesia and Lesser Poland provinces.

The number of respondents was determined by the study's anchoring in the interpretive paradigm, whose methodological contours involve, among other elements, the exhaustion of the "result field" during exploration (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000) and the saturation of categories that emerge during analysis. The selection of the research sample was therefore based not on the criterion of generalizability, typical of quantitative research, but on internal and external validity. Internal validity concerns the accuracy of generalizations made about members of the group who were not interviewed; external validity relates to the researcher's ability to predict how the observed phenomena might function under different conditions or in other communities (Szkudlarek, 1997).

As Męczkowska (2002, p. 27) notes, analysis in this type of research is typically conducted with a small group of approximately twenty participants. With such a number, the "result field" becomes exhausted—that

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is, new contextual elements cease to appear in participants' statements (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000). As Heinz-Hermann Krüger explains, the selection and inclusion of additional material ends when "theoretical saturation" is reached, i.e., further research no longer contributes anything new (2007, p. 162). Data collection therefore concludes at the point when no new categories emerge that would require additional analytical directions or explanations. As a result, the interview data more accurately capture what participants themselves think about their reality, instead of serving to confirm preconceived theses held by the researcher.

Participants were selected randomly, with the main eligibility criterion being that they were the parent of a child in the first, second, or third grade of elementary school and consented to participate. The researcher conducted the interviews in person, on dates individually arranged with each parent, between January and June 2024.

The study group consisted of 16 mothers and 6 fathers. Most participants (15 individuals) were between 27 and 40 years old, and the remaining parents were over 40.

Presentation and analysis of research results

In accordance with the adopted research approach, the ways in which respondents understood the studied phenomenon—as expressed in the analyzed material—guided the researcher in establishing descriptive categories. These categories are "generalized and structured descriptions of the ways phenomena present in respondents' experiences are understood" (Męczkowska, 2002, p. 18). They were identified by condensing recurring themes that emerged during the review of participants' responses. The established categories constitute the *outcome space* and may, but do not necessarily have to, be hierarchized to create a structure of descriptive categories.

It should be emphasized that these categories are simultaneously individual and collective, which means that a single statement may represent various expressions of the same concept, or even different concepts

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altogether (Jurgiel, 2009). The categories presented here reflect generalized and structured descriptions of how respondents understand the phenomena in question (Męczkowska, 2002).

Given the interpretive paradigm of the study, the aim was not to examine the phenomenon in terms of quantity or frequency—an approach characteristic of quantitative research—but to uncover the meanings and dimensions of educational partnership between parents and early childhood teachers. In what follows, I limit myself to presenting the categories identified in the respondents' statements, illustrated through selected excerpts from the interviews to shed light on the themes discussed and the analyses presented.

The analysis of empirical material obtained from a relatively small group is qualitative in nature and does not involve statistical tools. Nevertheless, scholars note that quantitative elements can be used in qualitative and explanatory research. As David Silverman explains, simple computational techniques can serve as a way to probe the entire dataset, much of which is often overlooked during intensive qualitative analysis (2008, p. 62). The analysis of the collected statements from parents of early school-aged children made it possible to distinguish the following categories and subcategories of description:

The essence of educational partnership with teachers from the perspective of parents

Analysis of the statements provided by parents of early school-aged children made it possible to identify how they conceptualize educational partnership with teachers**.** To begin with, it should be noted that all respondents recognized that educational partnership between parents and teachers is a necessary condition for ensuring the effectiveness of a child's learning and developmental process.

The content analysis of interview responses led to the identification of several ways in which parents understand the essence of this concept, differing in both scope and thematic emphasis. It is important to stress

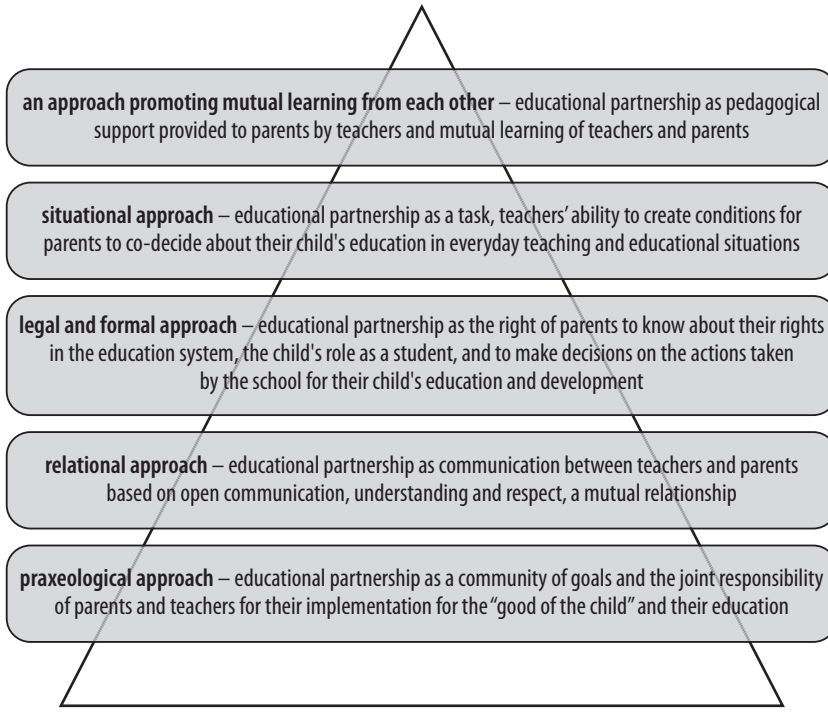
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that these categories are not mutually exclusive; elements associated with different categories frequently appeared together within the same interview. Consistent with the adopted qualitative research procedures, the presentation of results (for the purposes of this study) is limited to describing the categories of responses distinguished as a result of the analysis of parents' statements, along with the dominant tendencies observed within them.

Based on this analysis, five distinct parental approaches to the essence of educational partnership were identified (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Parents' conceptualizations of the essence of educational partnership with teachers



Source: Author's own research

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Category 1.1: Educational partnership as a community of goals and shared responsibility of parents and teachers for achieving them "for the child's good" and development
(praxeological approach)

The vast majority of respondents (20 parents), when explaining the discussed concept, focused primarily on the teleological aspect of educational partnership. They defined it broadly as the pursuit of common goals shared by the school and the family, along with coordinated actions taken by both educational environments to achieve these goals. It should be emphasized that parents' definitions were largely aspirational, often expressed through formulations such as "it should be this way," "ideally," "it would be good if…" and so on.

Example of a parent's statement[1]:

> There is no doubt that both parents and teachers should be partners at school. Both should care about the child developing and learning well. The most important thing is to support them together and help them develop their abilities and skills as much as possible. And here both must act together. Without this, unfortunately, nothing will happen… [Interview 3].

According to these respondents, the shared goal of parents and the school should be to meet children's educational and developmental needs and to create optimal conditions for learning.

Category 1.2: Educational partnership as communication, relationships, and open dialogue based on understanding and respect
(relational approach)

Teachers and parents enter into specific relationships characterized by mutual dependence and clearly defined roles. These relationships can take positive or negative forms, and in the school context it is mainly the

[1] The respondents' statements were quoted without linguistic correction, in their original form.

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teacher who shapes the quality of the relationship with parents. A substantial group of respondents (18 parents) emphasized the importance of proper communication in establishing an educational partnership.

In the opinion of parents, a partnership must be built on mutual trust and on treating one another as allies working toward shared goals. Only authentic, cooperative, and respectful relationships that acknowledge the subjectivity of both parents and teachers enable parents to participate fully in their children's education.

Example of a parent's statement:

> The most important thing is for the teacher to be open to contact with parents, to talk to them. If the teacher is inaccessible, doesn't let the parent speak, only lectures them, tells the child what they're doing wrong and how badly they behave at school, and still doesn't listen to the parent—how can you even say that this teacher is a partner? They must want to listen to the parent and be interested in what the parent has to say… Interview 12].

Category 1.3: Educational partnership as parents' right to know their rights in the education system, to understand their child's functioning as a student, and to participate in decisions about school actions taken for the child's learning and development *(legal and formal approach)*

A significant number of respondents (16 parents) associated partnership primarily with the equality of parents' and teachers' rights in the child's education. This includes parents' right to access information about their child's schooling and to participate in decisions regarding their child's course of education. Analysis of parents' statements shows that their ability to take part in decision-making at school constitutes an important component of what they consider an educational partnership.

In their view, parents' knowledge of their child, including their needs, often quite specific ones, entitles them to such participation. Knowing one's rights in the school system provides the basis for co-managing the educational process and co-determining the direction of the school's activities.

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Parents linked educational partnership with the right to accurate, reliable information about their child's functioning at school and the right to express opinions and expectations concerning the school's actions.

Example of a parent's statement:

> If a parent knows their rights—knows what they can demand or expect from the teacher and the school—then they know how to enforce them. Then they can decide together with the teacher what the child's education and upbringing should look like. I would like to know what's happening at school at any time, to have access to my child's work… But that's not always the case… [Interview 8].

Category 1.4: Educational partnership as a task—teachers' ability to create conditions that allow parents to co-decide about their child's education in everyday instructional and educational situations

(situational approach)

In contrast to the previously discussed ways of conceptualizing educational partnership, the next category emphasizes the *processual*, *situational*, and *systematic* nature of involving parents in their child's education at school and in resolving any instructional or educational problems. The parents in this group (10 respondents) associate educational partnership with having a sense of real influence on their child's education and on school functioning. In their opinion, teachers have the responsibility to involve parents in school life both in planned situations and in those that arise naturally in the course of everyday teaching.

Example of a parent's statement:

> I feel like a partner in my child's education at school. Matters concerning my daughter's learning and upbringing are discussed at meetings and individually. I can always speak up and express my opinion… I feel that my voice matters and is important. I know what is happening at school on an ongoing basis. I know I'm fortunate, but sadly, it's not always like that in schools… [Interview 4].

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Category 1.5: Educational partnership as pedagogical support provided to parents by teachers and mutual education of teachers and parents (an approach promoting mutual learning from each other)

The least frequent association found in parents' statements (8 respondents) concerned educational partnership as a mutual exchange of knowledge. These parents recognized that their interpretation of educational reality may differ from that of teachers, and hence, it is necessary to juxtapose and synthesize these perspectives in order to understand instructional and educational situations at school. They expect teachers to be cognitively open to parents' knowledge and experiences, which—though often intuitive or based on everyday understanding, as they themselves admit—can nonetheless be useful in teaching and upbringing.

Parents also expressed a need and willingness to improve their own competencies, especially those related to supporting their child's education. They expect teachers to provide pedagogical guidance in raising and educating their children, as well as to provide instruction tailored to parents' needs and capabilities.

Example of a parent's statement:

> I would like to be a better mother—to help my child more, for example, with learning or developing interests. But I don't always know how to do that. It's really hard. I try, but it would be good if teachers, as professionals, helped parents raise and teach their children, and not just informed us or told us what needs to be changed in our child's behavior because they're misbehaving… I know my child. I try to talk to the teacher at school, but I sense a lack of interest. "Please speak to your child," they say—but how? [Interview 11].

Ways in which parents (do not) experience educational partnership at school

The qualitative analysis of parents' statements provided data that made it possible to identify how parents experience educational partnership

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with teachers. A substantial number of respondents (15 parents) reported feeling that they have little or no influence on their child's education at school. These parents participate in their child's instructional and educational process only within the boundaries and to the extent permitted by the teacher.

The remaining respondents did perceive themselves as educational partners, but most often (7 parents) only to a limited degree. Analysis of parents' statements allowed for the identification of several factors that determine the scope and level of their sense of partnership with teachers.

Category 2.1: The teacher or the parent as the initiator/inhibitor of educational partnership

According to the majority of respondents (17 parents), it is mainly the teacher who initiates contact with parents and who decides on the form and structure of the meeting (regardless of whether it is a group meeting during formal school events or an individual consultation). Parents in this group emphasized that they themselves rarely initiate contact regarding their child's education. They are often uncertain whether the teacher will consider the matter important enough, how they will be treated, and what the consequences might be. Some worry they may be perceived as parents who "think they know better" or who are "too demanding." Only a small number of parents (5 respondents) felt that the teacher was open to communication and that they could independently initiate meetings or exchange information in other ways.

Category 2.2: Time as a factor determining the quality of educational partnership between parents and teachers

In many parents' statements (10 respondents), great importance was attributed to the factor of *time*. Referring to their own experiences, all respondents expressed the belief that there is "no time" at school for true partnership with parents. Teacher-initiated interactions were described as strictly planned, confined to narrow timeframes, and conducted according to predetermined rules. Several respondents (7 parents) mentioned the lack of flexibility in adjusting meeting times to parents' availability.

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A smaller group (6 parents) noted that their relationship with the teacher had improved "over time," with gradual progress toward an educational partnership based on mutual understanding and the recognition of both parties as sources of valuable information relevant to the child's education and development.

Category 2.3: Types of teacher–parent communication relations: one-sided communication versus interactive dialogue

A strong teacher–parent relationship depends on communication that allows for mutual exchange. However, according to most respondents (15 parents), communication with teachers is usually one-sided, with teachers presenting their own viewpoints and focusing on their role as the sender of messages. In such interactions, parents reported that their role is largely passive: listening, acknowledging, and expressing readiness to comply with the teacher's comments and recommendations about their child's education.

Parents often described the teacher's stance as dominant and expert-driven, which they associated with their professionalism and credentials. Several respondents (4 parents) suggested that this may also stem from teachers' fears of losing authority or relinquishing their role as the "more competent" figure.

In contrast, the remaining respondents (7 parents) characterized communication with teachers as open to dialogue. In their experience, teachers listened attentively and nonjudgmentally, creating an atmosphere of trust that enabled parents to speak freely about educational and instructional concerns. Such communicative relationships provided an opportunity to exchange experiences and establish a platform for dialogue.

Category 2.4: Symmetry/asymmetry in teachers' perceptions of parents' competencies

The respondents' experiences also shed light on how teachers perceive parents' educational competencies. According to most parents (15 respondents), their knowledge about their child and their child's upbringing is not sufficiently acknowledged or utilized by teachers at school.

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Parents attributed this primarily to a lack of dialogue, teachers' reluctance to allow parents into the sphere of school activities, and the tendency to treat parents' knowledge—often intuitive and rooted in everyday experience—as "inferior."

Some respondents also indicated that teachers only *pretend* to value parents' competencies. Although teachers may appear to solicit parents' opinions, ideas, or observations, parents felt that these contributions were not considered in practice. As a result, parents in this group expressed little confidence in their actual influence on their child's education at school.

In contrast, the remaining respondents (7 parents) evaluated teachers' attitudes toward their educational competencies as open and sincerely interested. These parents felt that their knowledge and experience, despite not being professionally substantiated, were accepted and considered important by the teacher.

Category 2.5: Spaces of educational partnership—areas of joint interaction between parents and teachers

Analysis of the respondents' statements revealed the thematic areas that are typically undertaken within teacher–parent communication. All respondents emphasized that the primary purpose of teacher-initiated contact, whether in group meetings or individual consultations, is to inform parents about their child's academic performance and behavior at school, especially regarding instructional and educational difficulties in the classroom, as well as matters related to class or school organization. The mode of communication is predominantly transmission-based: teachers convey information and provide general recommendations, such as advising parents to talk to their child or to increase supervision of their behavior or learning processes.

All respondents reported participating in *pedagogical sessions* during parent meetings, usually delivered in the form of lectures or presentations by a teacher or school specialist (e.g., a school counselor). These sessions were less frequently conducted as discussions, and their topics were most often predetermined. Only six parents reported having had the opportunity to propose topics for such sessions (usually via a survey

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question about future themes). Five parents participated in open lessons organized by the teacher. These findings indicate that the topics addressed in teacher–parent interactions rarely constitute genuine co-created spaces of educational partnership.

Category 2.6: Openness or reluctance of parents and teachers toward pedagogical support and parent education offered by teachers

Some parents (12 respondents) emphasized the teacher's role in enriching their pedagogical awareness and providing information about the course and outcomes of their child's education and upbringing. Parents in this group experienced support from teachers in solving difficult educational problems and reported receiving appropriate assistance related to their child's learning. For these respondents, being supported in their parenting and jointly seeking solutions with teachers represents an important expression of educational partnership. They also expressed a need for pedagogical support and parent education that goes beyond lectures—requesting workshops, meetings, opportunities to participate in lessons, and other interactive formats.

In contrast, a smaller group (5 parents) did not see the need for schools or teachers to undertake educational initiatives directed toward parents. They did not expect teachers to show initiative in this area and maintained a clear division between the responsibilities of the school and those of parents, especially regarding the child's education. These parents emphasized that teachers, as trained professionals, "know best how to teach and raise children," and therefore saw no need for cooperation beyond checking homework or occasionally helping their child study.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that "both the school and parents are competent entities capable of creating synergistic systems by generating rules of organization and collaboration with other people, institutions, and various

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types of communities" (Dubis, 2019, p. 155). The effectiveness of the educational and upbringing process depends to a large extent on authentic, cooperative, and reciprocal relationships between parents and teachers.

Based on the qualitative research, it can be concluded that parents are aware of the importance of their participation in their child's education at school. In their view, educational partnership between parents and teachers is a necessary factor that shapes the course and outcomes of the child's learning. Parents tend to emphasize the teacher's role as the person who determines whether an educational partnership occurs and what form it takes. They perceive the essence of partnership primarily as the pursuit of shared goals between school and family and as a relationship based on mutual trust and respect.

Some respondents associated educational partnership with equality between parents and teachers expressed through parents' sense of agency and participation in decision-making regarding their child's education. Others linked partnership with the systematic and situational inclusion of parents in school-based educational activities and in handling current instructional and developmental issues. The least common association in parents' statements involved the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience between teachers and parents. Nonetheless, many parents expect teachers to be open to learning from parents' insights, even when such knowledge is intuitive or experiential.

For many respondents, experiences of educational partnership were marked by a perceived lack of influence on their child's education, teacher dominance in determining the time, form, content, and course of interactions with parents, one-way communication, and an expert-driven teacher stance. More than half of the respondents expressed a desire to expand their pedagogical understanding through support offered by teachers as part of a true partnership.

There is no doubt that a key element of educational partnership must be teachers' willingness to recognize parents as "potential advisors, experts from whom it is possible and worthwhile to learn and whose knowledge and skills should be used in the teaching and upbringing process" (Śliwerski, 2017, p. 257). The findings of this preliminary study

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may constitute a foundation for further reflection and more in-depth research on the role of educational partnership in teacher–parent relationships, understood as authentic engagement in the child's education based on symmetrical communication, joint pursuit of shared goals, and shared decision-making.

For educational partnership to be genuine rather than superficial, the school must become a unique space shaped by the quality of relationships that occur within it. Such a school should be characterized above all by dialogue between teachers and parents, a sense of acceptance, recognition of "parental potential," shared understanding of problems, and collaborative, creative actions aimed at transforming educational reality into one that is relational and partnership-oriented.

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Education for transgression[1]: Narratives of "barrier-free" individuals on family and school determinants of exceeding one's own limitations

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Abstract

Research objectives and problem: The aim of this article is to analyze determinants related to family and school that foster exceeding one's own limitations (transgression) in the narratives of "barrier-free" individuals. The research question is formulated as follows: Which factors that contribute to readiness for transgressive action and are associated with the family and educational environment emerge in autobiographical reconstructions? The analysis identifies conditions that are conducive to transgression. Reflection on these factors may support the educational process and, through biography-based learning, be used in formative practice.

Research methods: Empirically, the article draws on the authors' qualitative study of people with disabilities who were finalists or laureates of the nationwide competition called "Person Without Barriers." The study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm using the biographical method and procedures of grounded theory.

Process of argumentation: Amid multiple contemporary crises, young people increasingly face isolation, loss of trust, diminished sense of meaning, and difficulties in setting life goals. The incidence of mood disorders, anxiety, and self-destructive behavior among children and

[1] Although the English term "transgression" generally carries a negative moral connotation, in Polish-language research on psychotransgresjonizm, the concept refers to positive acts of exceeding or transcending one's own limitations.

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adolescents is rising. This results in the need for effective forms of educational support. One possible form of action is education grounded in the life stories of "barrier-free" individuals. Theoretically, the article refers to psychotransgressionism and the notion of *homo transgressivus*, which were developed by the Polish psychologist Józef Kozielecki.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The analysis indicates that family and school conditions are crucial for the development of transgressive action. The identified family factors were acceptance, granting age-appropriate autonomy and decision-making, cultivating a belief in one's capabilities rather than focusing on deficits, fostering resourcefulness, and building optimism. School-related factors included treating the student as a subject/agent, setting demanding expectations, and simultaneously adopting individualized and flexible responses to the student's needs and abilities.

Conclusions and recommendations: The narratives of "barrier-free" individuals show that the identified features of the family and school environment support transgression. This knowledge should be disseminated among parents and teachers/educators, as a particular approach to upbringing can create opportunities for young people to move beyond various constraints and to formulate and attain ambitious life goals.

Introduction

Contemporary social and educational reality is marked by a deepening, multidimensional crisis: growing existential insecurity, axiological breakdown, and eroding trust in the institutions of education, state, religion, and even the family. We are witnessing global climatic, military, humanitarian, and (in consequence) migration crises. These phenomena particularly affect young people, who increasingly experience loneliness, alienation, loss of meaning, and difficulty in setting a satisfying direction for their personal development (CBOS, 2023). The recent SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and remote schooling further exacerbated these problems (Poleszak & Pyżalski, 2020; Pyżalski, 2021). Epidemiological data indicate rising diagnoses of mental health problems among children and adolescents, including anxiety, self-harm, depression, and other psychiatric disorders (CBOS, 2023).

At the same time, the formative roles of the family and school are weakening. There are deficits in parents' emotional presence and a decline

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in the authority of teachers and other significant adults. Many young people enter adulthood without stable role models that would support the development of their subjectivity and agency.

In response, new models of education are needed: approaches that do not focus solely on adapting to existing conditions, but enable individuals to shape their lives actively and creatively. One such model is "education for transgression," inspired by Józef Kozielecki's psychology of transgression (2007). In this perspective, education supports individuals in surpassing their own limitations and continuously redefining their own identity, i.e., continuously "being in the process" of *becoming* and constructing the meaning of their life under uncertain and changing conditions.

In this context, the biographical narratives of "barrier-free" people—i.e., individuals with disabilities who, despite objectively significant constraints, have achieved transgression in their own lives—can be particularly valuable. They can serve as constructive role models for adolescents seeking meaning and valuable axiological guidance. Education based on such biographies not only challenges stereotypes, but also cultivates a reflective approach to one's own identity, strengthens one's sense of agency, and develops one's existential competencies.

Transgression as a psycho-pedagogical category

The notion of transgression (from the Latin *transgression*, to cross or pass beyond) has gained prominence in the social sciences—psychology and pedagogy in particular—where it refers to overcoming one's own limitations. This concept has been most fully developed by Józef Kozielecki (1983), who defines transgression as "the intentional going beyond what one has and who one is" (p. 505). Transgressive actions are creative and innovative; they stand in contrast to homeostasis-oriented, conservative behavior and are driven by the heterostatic motivation of growth and development.

Kozielecki (1987, 2001) distinguished four principal forms of transgression, constituting a "four-dimensional space":

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- towards things – material and territorial expansion, often ambivalent in axiological terms
- towards people – social actions, including help and community-building, but also dominance and power
- towards symbols – intellectual and artistic activity that redefines cognitive structures and creates new cultural products
- towards the self – self-transgression, associated with self-development, self-creation, and strengthening one's own efficacy.

Transgression appears as a requirement of authentic humanity, an indicator of mental health, and a condition for development and life satisfaction (Szewczyk, 2014). In this context, Kozielecki (1996) asserted that "the human species will be transgressive, or it will not be at all" (p. 12), which should constitute a kind of imperative for contemporary society.

Building on the work of Kozielecki and other authors (Nosal, 2006; Obuchowski, 1993; Studenski, 2006; Tański, 2015; Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009), *homo transgressivus* can be characterized as *multidimensional man* with the following attributes:

- striving to exceed personal limitations, in both everyday coping and exceptional achievements
- an internal locus of control and mental independence grounded in a subject-centered value standard
- the agency to actively shape his world rather than merely be susceptible to influence
- the intentionality to consciously formulate and pursue goals
- self-knowledge, particularly from liminal situations
- the courage and strength of spirit to enable risk-taking and persistence in achieving goals
- hope and "sail heuristic," a mechanism that supports belief in one's success
- the temporal anticipation and orientation to foresee the future and use time constructively.

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Metaphorically, *homo transgressivus* is the "hero of his own life path" and is characterized by perseverance, the courage to take risks, responsibility for his choices, and a belief in the meaning of his own effort (Tokarska, 2010).

In this context, *education for transgression* becomes a key challenge. One form of such education is biography-based learning from individuals who have undertaken transgressive acts—especially people with disabilities who, due to their determination and activeness, transcend personal and social barriers.

Methods

This qualitative study follows the interpretive paradigm, which focuses on understanding the subjective meaning that individuals attribute to their own experiences. We employed the biographical method (Urbaniak-Zając, 2011; Włodarek & Ziółkowski, 1990), which allowed us to analyze identity processes in a dynamic, processual, and social perspective.

The empirical material was comprised of narratives of people with disabilities who made significant achievements in life. They were finalists and laureates of the nationwide competition called "Person Without Barriers."[2] These people were identified as transgressive individuals who surpass limitations stemming from their own physical condition as well as sociocultural barriers.

In total, 25 individual narrative interviews were collected and analyzed (Rokuszewska-Pawełek, 2006). The interviews were partly conducted in the "life story" format of Dan P. McAdams (2001) and partly as narrative interviews with elements of a "comprehending conversation"

[2] The competition was initiated in 2003 by the magazine Integracja [Integration]. Its aim is to challenge stereotypes about disability, promote pro-social attitudes, and demonstrate that physical, sensory, or mental limitations do not have to constitute obstacles to the pursuit of meaningful life goals. In addition to their significant personal achievements, the winners of the competition are also actively involved in work for the benefit of others.

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(Kaufmann, 2010), based on Fritz Schütze's procedure (Konecki, 2000; Schütze, 1997). The first-hand narrative material was supplemented with analyses of existing data (Angrosino, 2010; Bednarowska, 2015), including articles (in print and online), documentaries, and radio programs. This article presents a small excerpt of a larger body of studies and analyses.[3]

The aim of this work is to outline the family- and school-related conditions that facilitate one's transgression. The research question was, "Which factors that contribute to readiness for transgressive action and are linked to the family and school environments can be identified in the autobiographical reconstructions of 'barrier-free people?'" The data was collected and analyzed according to the methodology of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009; Konecki, 2000). The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of social research ethics. All participants provided informed consent and were fully informed about the aims of the project and the use of the data being collected. Anonymity was ensured throughout the research process, and a communicative validation procedure was applied to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Family and school determinants of transgression

The analysis of the narrative material collected during the study indicates that interpersonal relationships, starting from the earliest years of childhood, are of fundamental importance for developing a readiness for transgressive action. It is precisely the quality and character of these interactions—with parents, siblings, teachers, and peers—that constitute the foundation of an individual's identity, influence their position within the social structure, and determine their sense of agency.

The family, as the primary educational environment, plays a crucial role in the process of shaping the child's personality, particularly when

[3] A comprehensive analysis – whose main objective was the processual (re)construction of the conditions, mechanisms, and outcomes in the process of transcending limitations and becoming a "person without barriers" – has been presented elsewhere (Cierpiałowska, 2019).

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an additional factor is present, e.g., a disability. In such cases, there is a considerable risk of overprotectiveness, understood as a parental attitude characterized by the desire to protect the child at the expense of their autonomy. Such an attitude may effectively hinder the development of independence and a sense of competence. However, in the narratives of the respondents, these situations were rare.

One of the clearest manifestations of supportive parental attitudes identified in the study was encouraging the child's independence. As a deaf and blind man—a father, husband, NGO leader, and professionally active individual—recalled, "My parents involved me in various activities as much as possible; my mother wasn't afraid to let me, say, grind meat in a mincer, knead dough, or clean something. Of course, she tried to be cautious, warning me that something might be sharp […], but, at the same time, she didn't take everything out of my hands because 'you'll hurt yourself,' 'you'll fall', or something." Another narrator—a woman who lost her hands in childhood, a Paralympic medalist, mother, and socially active professional supporting others—emphasized the importance of fully participating in family life, including everyday household chores. As she recounted: "And that was really how it was in our home: if we planted potatoes, then we all planted potatoes […]. My parents didn't make me plant them at all; on the contrary, they often said, 'Kasia, step aside, it's uncomfortable for you.' But of course, I fought and stubbornly insisted that I wanted to. I wanted to do things like everyone else, so I was always part of it." Her narrative also clearly highlights the psychological aspect related to identity and the desire to be part of the family.

Some memories might be interpreted from an external perspective as signs of the parents' emotional distance, but in the long term turn out to be effective educational strategies, serving to eliminate demanding attitudes and to strengthen independence. The woman who lost both arms as a child recalled life in a farming family as crucial for developing her everyday coping skills. "My parents ran a farm, and that largely determined the absence or presence of what might be called protectiveness or overprotectiveness. They simply had no time for it […]. I remember an incident when I was hungry and, of course, irritated. I wanted my mother to slice

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me some bread. She said that the piglets wouldn't understand if she told them to wait, so she first had to feed the piglets and only later would she come and slice the bread for me." The child, confronted with the reality of farm life, did not hold a privileged position and had to adjust to the rhythm of the day imposed by adult responsibilities.

In these narratives, another important component of the family environment was clearly articulated: the conviction developed by the parents that a disability does not mean lesser worth or a need to abandon aspirations. The respondents' accounts suggest that it was thanks to their parents that they were able to internalize an image of themselves as competent and fully valuable people. One narrator recalled that "in childhood, I felt a great sense of security and my parents always told me, 'you can do anything.' And that gave me a strong foundation."

Memories of intuitive, ahead-of-their-time parenting practices, which are now part of standard therapeutic work, are also significant. The deaf and blind man recalls his childhood, in which his father—despite having no formal training—acted as a therapist at home. "When I was losing my hearing and couldn't see, my dad would put me on his lap and describe films to me, or, in other words, he would provide audio description, as it is called today […]. He constantly stimulated my hearing and my ability to understand […] so I was constantly bombarded with speech and encouraged to develop my speech."

The value of emotional support and full acceptance is particularly visible in the reflection of a woman with a physical disability, who is now professionally and socially active: "I was accepted. I didn't feel different. I simply wasn't afraid to reach out to people. To go and fight for myself. To live normally. Finishing elementary school and going to high school, and then going to university was obvious for me. There weren't any inhibitions like, 'What's the point? I don't have arms, maybe I won't manage,' or something like that."

The narratives also consistently highlight parental modelling of positive attitudes, where parents' beliefs, optimism, and agency became a natural source of learning. A woman with a physical disability, who is engaged in helping others, explained: "Well, maybe I inherited most [traits]

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from my mother, because she was like that. She took everyone in, smiled at everyone, and helped everyone. I think she embodied the idea that you simply need to act, to help, to do things… And that has stayed with me—I get involved in various matters."

Significant emotional and existential support was also provided by the fathers of most respondents: "My dad… well, thanks to my father, I didn't give up. I mean, you have to fight. Not give in. Not worry. He always supported me. That was incredible."

In the narratives of "barrier-free" individuals, particular importance was attributed to parental attitudes which, despite the passage of time, remained relevant and worthy of emulation. It is striking that although those parents raised their children decades ago, they demonstrated an approach that today would be described as very consistent with developmental and emancipatory pedagogy. Instead of focusing solely on the medical aspects and the search for "miraculous healing," they focused on preparing their child for life. As one narrator recalls, "my parents also focused on preparing me for life, not on curing me at all costs […]. They considered it more important to prepare me for life."

The collected accounts portray the parents as educators whose attitudes—often spontaneous and intuitive—were of fundamental importance for building their children's identities as independent people. The parents created an environment in which disability did not signify exclusion or dependency, but could serve as a framework for self-definition and activity.

Sibling relationships also played a crucial role in building psychological resilience and agency. They often emphasized normalization and mutual support, creating a safe developmental space that fostered emotional and social competences. As one respondent said, "my siblings were always my best friends. They always treated me normally, showed me a normal world when I was studying at the educational center. We always helped and supported each other."

Parental influence continues to be important through adolescence. Parents then encourage their children to spread their wings. "What was always striking was that my strengths were emphasized, not my weaknesses, right?! Not what I couldn't achieve, but what I could do. My dad always

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told me that I can swim, that I can drive a car, that I can do lots of great things. And he always stressed that."

In summary, the narratives of "barrier-free" individuals show that the family environment—through acceptance, support for independence, a conviction about their capabilities, modelling by example, and close relationships—played a key role in forming transgressive attitudes. Such upbringing did not focus on deficits, but on possibilities and preparation for independent living, providing a basis for the development of an independent, resilient identity capable of exceeding personal and social limitations. The analysis of the narratives of "barrier-free" individuals also identified a range of school-related factors that played an important role in fostering their readiness for transgressive actions. These conditions concern both teachers' and educators' attitudes, as well as specific institutional arrangements.

One of the fundamental factors conducive to transgression was treating the student as a subject and setting high expectations, while simultaneously recognizing, understanding, and accommodating their individual needs. An example of such an approach can be found in the account of a blind man with an additional disability: "In high school, there was an English teacher who was the only one who had learned Braille, and therefore I had to study English properly; he personally checked all my written work. And the result was that I chose English as one of the subjects for my graduation exam. I knew it well, which was very useful in my computer science studies."

Another significant aspect that emerges from the respondents' narratives was being treated at school "without special leniency" while also benefiting from teachers' flexibility and conditions conducive to effective learning. One example of such an approach comes from a deaf-blind man: "For her [the Polish teacher], learning was what mattered […]. I knew I had to try, that I never knew the day or hour when she would give us a test […] but, as I say, she approached things very flexibly […], so outcomes were valued over rigid rules."

Although attending special institutions meant separation and longing, they often provided an educational environment that fostered

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responsibility, resourcefulness, and social competences. One example is the account of a narrator recalling the peer-care system: "When I was in Laski,[4] there was a system (later abandoned) that each younger class had a caretaker class… it was terribly annoying… But it taught responsibility, and I think it taught me a kind of community-oriented approach."

These recollections also illustrate the value of intercultural activities and language education, which were carried out with the help of English-speaking volunteers. As one former student—a woman blind from birth, a traveler, writer, and an activist for people with disabilities —recounted, "one of our educators in the boarding house encouraged and made sure that volunteers from the UK came to our afternoon classes […]. When I started high school, it turned out that I was the best in the class at English, which strengthened my position from the very beginning."

For those who were educated in special institutions, the community based on shared biographical experiences was of particular significance. In the recollection of one woman, a person with a physical disability and the founder of an NGO providing assistance to those in need worldwide: "In fact, I wasn't really alone. I missed my family, but we were together, right? I grew up among people who had similar problems—we all underwent surgeries, we all had to attend exercises, after exercises we had to do homework, go to school… We had to help each other." These diverse educational experiences—both formal and informal—were a key element of an environment that supported transgression and self-fulfillment despite disability.

To a large extent, a positive outlook on the world and, above all, self-acceptance, was the result of the respondents' upbringing. Even when the situation was not easy, objectively speaking, they generally focused on the positive. Teachers often played a significant role in shaping such attitudes.

> I owe this to my educators in those institutions; they were wonderful people […]. They also instilled in us strength of character, courage,

[4] Laski is a locality near Warsaw that is home to a boarding school for blind children and adolescents.

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> responsibility. And above all, we were raised in a way that fostered self-acceptance. Because I have what I have, right? And, of course, I could have cried my whole life, and people could have pitied me and said, "Oh, poor Janina, so unfortunate, crippled, in pain, with problems." But really, what kind of life would that be?

Teachers' personalities and worldviews shaped transgressive attitudes as much as their educational methods. "There were people in Laski, including our choir director, who strongly emphasized that one had to be good in some field, even better than sighted people, in order to manage in life." Strengthening ambition and self-discipline often resulted in lasting character traits: "In high school I had a religion teacher, already deceased, who stressed the need to be ambitious and demanding of oneself, even if others are not demanding of you. That probably contributed to my perseverance and determination being formed."

The research participants' statements reveal that their school education played a key role in developing their transgressive attitudes—especially thanks to the people who shaped it. Teachers and educators who demonstrated professionalism, flexibility, empathy, and commitment were able to create an environment that supported not only learning, but above all the development of agency, resilience, and courage in overcoming barriers.

In mainstream schools of that time, before anyone had heard of meeting the special educational needs of students with disabilities, some respondents found the support of an assistant indispensable. As one narrator recalled, "J. helped me enormously. He was what we would now call a personal assistant for a person with disabilities—someone who introduced me to new environments. With his help, I spent my first weeks in high school and my first weeks at university […]. He was, so to speak, the prototype of personal assistants for people with disabilities. I can simply say he helped me a great deal."

In mainstream schools, certain situations fostered a readiness for bold, transgressive actions despite limitations—particularly through relationships with able-bodied peers. A man with muscular dystrophy, now

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a journalist, shared that "in sixth or seventh grade, when there were truancy escapes, my buddies carried me on their backs, and we escaped together." Ultimately, it was not the institutional form of the school (special or mainstream), but rather the quality of relationships and the attitudes of teachers, educators, and peers—as well as the overall school climate—that played the most significant role in the development of transgressive attitudes.

As the above analysis shows, school—if it treats the student in an individualized way, accepts and supports them, while also setting requirements—can become an environment for development as well as a space in which the individual learns to redefine their identity, build a sense of meaning, and overcome their limitations.

Conclusions and implications for educational practice

It is possible to draw several conclusions about the environmental conditions that support the development of an autonomous and agential identity from the biographical narratives of persons with disabilities who, despite many barriers, have undertaken transgressive actions. Two core socialization contexts—family and school—can initiate and sustain transgressive behavior when appropriately organized.

In families, supportive parental attitudes consistent with emancipatory pedagogy are pivotal: trust in the child's competencies and a readiness to support their developmental autonomy. The patterns recurrent in the narratives analyzed herein were as follows:

- enabling decisions and learning from consequences
- internalizing the belief that bodily limitations need not determine quality of life or worth
- consistently strengthening aspirations and the motivation to achieve goals
- modelling proactive stances through personal example: interpersonal openness, engagement, involvement, perseverance, and a positive outlook

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– preferring a developmental approach over a medicalized one and focusing on adaptive competencies rather than merely therapeutic procedures.

These elements of the family environment support psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and constructive coping and help internalize the values of agency and self-determination.

In education, the presence of teachers and educators who build relationships characterized by subjectivity, authentic interest, and high expectations acts as a catalyst. Key factors of transgression include an individualized didactic approach, educational demands adequate to the student's potential and abilities, organizational and methodological flexibility, developmental mentoring (supporting meaning-making and existential challenges), and stimulation of actions going beyond standard school routines.

Educational relationships, grounded in trust, demands, and acceptance, foster competence and identity work geared toward reflection, intentional action, and the redefinition of barriers. From the perspective of transgressive pedagogy, school operates as a space of biographical initiation where students craft their identity narratives not as victims of fate, but as active authors of their lives—*the heroes of their own life paths*. Peer relationships—especially with siblings and friends—also provide vital emotional support and social learning, producing experiences of cooperation, responsibility, and mutual engagement that train interpersonal competencies.

These conclusions are consistent with earlier theoretical and empirical findings in special education and developmental psychology (Głodkowska, 2014; Muszyńska, 2008). They confirm the importance of the educational environment as a purposefully organized structure that supports individuals in achieving success in life and subjective self-fulfillment, particularly by providing psychosocial and organizational resources adequate to their current developmental needs.

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The above analysis results in the following practical implications:

1. It is necessary to promote a model of education for transgression, whose essence is to support individuals in actively shaping their own narratives, rather than merely adapting to existing conditions.
2. Parents and teachers should be prepared to build relationships based on trust, high expectations, and genuine support, i.e., the factors that determine the development of an active identity.
3. Educational policies and institutional practices must take into account the importance of the relational and cultural dimensions of education and not limit themselves solely to technical or formal aspects.
4. The biographies of transgressive individuals should be widely used as educational tools, in the form of meetings, media narratives, and teaching materials, to strengthen agency and existential reflection among students—not only those with disabilities, but among all students.

In summary, education for transgression is not only about supporting the personal development of the individual, but also about creating a social space for their transgressive development. It is an educational concept rooted in the values of freedom, responsibility, and meaning—axiological orientations that are desirable in the realities of contemporary sociocultural change.

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Parent–teacher conferences as opportunities for educational partnership: A conversational analysis across three historical models of partnership

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): This study focuses on the concept of educational partnership, understood as the relationship between teachers and parents as reflected in their conference interactions. Three components of such partnership were examined: trust, a sense of collegiality, and a sense of the common good (Mendel, 2002, p. 53). The aim of the study was to diagnose the educational partnership as manifested in conversations recorded during parent–teacher conferences. The research questions were:

1. In what situations, and in what ways, does trust manifest during parent–teacher conferences?
2. In what situations, and in what ways, does a sense of collegiality manifest during parent–teacher conferences?
3. In what situations, and in what ways, does the common good manifest during parent–teacher conferences?

Research methods: The study was conducted using conversational analysis, which seeks to describe methods of producing orderly social interactions. This approach emerged from Garfinkel's ethnomethodological program and his analysis of "human" (ethno) methods (Silverman, 2009, p. 190). Conversational analysis is a well-developed, internally coherent method (…) particularly suited to examining professional practices as action processes (Granosik, 2013, p. 10). To examine the parent–school partnership from this perspective, conversational analysis was

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applied to 22 parent–teacher conferences in grades 1–3 held in public schools. A conference is a pedagogical practice that maintains existing order and tradition (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2018, p. 55).

Process of argumentation: The article consists of a theoretical section and a research section. The theoretical section presents three historically shaped models of parent–school relationships: participatory relationships (in the Second Polish Republic), asymmetric cooperation (during the communist period), and simulated democracy (in the Third Polish Republic). The research section presents the method and findings, showing contemporary images of partnership: how mutual trust, community, and the sense of the common good are expressed in the context of conversational analysis.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: Trust manifests primarily in conversations about children. It appears as an attitude directed toward parents (in the expectation that they will exercise parental control). Both parents and teachers tend to distrust children. Collegiality manifests in formal and organizational matters; for example, when parents elect the class parent board to discuss organizational issues. A sense of the common good appears in teachers' references to benefits for the entire class and to class events organized jointly.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The contemporary relationship model identified on the basis of conversational analysis of parent –teacher meetings is one that is dominated by the teacher, focused on meeting the school's needs, oriented toward cooperation for the benefit of the school rather than the child, based on class achievements rather than individual ones, simulates democracy within schools, generates distrust toward pupils, and leaves parents largely on their own.

Introduction

The family–school system forms a shared educational community and mirrors the general principles of social life (Gulczyńska, Rybińska Segiet, 2020, p. 350). The current model of parent–school relations is described by teachers, parents, and researchers as difficult and marked by tension and conflict. Both teachers and parents note that the focus on the child is diminishing in these bilateral relationships. System-related factors, the lack of specialist support, mutual distrust, and opposing positions are becoming increasingly significant. This shift is striking given that not long ago, parent–school relations were viewed as successful,

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if not exemplary. Looking back just a century reveals a period when schools maintained strong, positive relationships with parents.

The concept of partnership for education (Mendel, 2002, p. 53), understood as a special relationship centered on the child and based on mutual trust, a sense of the common good, and collegiality (cf. Mendel, 2000, p. 6), serves as the theoretical background for the historical and scholarly reflections presented below.

I. Theoretical background

It is proposed that the current state of educational partnership in Polish schools be examined through three relationship models, each illustrated by a distinct historical period: the Second Polish Republic, the communist era after World War II, and the present day in the Third Polish Republic. A fourth, contemporary model will incorporate a research component that depicts current relationship patterns.

Model one: Participatory relations

Participatory relations in Polish schools began to develop shortly after the partitions, during the rebuilding of the state after the restoration of independence. The Second Polish Republic was a period of forging the foundations of an independent Polish school system, marked by enthusiasm after 123 years of foreign rule. In addition to fundamental changes in teaching concepts, the ideas of New Education were based on the assumption that the school was a community of teachers, children, and parents (Zasada, 2000, p. 166; Jakubiak, 1995, p. 77; Mendel, 2000, p. 63). Cooperation with parents took place in multiple contexts: in the social dimension, it involved caring about society's living conditions, legal protection for women and children, raising parents' awareness, and engaging them in school activities (Segiet, 1999, p. 20).

Changes in the understanding of cooperation were also tied to the new position of the family, which came to be viewed as a social partner (Okrasa, 2013, p. 219). The efforts of many actors were directed at raising

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a new generation equipped to live in society (Malinowska, 1937, p. 30). In alliance with parents, the school offered hope for social change in the newly independent nation, and completing one's education became a path to upward mobility (Mauersberg, 1988, p. 88). Parents became co-creative participants, jointly responsible for matters concerning schoolchildren (Bzowski, 1930, p. 23). Both the family and the school were regarded as equal and equivalent entities. Family-based and social (pedagogical) forms of education coexisted (Rowid, 1936, p. 31).

Educational practices in the Second Polish Republic were oriented toward pursuing community interests. Greater attention was paid to developing social capital than to meeting individual needs, expectations, or aspirations (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2015, p. 152). Parents acted as partners, patrons, and representatives of the school. Family–school relations during this period exemplified the participatory model, which emphasized interpersonal relations, their quality, the building of mutual respect and trust, and the development of new forms of communication (Zasada, 2000, p. 173). This syntonic harmony between school and family, stemming from teachers' humanistic (pro-family) orientation and parents' pro-school attitudes, protected the educational process from monopolistic management and political pressure (Tchórzewski, 1993, p. 111).

Educational participatory relations in the Second Polish Republic were more than a framework for cooperation between parents and schools. They extended beyond these relationships, constituting a new quality in the space between parents and the school: a space in which social forces emerged, a sense of empowerment developed, and opportunities for choice and mutual responsibility were created.

Model two: Asymmetrical cooperation with parents

The postwar years and the new social order shifted emphasis and responsibility from parents to educational institutions. The pedagogical achievements of the prewar, didactically modern school were replaced by an ideological project designed to shape a "new human" (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2015, p. 253). Family–school relations no longer arose from

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genuine need or motivation; instead, they were the result of politically imposed, centrally controlled regulations (Winiarski, 2000, p. 75).

The objective of the postwar social order was to transform the family's social position by "attempting to place it under the influence of a school that can be controlled" (Janke, 1995a, p. 9). According to Marxist pedagogy, the school served the interests and ambitions of specific social groups (Muszyński, 1980, p. 7). Publications dedicated to home–school cooperation emphasized that "Marxist science demonstrates that a person is shaped mainly through education, work, and struggle" (Czerwiński, 1953, p. 16). The blending of ideology with science became a defining feature of the new Stalinist social order (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2015, p. 194).

Pedagogization and the activities of parent–teacher associations became tools through which schools exerted influence over parents (Lewin, 1966). Attendance at parent–teacher conferences became a means of control, particularly over the parents of troublesome children. "When a lack of home care is noticeable, it morally forces the parents of troublesome children to attend such conferences regularly. The class tutor may require some parents to attend these meetings" (Gałecki & Sędziwy, 1967, p. 297).

Change began in the 1980s with the establishment of the Polish Pedagogical Society, the Child's Rights Protection Society, and the Teachers' Trade Union "Solidarność" (Śliwerski, 2013, p. 30). Shifts also appeared in legal regulations concerning school–parent relations. Toward the end of the socialist era, a ministerial regulation was issued on forms of cooperation between parents or guardians and schools and school supervisory bodies. In theory, it restored parents' right to have a say in matters important to the school—though unfortunately only on paper, as it never took effect.

Parent–school relations during this time were **instrumental**, subordinated to Marxist ideology, and marked by a separation between school and family. Cooperation was andragocentric[5] (Winiarski, 2007b, pp. 441–446), characterized by asymmetrical relations and teacher dominance that ignored the principles of partnership.

[5] Based only on adult—i.e., parent–teacher—relations, disregarding the children (Winiarski, 2007b, p. 443).

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Model three : Simulated democracy

The period of political transformation brought hope for change. This transformation, in line with the principle of social empowerment, was accompanied by the socialization of schools and the inclusion of parents in principal issues related to teaching and education (Jakubiak, 1992, p. 111). However, it soon became clear that despite expectations of radical reform, "there is and there will continue to be a need for making dramatic choices in the face of inertia and an increasingly complex reality" (Radziwiłł, 1994, p. 35).

The 1999 reform assumed greater teacher autonomy and an expanded role for parents in curricular decisions in schools (Rura & Klichowski, 2011, p. 31). Parents were empowered, included in school activities, and granted a voice in educational matters that had previously been closed to them. Yet despite sound intentions and a well-designed plan, the poor condition of the state and the tragically low share of national income allocated to education (Rura & Klichowski, 2011, p. 31) thwarted hopes for substantive changes in the concept of school education.

Studies of shifts in parent–school relations during the 1990s showed that "these were only apparent processes of democratization between the family and the school at this stage" (Janke, 1995, p. 283), and parents did not "take matters into their own hands." It is possible that, aside from the condition of the state, the problem lay with the people themselves, as "they were unable to comprehend the new symbols provided to them by the unknown, global everyday reality" (Rura & Klichowski, 2011, p. 32). Or perhaps responsibility rested with the "schizophrenic awareness" of educational staff, whose attitudes were unstable and easily reversible (Kwieciński, 1985, p. 40). It may also be that the "old order" persisted in people's minds and mental change remained "frozen" or blocked due to ideological entanglement (Kwieciński, 1985, p. 40).

In the hierarchy of school actors, "the needs of the school and school staff prevail over the needs of students and their parents" (Śliwerski, 2015, p. 277). Unfortunately, "deconstruction of senses and meanings continues, even though the system that favored it, and even enforced it, has disappeared" (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2015, p. 195). In the Third Polish Republic,

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the long-awaited and much-desired participation was replaced by an authoritarian approach deeply rooted in the Polish People's Republic, according to which relations among educational actors must be based on the authority of those higher in the power hierarchy, to whom obedience and submission are expected (Śliwerski, 2024, p. 113).

Model four: Contemporary relations between parents and the school

In order to continue the historical overview of parent–school relations presented above, I undertook research to examine what the current model of these relations looks like in the 2020s. Do historical contexts allow us to draw lessons from the past as we search for an optimal model? Is the current model one of participation characteristic of the Third Polish Republic, the subordination of the Polish People's Republic, or the simulated democracy of the Second Polish Republic? Or has a new model emerged: one suited to the modern world? To answer these questions, I conducted research on parent–teacher meetings in order to diagnose the current state of relations between parents and schools.

II. The research component: Contemporary partnership in Poland in light of parent-teacher conferences

To observe the parent–school partnership from this research perspective, conversational analysis was applied to 22 parent–teacher conferences in grades 1–3 held in public schools. A conference is a pedagogical practice that maintains existing order and tradition (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2018, p. 55). It plays a vital role in "passing information, streamlining communication, improving cooperation, and maintaining control within an organization" (Rancew-Sikora, 2007, p. 97).

Most conferences (19) were recorded in towns with populations of up to 5,000 inhabitants, and three were recorded in cities ranging from 50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants. Purposive sampling was applied. The choice of grades 1–3 was based on earlier research (e.g., Mendel, 1998), which

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identifies early education as the most favorable period for building relationships with the school. The methodological concept of the study was based on ethnomethodology, understood as a research perspective that seeks "to describe methods persons use in doing social life" (Sacks, as cited in Silverman, 2009, p. 103). Ethnomethodology regards everything that becomes an object of interest as an organized, competent social practice (Garfinkel, 2007, p. 46).

The study used **conversational analysis**, which aims to describe the methods through which orderly social interactions are produced. This method developed out of Garfinkel's ethnomethodological program and his analysis of "human" (ethno) methods (Silverman, 2009, p. 190). Conversational analysis is a well-developed, internally coherent approach (…) particularly suited to examining professional practices as forms of action (Granosik, 2013, p. 10). Most socially significant phenomena manifest themselves in conversation; thus, examining conversations means **examining social life and professional activities** (Granosik, 2013, p. 35).

Studies employing conversational analysis are founded on empirical material[6] recorded as natural audio or video data (Peräkylä, 2015, p. 333; Granosik, 2013, p. 31). In this study, only audio recordings of the conferences were permitted.[7] The raw data collected consist of ethnographic recordings of actions and interactions captured in audio format (Rapley, 2013, p. 29).

The aim of the study was to diagnose the contemporary model of relations between parents and schools as manifested in conversations recorded during parent–teacher conferences. Partnership for education is based on mutual trust, a sense of the common good, and collegiality (Mendel, 2002, p. 53), a special relationship built with the child at the center (cf. Mendel, 2000, p. 6). Therefore, the object of this study is the partnership for education, understood as the relationship between teachers and parents as reflected in their conference interactions. Three compo-

[6] Natural—based on the principle of non-interference by the researcher (Granosik, 2013, p. 31).

[7] Headteachers, teachers, and parents showed strong resistance when asked to grant permission to record a school conference for the study.

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nents of this partnership were examined: trust, a sense of collegiality, and a sense of the common good.

Maria Mendel does not define these components in detail, and in my analysis I have only attempted to touch upon their description, aiming instead to explain them in a descriptive manner. I analyzed conversations from parent–teacher conferences in which these three components appeared, described the contexts in which they emerged, and considered how they illustrated the relationships between parents and teachers. This constituted the theoretical foundation for the research questions:

1. In what situations, and in what ways, does trust manifest itself during parent–teacher conferences?
2. In what situations, and in what ways, does a sense of collegiality manifest itself during parent–teacher conferences?
3. In what situations, and in what ways, does the common good manifest itself during parent–teacher conferences?

Mutual trust

Conversational analysis helps identify responses in which speakers express trust or lack of trust towards pupils, parents, and teachers. Trust is a form of social capital and a social fact that helps reduce uncertainty through the assumption (an axiological expectation) that others will act for one's benefit, or at least not act against it (Sztompka, 2002, p. 310). In every recorded conference, both parents and teachers made statements about the social fact of trust as it related to pupils.

In each conference, teachers asked parents to supervise their children and check whether they completed their schoolwork at home. By making such a request, the teacher assumes that pupils cannot complete tasks independently. The teacher (T) asks this of the parents (P), trusting that parental supervision is a guarantee of the child's success, of catching up, and of mastering subsequent stages of education:

> T. *And look, I'd like to ask you to supervise them, because they're in third grade, to keep an eye on them. (…) As I say, you need to watch them*

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because, you know, when they're in first grade, everyone stresses the need to assist the child, and in third grade it seems like some try to be more independent. But, you know, they still need someone to watch them, to see how they're doing their tasks, right? It's not that they should do it entirely on their own: the parents need to check what they do so that our cooperation is better (laughing), so to speak.

[Conference 5; 479-500][8]

Here, the teacher expresses trust in the parents, while her trust in the children regarding school tasks is limited. At each conference, statements made during the individual conversation phase reveal trust, or distrust, toward the child. In the exchange below, both the parent and the teacher accuse the child of lying:

P. *But now, when I tell Janek[9] that he's writing something incorrectly, he says, "No, the teacher didn't say anything, the teacher said it's right." And I say, "Oh really?" "No."*
T. *Right!*
P. *So I'm leaving it to you then.*
T. *Yeah, right—and then the parent comes to me about it.*
P. *And that's how we just go around in circles and nobody knows anything.*
T. *Yes. Because that's how it is. When they talk to me, they say their parents—their mom—told them to do something. I say, "Are you sure your mom told you to do it.*

[Conference 8; 1523–1530]

In this conversation, both the teacher and the parent express doubt about what the pupil is saying. They do not trust the child, and neither the parent nor the teacher believes him. Their lack of trust demonstrates

[8] This is how I record the "bibliographic address" of a statement: the conference number and the transcript line numbers from which the quoted conversation fragments are taken.

[9] All the names have been changed.

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disloyalty to the child. Yet in their view, the child is ultimately the one who benefits from this relationship. In Conference 3, the teacher explains to parents what she believes is the problem with children bringing unnecessary items in their school bags, and she asks the parents to intervene:

> T. *So my request to you is to check their school bags, because sometimes your children, out of convenience or…*
> P. *Because they're lazy.*
> *T. It's just that… yes, they can be lazy, but some children also worry a lot that they'll forget something, English, religion notebooks, because it's happened to them before.*
>
> [Conference 3; 64–68]

The teacher asks parents to help with packing, while the parent interprets the situation as the child's laziness (not bothering to remove books that they will not need the next day) and holds the child responsible for failing to prepare their school things. The teacher does not fully agree with the parent's interpretation, which undermines trust in the child by attributing everything to laziness. She continues her earlier point, which the parent had interrupted, and expresses confidence in the child, saying, *"They are very concerned about forgetting something."*

There was another statement concerning trust during Conference 8, when a parent described a conversation with her child and assumed that the child intentionally lied:

> P. (loud/animated) *And my Tomek, sometimes he says, "Ms. Zosia said something about me." And I say, "Don't lie," and then he starts crying. And when I call you, it turns out to (incomprehensible 1:12:41) be a completely different story, and Tomek is so emotional.*
>
> [Conference 8; 1533–1533]

The parent does not trust the child and insists that she is correct because she contacts the school to confirm that the child has lied, thereby exposing him. Paradoxically, although she remarks on the child's emotional

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sensitivity, she fails to recognize the inconsistency between acknowledging his feelings and assuming "foul play" when he reports what the teacher allegedly said in class.

A summary of the conversational analysis focused on trust reveals a strong belief among parents that they can effectively support the school's objectives. However, there is a noticeable lack of trust from parents toward their children, as indicated by both teachers' and parents' statements. Interestingly, one parent did express trust in her child, revealing a contradiction between recognizing the child's abilities and simultaneously feeling a lack of trust.

Collegiality

Collegiality in an organization stands in contrast to managerialism: "managerialism is underscored by hierarchy, collegiality by lack of hierarchy; managerialism writes off failure, collegiality learns from failure; managerialism codifies behavior, collegiality accepts behavior" (Sawyer, Johnson, and Holub, 2009, p. 12). Collegiality, understood as an organizational principle in decision-making, was marginalized. Parents rarely had the opportunity to make decisions together.

In the meetings observed, collegial decisions were made only when discussing organizational matters and events, especially decisions about meals (during trips, Christmas event menus), gifts, or purchases. In Conference 13, the teacher raised the topic of organizing the Boys' Day celebration. The parents suggested that they would buy some treats (on behalf of the girls), which would be shared with everyone during the celebration:

> T. *Well, I don't know; we can do it however you'd like. I mean, we won't collect money; everyone can just bring something…*
> P. *(all together) Yes!*
> P. *And then we'll all sit at the table and eat…*
> P. *Yes… yes…*
>
> [Conference 13; 448–452]

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During that same conference, the teacher discussed with the parents the starting time for the end-of-third-grade grill gathering:

T. I'm fine with any time after 1 p.m., because that's when I finish work.
P: Five p.m.
T: Five p.m.?
P: So that Lila can make it.
T: Is anyone not okay with that?
P: Lila, you can take a day off.
P1: You get back at ten; you won't be in Naruszewo,[10] until 3:45, no earlier.
P: An hour is a long time for a grill party—an hour is a lot.
T. Well, yes.
P: I'm going to work, so…
T: Alright, then—5 p.m. it is.

[Conference 13; 491–501]

Collegial decisions were also made during the September conferences when parents were elected to the parents' board (the class board, whose leader automatically becomes a member of the school parents' council). Collegiality in parents' statements appeared in the following exchange during Conference 5:

T. You can decide here how we want to handle this so that everything works well and the board can support our children. Please sign the attendance list. I'll pass around the class register and you can sign it.
(…)
Well, if we're preparing a report, then we can ask for the results (silence, quiet talk: so it has to be written down).
P. Any objections? No.
P. Sylwia, can you read it and keep it brief?
P. Well, there was Ms. Kowalska, Ms. Kozłowska.

[10] Proper names of all the places mentioned in the conversations have been changed.

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T. The class parent board for Group 2f will consist of the same people as last year; we'll just note the number of votes cast. So that's the report, okay, we have 15 people, thirteen votes for Ms. Kowalska, and the fourteenth as well. You're accepting the group that has been working; you're accepting the choice. The board did well in Group 2, and it will do well now (?).

[Conference 5; 20–41]

During this conference, the teacher asked parents to choose the same board as the previous year. She left the classroom and, after the election, returned to announce that the individuals she had proposed were elected. Thus, collegiality in this conversation resembles an election convention imposed by the teacher, with parents, who want to go home quickly, accepting the choice that she suggested. Another conference involved a collegial decision to organize an event for children to celebrate Boys' Day. The teacher brought up the topic during the meeting:

T. Maybe it would be better to go see a movie, and then, I don't know, the children could bring some candy, or would you rather buy something? Because—
PP (murmur): No, the girls will bring something… for the boys.
T. (silence)
PP: Something sweet, so they feel special that day.
T. Yes!
P. (treasurer) The girls will bring something sweet.
P: Yes.
P: For the boys.
PP: (murmur of approval)
T. That's fine.
PP: So they'll all eat together—great.

[Conference 22; 1053–1065]

This conversation shows the need to make a decision regarding a class event. When asking the parents, the teacher proposes a ready-made solution, and the parents approve it.

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In summary, collegiality in these discussions appears in the organization of events and the selection of representatives for the parents' board. Most decisions are initiated and steered by the teacher. Parents willingly participate and express their views; however, the final decisions are ultimately made beyond their control, as they are shaped by the teacher's preferences.

A sense of common good

The sense of the common good is a guiding principle in the Polish constitutional order, closely linked to the fundamental values that participants in social life must uphold: justice, truth, and morality (Brzozowski, 2006, p. 22). In the analysis of the meetings, the sense of the common good was emphasized through the teacher's identification with the students' achievements. When discussing pupils' accomplishments, the teacher, acting as the class teacher, stressed her emotional involvement, presenting their success as the outcome of joint efforts. A sense of the common good was evident in these conferences when the teacher spoke about the achievements of the class:

T. *Some of them did so well that I was honestly shocked.*

[Conference 9; 27]

Elsewhere, the teacher describes the children as a collective treasure that must be supported:

T. We really should help the children—they're our shared treasure, and they need our support.

[Conference 9; 98–99]

Acting for the common good also involves, as explicitly stated by the teacher, the need to support children:

T. And the boys… well, boys will be boys—a little lazy, so they need a bit of encouragement.

[Conference 9; 107–108]

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During many conferences, teachers answer parents' questions about their children and acknowledge pupils' achievements, recognizing the parents' interest in their child's progress:

P. Well, I can see that my little star is doing quite well in Polish, right?
T. (loudly) *No! Not just in Polish—she's doing well in everything.*
[Conference 6; 176–177]

The common good also includes activities related to extracurricular contests, where the number of votes can influence the class's overall score:

T. On Facebook Rerum—teaching aids—there are several student projects posted. You need to find ours; they're labeled as being from Lubomino. Click 'Like,' and that counts as a vote.
P. No, no… (3)
P. I think we took third place last year, didn't we?
[Conference 6; 194–198]

The common good, in the teacher's statements, also involves parents fulfilling their responsibilities. At Conference 22, the teacher reminds the parents that they were unreliable (failing to act for the common good) during preparations for the Christmas Eve event, and she asks that this never happen again:

T. And… we weren't able to put together the Christmas Eve event, as I've already mentioned.
P. True.
T. I hope it's going to be different this year, because someone promised to bake cookies and didn't, and that was two parents. Someone else promised to bring tablecloths and didn't either…
[Conference 22; 1103–1108]

In conclusion, the common good appears in the conversations analyzed through statements about pupils, actions supporting their

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achievements, efforts to organize class events, and voting to help the class achieve a high score. The components of partnership identified in the statements—trust, collegiality, and acting for the common good—are understood in a specific school context. Trust toward students is lacking, collegiality appears only in decisions with limited impact on students, and the common good is defined primarily by pupils' achievements and their participation in organizing school events.

Conclusions

What is the diagnosis of educational partnership in the contemporary model of relations between parents and the school, as manifested in conversations recorded during parent–teacher conferences? Educational partnership is a special relationship built on mutual trust, a sense of the common good, and collegiality (Mendel, 2002, p. 53), centered on the child (cf. Mendel, 2000, p. 6). If we understand educational partnership through the lens of the triad proposed by Professor Maria Mendel—trust, collegiality, and a sense of the common good—then, based on my analysis of the recorded conversations, the following conclusions can be drawn (in response to the research questions: *In what situations do trust, collegiality, and the common good manifest themselves during parent–teacher conferences?*).

Conversation analysis allows us to formulate the following findings:

1. Both parents and teachers express a lack of trust in children.
2. Trust is expressed only toward parents (when the teacher appeals to them for supervision and control of their children).
3. No decisions related to education are made collectively.
4. Collegiality manifests itself only in formal and organizational matters.
5. Parents collectively decide only on the selection of the class representative and on organizational issues related to outings, trips, and similar events.
6. Parents engage actively and enthusiastically in conversations aimed at collegial decision-making.

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7. The teacher's understanding of the common good includes the broadly defined well-being of the child, the joint undertaking of school tasks, the good of the whole class, competitions (voting) undertaken for the benefit of the class, and jointly organized class events.
8. The common good is understood in a highly instrumental way, which overlooks the child's educational or developmental success, the building of relationships between educational actors, or the joint efforts of parents and the school in the upbringing and education of future generations.

Final Remarks

In the considerations presented here, through the analysis of cooperation models (set against their historical contexts), I sought to examine the current model of relations from the perspective of parent–teacher meetings. The model of relations presented in the three historical images shows that the Second Polish Republic embraced a participatory approach and created opportunities for fruitful cooperation between parents and schools. The communist era, by subordinating parents to the goals of socialism, squandered the achievements of the prewar school in this regard and introduced an asymmetrical model subordinated to the interests of the school. The simulated partnership of the Third Republic offered hope that ultimately was not fulfilled.

Based on the research conducted, the current relations between parents and the school:

– are dominated by the teacher,
– are focused on meeting the school's needs,
– emphasize cooperation for the benefit of the school rather than the child,
– are based on class achievements rather than the achievements of individual children,
– simulate democratic processes within schools,

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– generate distrust toward pupils,
– leave parents largely on their own.

This partnership more closely resembles that of the communist period than that of the Second Polish Republic, where—despite lower levels of social awareness—the participatory process was democratic: parents were allowed to take part in decision-making, relationships were built on trust among educational actors, decisions were made collegially, and actions were taken for the common good, benefiting not only pupils but also their parents. The current partnership for education is a distorted reflection of what existed in the Second Polish Republic: it is dominated by the teacher, based on actions that mainly benefit the school, and simulates democratic processes in the educational system.

One can only regret that we are unable to draw on the lessons of history, as, after all, *historia magistra vitae est!*

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Preparing teachers to cooperate with parents

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): Cooperation between teachers and parents is one of the fundamental tasks of the school. It is closely related to the idea of the family's and school's subjectivity in the educational process, which is based on the relationship between teachers and parents. Strong, positive relations between these parties create conditions conducive to a child's development. At the theoretical level, there is well-established scholarly knowledge about educational partnership. However, the multidimensional nature of educational partnership and the diversity of forms of cooperation among the family, school, and local community are often not reflected in everyday educational practice. This continues to be a challenge for contemporary schools as well as for teacher training programs. In this context, the aim of the study is to examine higher education programs that prepare students for the teaching profession and to evaluate their usefulness in developing competences related to cooperation with parents, as well as to identify proposals for better preparing teachers to collaborate with families.

Research methods: The research was conducted using document analysis (education programs). The study analyzed the teacher-education programs of five academic institutions that train preschool and early-school teachers.

Process of argumentation: A preliminary analysis of the curricula of five Polish universities training teachers showed that the issue of teacher cooperation is not addressed explicitly (e.g., in the form of a separate course).

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The exploratory research conducted revealed shortcomings in the preparation of teachers for working with parents.

***Keywords*:**
School, family, partnership, teacher training, study program

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Although the training programs examined include learning outcomes related to cooperation with parents, they do so only to a limited extent. Given the significance of this educational issue, more in-depth research on a larger sample is needed. The findings are important for the development of pedagogy, particularly in view of its practical dimension. They may contribute to improving teacher training practices and to the creation of new teaching methods and programs.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: Research conducted among students completing a five-year full-time teacher training program (Surma et al., 2024) shows that they rate their competences lowest in the area of cooperation with parents. They feel least prepared for this aspect of teaching. Young teachers (with up to five years of experience) also report difficulties in working with parents and identify this as one of the most important factors contributing to leaving the profession. The research led to the following recommendations for teacher training:

1. Enriching teacher-education programs with practical components—introducing exercises and communication-skills training into the curriculum, taking into account the specific nature of family environments;
2. Expanding student internships to include opportunities to observe parent-teacher meetings conducted by experienced teachers and to participate in various forms of cooperation with parents.

Introduction

Cooperation between teachers and parents is one of the fundamental tasks of the school. It is closely related to the idea of the subjectivity of both the family and the school in the education process, which is based on the relationship between teachers and parents (Dubis, 2019). Good mutual relations between these entities create conditions conducive to the child's development, as both parents and teachers are committed to the child's holistic growth.

The understanding and practice of cooperation between educational environments has evolved. A review of research in this area (Deslandes & Royer, 1994) makes it possible to distinguish two trends, both of which demonstrate the importance of parental involvement in monitoring learning progress. The first group of authors focused on the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of the "family" and examined the impact of family characteristics, parenting style, and parenting practices on school achievement (Christenson et al., 1992). In contrast, the second group of

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researchers concentrated on examining the impact of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), that is, the links between family and school, on the motivation and academic success of young people (Christenson et al., 1992; Epstein, 1987). It is within this latter line of research that studies on family–school cooperation are situated, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development continues to be used in research on cooperation between teachers and parents/guardians (Sadownik, 2023).

Polish pedagogical literature from the last quarter century also demonstrates a solid understanding of the issue of cooperation between educational environments. During this period, programs were developed to build partnerships between families, schools, and communities (Mendel, 2000, 2009). Scholars also presented a vision of a school open to parents—their needs and expectations. (Nowosad & Olczyk, 2001)—and examined the significance of cooperation between schools, parents, and students (Śliwerski, 2004). Questions were raised about the school as a place of mutual understanding between teachers, parents, and students (Waloszek, 2005) and about effective communication strategies among partners (Hernik & Malinowska, 2015; Kowolik, 2005). The potential for school development through cooperation with parents was likewise highlighted (Nerwińska, 2015). The main lines of reflection thus focused on cooperation partners, the space for cooperation (institutional aspect), the meaning of cooperation, and communication between partners.

The fundamental dimensions of educational partnership include the community of relationships between:

- **students** – teaching style, nature of tasks (cooperation–competition);
- **teachers and students** – co-decision-making, self-education, responsibilities;
- **teachers and parents** – supporting parents in fulfilling their responsibilities toward their children;
- **schools** – asserting their rights, initiatives, and programs;
- **the school and local authorities** – financial decisions, three categories: mutual exchange, charitable activities, and recreation-oriented activities (Karbowniczek, 2016, p. 77).

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Researchers have also noted that optimal cooperation between teachers and parents requires certain conditions in order for it to be effective. These include appropriate frequency of contact between parents and the school; involving the family in implementing comprehensive tasks related to the school's curriculum rather than only individual or ad hoc tasks; ensuring an appropriate climate for cooperation and adequate organizational and material conditions; parents and teachers being aware of their rights and obligations; and supporting parents in developing the competences necessary to understand and raise their children (Dubis, 2019, p. 166).

Educational partnership

Currently, the concept of *educational partnership* has become established in pedagogical discourse. Polish legislation contains provisions concerning agreements between teachers, parents, and the local community. These are set out in each school's documentation (statutes, curriculum, educational program, etc.), which should be fully accepted by parents. This documentation provides the legal basis for their participation in school life. Parents' right to have a say in the education and upbringing of their children is therefore guaranteed by law. Schools are required to "constantly consult parents on all matters related to their children's development". In practice, this means elevating cooperation "between teachers and parents to the level of everyday interaction filling the school space" (Nowosad, 2001, p. 9).

Taking the above into account, schools should organize cooperation with parents according to the adopted criteria, taking into consideration:

- the number of participants (individual, collective, mixed);
- the form of contact (direct and indirect);
- the areas of the teacher's activities;
- the implementation of the school's basic functions toward parents.

Community engagement activities should be an important part of a comprehensive school partnership program. Joyce L. Epstein, considered

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the originator of the theory of educational partnership, proposed a classification of types of cooperation between the family, school, and local community. She identified: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2002).

The first type involves understanding roles in the family and in the classroom, recognizing the family's uniqueness, supporting families in the processes of upbringing and education, and providing assistance through home visits, meetings, lectures, discussions, and similar activities. In communication, it is important to improve the flow of information between the school and parents in order to understand the needs of the environment and strengthen cooperation. Volunteering focuses on social assistance, prevention, support groups, and nurturing attitudes of sensitivity, openness, empathy, and solidarity among family members, the school community, and the local environment, as well as supporting educational and upbringing programs.

Learning at home is an area that is particularly accessible to parents. They influence homework and the implementation of educational activities, foster independence and a positive attitude toward school obligations, and help combine schoolwork with everyday life. The school may provide recommendations on how parents can effectively support their children's education. An important element of partnership is co-decision-making: involving parents in actively planning school activities, participating in school life, supporting parents in raising their children, and cultivating leadership among parent representatives.

The last type—collaboration with the local community—means encouraging activity and integrating internal and external stakeholder groups and institutions operating in a given community. It includes joint activities undertaken by the school and parents for the benefit of the community, such as various forms of preventive cooperation: initiatives by the school, institutions, and groups aimed at preventing dysfunctional and maladaptive behaviors; discussions; seminars; consultations; meetings with psychologists, therapists, and counselors; and preventive classes and workshops (Karbowniczek, 2016).

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Theoretical assumptions and their practical implementation – research on study programs

The multidimensional nature of educational partnerships and the variety of forms of cooperation between families, schools, and local communities are often not reflected in everyday educational practice. In their work, teachers encounter various types of difficulties or even resistance of varying intensity. The primary source of this resistance may be information—its abundance, diversity, and variability. Teachers must first process this knowledge themselves and then help their students master and understand it. Other sources of resistance include inattention, indifference, or oppositional behavior on the part of students, as well as interactions with parents, school management, or colleagues (Kwiatkowska, 2010, pp. 73–74). This is a constant challenge for contemporary schools, but also for the process of teacher training.

Academic teacher training in Poland emphasizes preparing students to work with children, and university training programs are based on educational standards that define student learning outcomes. We teach students how to work with children (Christofer, 2004, p. 13). Yet, although it is obvious that education and upbringing, as social processes, require interaction and cooperation among various social actors, most importantly, parents, in practice, little attention is paid to teaching students how to cooperate with the parents of these children. There are two important reasons for this conclusion: first, the teacher training programs themselves, and second, the self-assessment of students completing teacher training.

Undoubtedly, the effectiveness of cooperation between teachers and parents will depend largely on the quality of teachers' professional preparation, including their level of professional, communication, and social competences. Issues related to parent–teacher cooperation are included in the education of future teachers, so students learn the principles, forms, methods, and anticipated effects of such cooperation. In this context, it is reasonable to ask whether, without professional experience, they are able to understand the importance and necessity of this

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cooperation (Walaszek-Latacz, 2014). Research on students completing a five-year full-time teacher training program (Surma, B., Rostek, I., & Twardowska-Staszek, E., 2024) shows that they rate their competences lowest in relation to cooperation with parents: they feel least prepared for this area of professional activity.

This phenomenon is also confirmed by research conducted by a team led by Małgorzata Żytko, published in a report on the conditions leading to professional attrition among Warsaw teachers with up to five years of service (Dobkowska et al., 2024), which highlights the reasons why young teachers leave the profession. Among the factors that demotivate teachers in their daily work, difficulties in cooperating with parents (49% of respondents) ranked second, following unsatisfactory remuneration (75%).

In this context, the question arises as to the sources of these concerns among students, which are later confirmed by studies of young teachers. It was assumed that one reason may be the marginal treatment of cooperation between schools and families—and between teachers and parents—in teacher training programs. In order to verify this thesis, a study was conducted on study programs preparing students for the profession of preschool and early school education teacher. The programs of five universities (three in Kraków and two in Warsaw) were selected for analysis. Although academic study programs emphasize this dimension of teaching and students do receive theoretical knowledge about this aspect of their future work, this proves to be insufficient.

The concerns of future teachers are largely justified, as teachers often encounter negative attitudes from parents who are demanding and who shift responsibility for their child's difficulties onto the teacher or school. When it comes to challenges in cooperating with parents, future teachers anticipate difficulties in schools primarily in the form of parents failing to recognize (or undermining) the authority of teachers, especially young teachers, as well as a lack of understanding regarding the importance of problems identified by teachers and a visible reluctance to address them (Walaszek-Latacz, 2014, pp. 114–115). This conclusion comes from research conducted more than ten years ago, yet little has changed in this regard. Teachers today continue to face similar problems.

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An analysis of the curricula of several Polish teacher training institutions has shown that the issue of cooperation between teachers and parents is not addressed explicitly (e.g., in the form of a separate course). The teacher training cycle ensures that teachers acquire professional competences defined as the ability to perform a set of professional activities in a manner consistent with the standards and requirements for a given professional task or job position, supported by appropriate skills, knowledge, and psychophysical characteristics. The education process is carried out through courses or groups of courses preparing students for the teaching profession. It includes substantive and pedagogical preparation, and within this framework, psychological and pedagogical preparation as well as didactic preparation, which also includes professional internships. Their purpose is to enable students to gain experience related to the teaching and educational work of a teacher and to confront the knowledge acquired in specific didactics (teaching methodology) with pedagogical reality (Szempruch, 2022).

The topic of partnership appears in the description of learning outcomes only in a rather laconic form. Content related to cooperation between the most important educational environments is dispersed across various courses. On this basis, students learn the principles, forms, methods, and effects of such cooperation. The programs include learning outcomes related to the development of soft skills, which complement functional, specialist, and technical skills, i.e., hard, specific, and executive skills. Soft skills include, among others, self-presentation, building relationships with others, willingness to learn, emotional intelligence, communication skills, politeness, establishing contact, teamwork, self-confidence, independence, and decision-making. The proper development of these outcomes will pay off in cooperation with parents. However, the question remains whether these learning outcomes are actually achieved during studies. The long-standing debate among education theorists and practitioners about whether and how teachers, headteachers, and counselors are prepared to work with students' families and the local community suggests that shortcomings persist in this area.

The opinion formulated many years ago by J. L. Epstein still seems relevant in the Polish context:

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> Despite constant calls for new directions in teacher training and management, including courses on parent education, parent involvement, school–family partnerships, and community relations, most universities need to do more to prepare teachers and administrators to understand and work with students' families and communities (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

Conclusions and recommendations

The programs analyzed show great similarity in how they define the vocational training path for teachers. This is understandable, as they were created on the basis of the education standard (Minister of Science and Higher Education, 2019), which precisely defines the thematic blocks to be covered during the course of study, as well as a particular philosophy of education:

> The education process preparing students for the profession of kindergarten teacher and early school education (grades I–III of primary school) is individualized. The start of the education process is preceded by an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the student as a future teacher. During the education process, students should receive support in planning and implementing self-development tasks and in shaping the attitude of a reflective practitioner, in particular by building professional judgment based on the analysis of individual cases. During the education process, students should be provided with individual methodological guidance supporting the integration of knowledge in scientific disciplines related to education, while at the same time shaping students' independence and responsibility for the course and effectiveness of their own education (Minister of Science and Higher Education, Appendix 2).

The education standard preparing candidates for the profession of kindergarten and early school teacher (grades I–III) does not mention

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cooperation between the school and the family at all. It is limited to defining the content and scope necessary to obtain adequate preparation for the teaching profession. However, the programs analyzed do include learning outcomes related to cooperation between teachers and parents. More in-depth research on how these outcomes are implemented would be necessary.

Preliminary exploratory research has led to a proposal to enrich the teacher training process with practical exercises and skills training that take into account the specific characteristics of the family environment. It is necessary to introduce courses on social and communication skills training into teacher education programs. It would also be important to extend the student internship program to include opportunities to observe meetings with parents conducted by experienced teachers and to involve students in various forms of cooperation with parents. It also seems necessary to ensure that teachers are better equipped—during both their studies and various forms of postgraduate training—with skills that facilitate dialogue with parents, as well as to provide both parents and teachers with knowledge about legal regulations concerning the rights and obligations of parents at school, including those set out in Articles 48, 53, and 71 of the Polish Constitution and Articles 83, 84, and 86 of the Education Law (Starzyński, 2025).

This appears to be a course of action that offers an opportunity to better prepare future teachers for the role of moderator of interactions with the family environment.

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The need for parent–teacher collaboration in shaping healthy habits in early school-age students. Pedagogical research results

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family, school, student, cooperation, health habits

Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The aim of this paper is to present the theoretical principles of cooperation between early school teachers and the parents of their students, as well as to show the results of research that was primarily aimed to identify the actions taken by parents and teachers to shape children's pro-health habits.

Research methods: The research was conducted using a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative) among 52 parents and 12 teachers from five primary schools in the Lublin Voivodeship. Parents completed surveys, and in-depth interviews were conducted with early childhood education teachers.

Process of argumentation: It is widely recognized that cooperation between school and family is natural and necessary, yet it remains debatable whether this relationship is truly a partnership. A child at an early school age not only acquires knowledge and skills but also develops habits that shape his or her attitudes. This article presents the results of research on the need for cooperation between family and school, using the example of shaping pro-health habits. The study identifies both well-established children's habits and those requiring additional support from the school.

Research results: An analysis of the findings suggests that children's health habits are developed to varying degrees across different areas of health. These habits are most advanced in the area of personal hygiene and least developed in the areas of physical activity and proper nutrition.

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Conclusions and/or recommendations: The study identified specific areas of cooperation between teachers and parents in shaping healthy habits in children. Certain topics should be addressed jointly, and the actions of parents and teachers should be consistent.

Introduction

A discussion is now emerging on the cooperation between schools and families. While the obvious benefits of such collaboration are widely acknowledged, questions regarding the subjectivity of the partners, mutual trust, and the scope of their involvement remain open. In pedagogical practice, the concept of *collaboration* is often equated with *cooperation*. Educator Mieczysław Łobocki used these terms interchangeably (Łobocki, 1985). Collaboration involves the joint activity of schools and families in solving problems, brings satisfaction, and creates a model of work that enables the implementation of grassroots initiatives. Relationships between teachers, parents, and students that are based on respect for each individual's identity affect the quality of the school's work, which in turn makes it open to all and advances the idea of inclusive education. Thus, in the simplest sense, cooperation is an equal relationship and mutual influence between the key environments shaping a child's education (Mendel, 2013; Otero-Mayer et al., 2021).

Cooperation between school and family is an indispensable element of an effective educational process, as only the coordinated actions of both environments can fully support a child's development. Without the teacher's understanding of the child's living conditions, effective pedagogical work is impossible. Likewise, without awareness of the school's functioning—its teaching, educational, and care activities—and without the teacher's insights into the child's behavior, attitude, and learning, it is difficult for parents to apply appropriate measures and forms of support that promote the child's overall development (Weissbrot-Koziarska, 2018; Knopik et al., 2022). We agree with Mendel's (2013, p. 1) statement that:

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> A teacher focused on the progress of their students always works with openness to the environment from which they come. They know that their work will make sense only when—having become familiar with this environment—they take its characteristics into account and recognize the value of cooperation with parents.

The criterion of cooperation on the part of parents should be based on partnership, which requires them to possess knowledge of how the school functions and to gradually build trust in teachers (Weissbrot-Koziarska, 2018, p. 179).

Referring to the topic of the article, which concerns cooperation between the family and the school in shaping students' health habits, it is necessary to identify several basic international legal acts that mandate cooperation between parents and teachers. Poland, as a member state of the European Union, is required to comply with international legal instruments. The first document is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (adopted on 10 December 1948 by the United Nations). In particular, Article 26, points 1 and 2, refer to the universal right to education, at least at the primary level, its equal accessibility according to individual merit, and the principles of tolerance and peace. Point 3 states: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."(UN General Assembly Resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998)" Although the declaration does not explicitly address the shaping of children's health-related habits, it emphasizes parents' rights regarding their children's education.

Similar ideas appear in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted on 20 November 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly, which stipulates that "childhood is entitled to special care and assistance" and that the family, as "the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children," should receive the necessary protection and support to fulfill its responsibilities (OJ No. 120, item 526, https://brpd.gov.pl/konwencja-o-prawach-dziecka/). A key document establishing the framework for cooperation between schools and families is the *European*

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Parents' Rights Charter, which states that parents' fundamental right to raise their children should be supported through collaboration between parents, teachers, and school administration. It affirms parents' right to be recognized as the "first teachers" of their children (OJ EU C 303, p. 1, https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/prawa-rodzicow).

In the national context, the pedagogical activity of the school is one of the fundamental goals of the state's educational policy. According to the objectives of this policy, the school's activities should take into account both the will of parents and the role of the state in educating and raising the young generation. As defined in the current *Core Curriculum for General Education*, the school's tasks at the stage of early childhood education, in terms of cooperation between the school and parents, include:

- "cooperation with parents, various communities, organizations, and institutions recognized by parents as a source of important values, to create conditions enabling the development of the child's identity;
- regularly supplementing, with parental consent, the educational content with new issues resulting from the emergence of changes and phenomena in the child's environment that are important for the child's safety and harmonious development" (Journal of Laws 2024, item 996).

It should also be remembered that cooperation between school and family ought to be based on partnership principles in three areas—didactic, educational, and caregiving—because only then can it be said to have a constructive impact on the upbringing of children and youth (Ordon & Gębora, 2017).

Cooperation between family and school leads to the coordination of educational activities. These two environments should not act in contradiction to each other, as such inconsistency can weaken the sense of previously established values, judgments, or ideals (Młynek, 2021; Błasiak, 2017). The main principles of parent–school cooperation involve several key elements that help build an effective relationship between both parties. Some of the most important include the child's well-being, partnership

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and mutual respect, openness and frequent communication, mutual trust and discretion, engagement of both sides, and transparency of activities. Once cooperation has begun, it should not be interrupted, as doing so would undermine earlier efforts and require rebuilding the relationship from the beginning (Reczek-Zymróz, 2024).

The school, as an educational institution, both shapes the student and supports parents in the process of educating their child. The school's role in strengthening parental competences includes, among other things, collecting and providing information about the child's behavior, jointly seeking solutions to problem situations, involving parents in school activities, organizing specialized counseling, and providing pedagogical knowledge (Opozda, 2017; Barbara et al., 2014; Mendel, 2013).

Meanwhile, the educational influences of the family are usually not subject to predetermined regulations. Each family develops its own educational practices, which arise naturally and are used not because of formal statutory obligations but as a result of certain habits, traditions, or incidental circumstances. The family provides children with a sense of security and relative independence, which gives it a clear advantage over the school.

Weissbrot-Koziarska's (2018) research shows that the most beneficial forms of cooperation between teachers and families seem to be individual, direct or indirect contact (information sent via the student's electronic journal, correspondence, telephone contact, or communication through social media), as well as regular meetings held either at school or in the student's home. These conversations touch on the child's academic progress as well as on issues related to health, insufficient physical activity, a tendency toward a sedentary lifestyle, and the lack of healthy eating habits (Przybyszewska, 2011).

A teacher's work encompasses various areas of teaching, educational, and caregiving activities, as their role is not limited to transferring knowledge. In the instructional domain, teachers plan and implement the teaching process, adapting methods and forms of work to students' needs, motivating them to learn, and monitoring their educational progress. In the educational domain, they support students' personal development,

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shape values, attitudes, and social norms, and help address emotional, social, and health-related issues. Caregiving activities involve ensuring students' physical and mental safety and well-being, as well as supporting them through difficult life situations. Through this multifaceted work, teachers play a key role in a young person's overall development (Młynek, 2021; Błasiak, 2017; Woynarowska, 2013; Trojan, 2014). Communication and openness to collaboration with parents are crucial components of these teacher responsibilities.

While not functioning as parents, teachers can play a significant role in supporting and developing parenting skills, particularly through collaboration with students' parents and by organizing educational activities. The main parenting competencies that teachers can help strengthen include communication with the child, understanding the child's needs and emotions, supporting independence and responsibility, setting boundaries and consequences, building a positive relationship with the child, and cooperating with the school (Opozda, 2017; Weissbrot-Koziarska, 2018). Our research on the development of pro-health habits in early school–age students is relevant in the context of the principles of cooperation between family and school, which have been presented here in brief out of necessity. At the same time, implementing the above-mentioned tasks requires support for teachers and partnership-based cooperation with parents. This need was the primary motivation for undertaking the topic and designing the study.

Research procedure

This study falls within the area of early childhood education and health education. The main research problem was formulated as the following question: *What are the forms of cooperation between primary school teachers and parents of early school–age children in shaping healthy habits in children?* The aim of the study was to identify the actions undertaken by parents and teachers of early childhood education to shape healthy habits in children.

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The nature of the research problem guided the selection process, as it influenced the choice of measurement tools to ensure the validity and reliability of the study (Łobocki, 2006; Pilch & Bauman, 2002). Quantitative methods were used to fulfill the goal of identifying parents' opinions and health habits in early school–age children, including physical activity, preventive care, personal hygiene, and proper nutrition. To achieve this goal, a diagnostic survey method and an original survey questionnaire were used. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of a literature review and previous research on children's healthy habits (e.g., physical activity, preventive medicine, personal hygiene, and proper nutrition). The questionnaire was nonstandardized and was piloted among a small group of parents (n = 10), which allowed for clarification of some items and improved content validity.

Qualitative research methods were used to identify teachers' actual expectations concerning cooperation with parents in shaping children's healthy habits. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted using an original, nonstandardized interview questionnaire (Wiśniewska, 2013; Pilch & Bauman, 2002). Given the research problem and the complexity of teachers' work across diverse school environments—along with the individualized nature of their educational practices—the use of this technique is justified.

A non-random, convenience–purposive sampling strategy was employed. Study participants included parents of early school–age children and teachers who taught grades 1—3 in primary schools. Questionnaires for parents were distributed via the electronic journal, with the consent of school principals. In the second phase of the study, interviews were conducted with 12 teachers. Interviews took place individually at prearranged times. Principals from five schools granted permission to conduct the study. All participants provided informed consent, and the study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles.

A total of 52 parents participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 27 to 35 years. Participants' place of residence was also recorded: 76% lived in the city of Biała Podlaska, while 24% lived in villages in the Biała Podlaska district. Regarding parental education levels, 72% had higher education, 12% had secondary education, and 16% had vocational education.

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The need for cooperation of parents and teachers in shaping healthy habits in children

In the initial phase of the study, the focus was on analyzing data concerning children's health habits related to personal hygiene, including hand and foot hygiene and tooth brushing. The ability to independently compare one's behavior with standards appropriate for a given age group supports the development of agency and increases children's self-awareness. Parents' responses regarding their children's hand and foot hygiene are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Hand and foot hygiene in children

No.	Hand hygiene/ Hand-washing frequency	Parents' answers %	Foot hygiene/ Foot-washing frequency	Parents' answers %
1.	My child washes hands very often	79.0	Every day before bed	82.0
2.	Only before eating and after using the toilet	17.0	Only when they get really dirty	16.0
3.	Only when they get really dirty	4.0	Very rarely	2.0
	Total	100.0	Total	100.0

Source: own research

According to the majority of respondents (79%), the reason for very frequent handwashing in children is their personal concern for cleanliness, and similar results were observed for foot hygiene. Almost 82% of respondents reported that their children wash their feet every day before going to bed. The high indicators in this area show that most children have established personal hygiene habits. However, 4% of respondents pointed to a low level of hygiene habits or a lack thereof. Although these percentages are small, they suggest the need for targeted educational measures for this group of children.

The questions about children's personal hygiene were supplemented by parents' responses regarding the regularity of tooth brushing. The vast majority of parents (70%) reported that their child brushes their

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teeth twice a day (morning and evening), 28% indicated once a day, and 2% stated that their child does not brush their teeth at all. These results indicate a lack of consistent parental supervision, as well as the need for cooperation with teachers in shaping hygiene habits, particularly oral hygiene. The findings concerning the frequency of tooth brushing therefore point to the urgent need for parents and teachers to work together in this area.

Research on the relationship between hygienic and nutritional behaviors in children and the risk of dental caries was presented by Michota-Katulska et al. (2015), who emphasized the importance of monitoring children's hygiene practices. Similarly, research conducted by Nijakowski (2015) drew attention to concerning issues such as insufficient parental supervision, which can lead to a decline in children's daily oral hygiene, especially as they grow older. Children gradually lose motivation to maintain hygiene if they are not systematically supported and supervised by caregivers (Nijakowski, 2015).

The relationship between family influences and socioeconomic factors in maintaining oral hygiene in children was demonstrated in studies conducted in Pakistan and Ecuador (Yousaf et al., 2022). These studies indicate that parents' level of education, health awareness, and economic circumstances directly affect children's hygiene. Unfavorable economic conditions may limit access to hygiene products, dental care, or health education. Findings from both Polish and international studies underscore the need for health education directed at parents, especially concerning the importance of daily oral hygiene and the role of parents as role models for their children (Yousaf et al., 2022; Nijakowski, 2015).

The study also takes into account the importance of physical activity as an integral part of children's healthy habits. Parents' responses to the question about their children's participation in morning exercise are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2 Participation of children in morning gymnastics

No.	Frequency of morning gymnastics	Parents' responses %
1.	Every day	5.0
2.	When assisted by parents	11.0
3.	Never	84.0
	Total	100.0

Source: own research

The collected data may raise concerns, as 84% of parents reported that their children never do morning exercises, and only 5% indicated that their children engage in this type of activity every day. It should also be noted that the responses from parents regarding walking with their children are relatively unsatisfactory. According to 79% of respondents, they *sometimes* walk with their children on days off from work; 14% reported walking with their children every day for about one hour; and only 7% indicated walking for up to two hours every day.

The questions related to physical activity were supplemented by parents' responses regarding their child's participation in sports or dance classes. The majority of respondents (66%) stated that their child does not participate in these activities, whereas only 34% indicated participation. Analyzing the parents' answers regarding their children's involvement in various forms of physical activity reveals very low participation rates, which suggests the need—indeed, the necessity—to undertake actions promoting these forms of activity. In this respect, professional pedagogical work with students can be helpful, and such efforts should begin as early as possible.

The need for physical activity in children's healthy development has been emphasized by many health researchers, including Woynarowska (2013), Leszcz-Krysiak (2022), Charzewska and Wolnicka (2013), and Waszczuk et al. (2017). Research by Merkiel et al. (2011) also demonstrated low levels of physical activity among children in the Mazovian Voivodeship. A child's healthy habits develop through regular hygiene

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practices and physical activity, along with an appropriate diet. When asked about the frequency of vegetable consumption, parents responded as follows: 63% answered once a week, 31% "almost never," and only 6% reported that their child eats vegetables every day. When asked specifically about sweets consumption, 100% of parents stated that their child eats sweets almost every day.

The clear disparity between occasional vegetable consumption and daily consumption of sweets indicates that many children's diets rely predominantly on sweet-tasting products. This pattern may stem from a lack of appropriate dietary modeling by adults as well as limited access to reliable health education. These results underscore the urgent need for educational initiatives directed toward parents, aiming to increase awareness of the importance of a balanced diet for children and the necessity of reducing sugar intake in favor of nutritious foods such as vegetables.

The next question also concerned the child's diet, as parents were asked whether their child had an appropriate body weight for their height and age. Parents' responses were as follows: 64% stated that their child weighs much more than they should, 25% indicated a slight excess, and 11% reported that their child weighs the appropriate amount or slightly less. Barbarska et al. (2012) and Trojan (2014) emphasize the importance of nutrition in preventing obesity and overweight in children and highlight the significance of the school environment as a key factor influencing children's eating behaviors.

In the research on shaping healthy habits in children, attention was paid to the daily schedule, including the time at which the child goes to sleep. The majority of parents (87%) indicated a bedtime between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m., while 13% reported a bedtime before 9:00 p.m. The daily schedule is considered a universal measure because it accounts for key pedagogical and hygienic principles that contribute to good health. The results indicate that children have not yet fully developed pro-health habits related to planning their daily routines. This need should motivate substantive cooperation between parents and teachers.

Parents' opinions regarding the development of healthy habits in children helped identify the substantive issues that should become the focus

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of cooperation between parents and teachers, given the varied levels of established health habits in children. In the area of personal hygiene, health habits appear to be properly formed for almost all children, according to the surveyed parents. However, nutritional habits show low vegetable consumption and high consumption of sweets, which will require dialogue between parents and early childhood educators in the area of nutritional education.

Another important area for cooperation between parents and teachers is physical activity. It is necessary to strengthen parents' pedagogical knowledge by educating them about the physiology of a healthy body and the role of physical activity in increasing energy levels and strengthening immunity. Considering the age of the surveyed parents (27–35 years), it can be assumed that raising the issue of health education in cooperation between parents and teachers would likely bring mutual benefits and contribute to effectively forming health habits in children.

Parents' pro-health attitudes have a crucial impact on children's upbringing and overall health. Parents act as role models for their children, which is why examining their attitudes toward their own health is relevant. It is therefore worthwhile to propose educational initiatives for parents that emphasize the importance of parental involvement in supporting proper child development (Miyake et al., 2021; Woynarowska et al., 2010). Such initiatives are an investment that benefits both the child and the family.

An important aspect is the child's emotional engagement. When children are emotionally involved in an activity (e.g., preparing healthy meals, participating in group exercises), their sense of agency and willingness to continue increases, and intrinsic motivation develops. They experience firsthand that caring for their health brings real benefits (more energy, satisfaction, overall well-being). The social environment in which a child lives is also crucial. It should support healthy choices by, for instance, providing access to safe spaces for physical activity and limiting exposure to unhealthy food advertisements.

Shaping pro-health habits in children is an important task addressed to both parents and teachers. Only the joint efforts of these two partners

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can create a coherent educational environment that supports children's health (Leszcz-Krysiak, 2018; Nazaruk, 2017). Joint activities between schools and parents include health education (in which parents and teachers can together teach children the principles of a healthy lifestyle), as well as shaping healthy eating habits, physical activity, and hygiene practices. The parents' and teachers' efforts should be coherent and systematic, and regular meetings along with the exchange of information about the child's health behaviors can facilitate this process.

The research showed that all teachers participating in the study cooperate with parents and communicate with them frequently, mainly on an individual basis. According to the surveyed teachers, most parents show considerable interest in their children's behavior and educational progress, which is reflected in regular conversations with teachers. In many cases, parents contact them every few days, and some even on a daily basis. Particularly demanding are conversations in which teachers must provide parents with less positive information, such as "today the child was not active in class," "the child was sleepy," or "the child was reluctant to participate in physical exercises." Moreover, teachers' suggestions for incorporating physical activity do not always receive approval from all parents. This may stem from the fact that some parents have their own views on how to spend free time with their children.

In such situations, it is advisable to offer thoughtful educational support that encourages parents to reflect on the benefits of physical activity for their child—physically, emotionally, and socially. Parents should understand that regular activity promotes not only physical health but also concentration, emotional stability, better sleep, and stronger peer relationships. Children learn through experience: when they see physical activity as a normal part of daily life, they are more likely to adopt it as a habit. Through ongoing cooperation and conversations with parents, teachers learn about parental expectations regarding children's physical activity, hygiene, and nutrition. Research by Knopik et al. (2022) likewise demonstrated the need to develop strategies for supporting parents in connection with the health education of students with special educational needs, which is included here for added context.

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According to the surveyed teachers, half of the parents of children attending the schools where the research was conducted do not offer any comments or suggestions regarding the health education tasks implemented by the school or by teachers, through which students develop pro-health attitudes. Parents often justify their children's low level of physical activity by claiming that "they already have quite a lot of outdoor exercise and see no reason to participate in additional forms of physical education." However, some parents hold a different view, as the surveyed teachers noted: "they want physical activity classes at school to be more intensive and regular." Teachers also presented suggestions submitted by parents to make children's physical activity more appealing. The most frequently mentioned forms are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 List of parents' expectations perceived by teachers

No.	Parental expectations	Teachers' answers %
1.	Organizing swimming pool activities	61.0
2.	Organizing dance classes	46.0
3.	Organizing posture-corrective classes	36.0
4.	Regularly organizing free outdoor activities/games	34.0
5.	Organizing sports competitions	32.0
6.	Organizing school camp trips	12.0
7.	Other activities	5.0

Note: The results do not add up to 100% because multiple proposals were submitted

The types of expectations perceived by teachers suggest that parents possess varying levels of knowledge and diverse approaches to shaping pro-health attitudes, as well as indicate the forms of activity that they prefer. We assume that introducing children to such forms of activity would positively influence the development of proper habits during childhood and in later stages of life. At the same time, parents' comments reveal a degree of dissatisfaction.

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Based on these findings, we recommend implementing the proposed measures both at the class level—working directly with educators—and at the school level with school management, and even, when necessary, involving the governing body of the institution due to the associated costs. An instructive example can be found in Japanese schools, where practical health promotion lessons for parents on child development are implemented (Miyake et al., 2021).

Summary and recommendations

The research and the resulting findings allow for several reflections on the cooperation between family and school. The research indicates that children's health habits are formed at varying levels across different health-related areas. The strongest habits are clearly in the area of personal hygiene, as the vast majority of parents' responses indicated that their children engage in hygiene practices regularly and independently. However, habits related to proper nutrition and physical activity are not fully developed, as indicated in parents' responses. These areas require the implementation of *exercitatio* in a professional manner—an effort in which teachers can play an important role, thus outlining key areas for cooperation between parents and teachers. The study showed that cooperation between teachers and parents in shaping pro-health habits is multidimensional, though certain issues still require attention. This cooperation focuses directly on the child and emphasizes their behaviors, knowledge, activities, and the suggestions or proposals for actions that foster health-promoting abilities.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that without effective, partnership-based cooperation between parents and teachers, valuable health education cannot occur. Teachers and parents should jointly organize health education initiatives. Parents communicate their needs to teachers regarding the implementation of health-related topics that support the development of pro-health habits, including proper nutrition, oral hygiene, and physical activity. The coherence of parental and teacher

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actions should be coordinated. Parents are the first to convey the foundations of healthy behavior, after which educational institutions continue and reinforce this process. Therefore, an increasing number of specialists in health education draw attention to the key importance of the school in shaping children's pro-health habits.

What should also be noted is another dimension of cooperation between parents and teachers that may not have emerged directly from the conducted research, namely, financial support and sponsorship from parents. For example, school camps or swimming pool trips would be difficult to organize without parents' financial participation. Parental support is also necessary for purchasing sports equipment and providing prizes for participation in athletic competitions. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that without partnership-based cooperation at both the parent–teacher and parent–school management levels, effective promotion of a child's healthy development and pro-health habits is unlikely. While this research does not fully exhaust the topic of teacher–parent cooperation, it sheds light on one part of a broader reality that is still evolving. Such cooperation may support not only the effective implementation of health education but also a conscious and responsible approach to nurturing the child's family environment and ensuring their healthy development. It seems that the research issues, particularly due to their broader implications for the health of the younger generation, are highly relevant and merit continuation to further investigate other factors influencing the formation of pro-health habits.

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Parental burnout as a challenge for the parent-school partnership

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problems: This article analyzes the parent-school partnership in the context of parental burnout (PB). PB is a syndrome characterized by parents' exhaustion resulting from prolonged stress and a chronic imbalance between demands and resources. It has serious negative consequences for the parent, the child, and the parent-child relationship. PB also affects children's academic achievement.

Research methods: The methods employed include a critical analysis of the literature on PB, the risk and resources model of PB and its relationship to parent-school cooperation. However, this review does not meet the criteria for a systematic review.

Article structure: The article consists of four parts. The first two focus on PB and summarize the main findings concerning the phenomenon. The third part examines academic achievement and PB, while the final section discusses the parent-school partnership and its challenges, particularly in relation to parental stress and PB.

Research findings: The parent-school partnership is a crucial yet challenging endeavor. Research indicates that teachers often perceive parents as overly demanding and difficult, rarely viewing them as partners or allowing them to play an active role in the school community. Teachers' comments and actions may contribute to parental stress and burnout; therefore, suggestions have been made for improving communication and collaboration with an emphasis on parental well-being.

Conclusions: PB is a serious condition with potentially significant negative ramifications. Teachers are often on the front lines and can either alleviate or exacerbate parental stress. Thus, it is important to discuss

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parental burnout,
parent-school partnership,
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how to support parents and to reconsider the parent-school partnership in order to create a more supportive environment.

Introduction

Parental burnout (PB) is a syndrome of parental exhaustion resulting from prolonged stress and inadequate support systems (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018). It leads to feelings of being overwhelmed, as well as emotional distress and disconnection from one's child. PB is associated with a lack of resources for managing everyday parenting challenges. Although the phenomenon is not new and has been documented in literature since the 1980s (Mandecka, 2019; Mikolajczak et al., 2023), it has garnered increasing attention, particularly over the past decade. Today, PB is the subject of numerous studies and is widely discussed in popular media and online (Mikolajczak et al., 2023), which underscores the seriousness of this issue and its consequences for parenting. This article aims to discuss PB in the context of parent-school cooperation. Based on existing research, the first two sections focus on PB, particularly the risk and resources model. The next section investigates how PB affects children's school performance. The article concludes with practical guidelines for supporting parent-school cooperation in the context of PB.

Main characteristics of parental burnout

Research on PB stems from the idea that any area of life that is both meaningful and stressful can lead to burnout (Bianchi et al., 2014; Mandecka, 2019). Thus, the phenomenon cannot be confined to work-related conditions; it can also occur among pupils, students, and parents. Early PB research focused on emotional exhaustion and a loss of meaning in child-rearing among mothers. Attention then shifted to parents of children with chronic illnesses, life-threatening conditions, and disabilities (Mandecka, 2019).

More recently, researchers have refocused on parents of children without special needs, arguing that attitudinal changes toward child-rearing—

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such as the promotion of close parent-child relationships and strong parental involvement in children's development—have placed increasing pressure on parents (Godawa, 2022; Mikolajczak et al., 2023; Wiśniewska-Nogaj, 2025). For some, parenting has become a burden (Roskam et al., 2018). Research shows that PB differs from job-related burnout, depression, and general anxiety disorder (Mikolajczak et al., 2020).

Four core symptoms characterize PB (Schittek et al., 2024):

1. Exhaustion in one's parental role—physical, emotional, or both. The exhaustion is severe, intense, and chronic, and it cannot be alleviated simply by a night's rest.
2. Emotional distancing from one's children—in contrast to job-related burnout, parents do not dehumanize their children but instead focus on providing basic care (e.g., feeding, putting them to bed) without emotional involvement. Burned-out parents tend to distance themselves emotionally rather than physically. They also become less involved, responsive, or sensitive to their child's needs and less connected to their children.
3. Loss of parental fulfillment—exhausted parents no longer enjoy being with their children. They lose the joy, satisfaction, and pleasure of parenting and feel less effective. In other words, they are simply fed up with being parents.
4. A strong contrast between current and previous feelings and behaviors, as well as between how they imagined parenting before becoming parents and how they experience it now (e.g., the kind of parent they wanted to be versus the kind of parent they have become). This discrepancy between imagined expectations and reality becomes an additional source of distress, contributing to feelings of shame and guilt (Roskam et al., 2021b).

PB develops in stages (Roskam et al., 2021a), which suggests that it is a process that unfolds over time. The first symptom is exhaustion, followed by the others. Emotional distancing was previously believed to be the second symptom; however, current research indicates that all symptoms

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worsen after exhaustion emerges and can reinforce one another (Kalkan et al., 2022). Moreover, the developmental nature of PB shifts the difficulty from the parent (exhaustion) to relationships (e.g., emotional distance) (Schittek et al., 2024). Its processual character creates opportunities for early interventions and support for parents. PB typically arises after a period of acute stress, during which parents begin to feel overwhelmed by chores and demands and stop seeking solutions to problems related to child-rearing (Bayot et al., 2024).

The level of PB varies across countries and cultures (Roskam et al., 2021a). Cultural values (e.g., a high level of individualism) are considered to play a significant role (Matias et al., 2023; Mikolajczak et al., 2023; Ren et al., 2024). The highest scores are found among Western parents, where up to one in twelve (8%) exhibit symptoms of PB. Several possible explanations exist, such as the aforementioned level of individualism or the pressure to engage in active parenting focused on the child's needs and development (Matias et al., 2023; Mikolajczak et al., 2023). In Poland, PB levels are among the highest globally, with approximately 7.7% of parents exhibiting PB symptoms (the third highest among 42 countries, after Belgium and the U.S.). The mean result suggests that more parents experience severe PB symptoms and/or parental stress more frequently, even if they do not meet the criteria for a PB diagnosis.

There is ample evidence that PB has detrimental effects on parents' well-being and behavior toward their children (Roskam et al., 2018; Roskam et al., 2021b). A longitudinal study by Chen and colleagues (2021) found that PB leads to internalizing and externalizing problems among adolescents through increased parental hostility. PB among mothers can lead to poorer social adaptation and a lower sense of security among adolescents (Song et al., 2024) and can negatively affect adolescent development (Wang et al., 2023). Generally, burned-out parents exhibit higher levels of neglect and violence toward their children (Hansotte et al., 2020) and tend to emotionally distance themselves (Gillies & Roskam, 2019).

PB can lead to suicidal and escape ideation among parents (Mikolajczak et al., 2019), as well as psychological forms of escape, such as alcohol use (Mikolajczak et al., 2018). Due to changes in brain function

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(dysregulations in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal [HPA] axis), burned-out parents often present somatic complaints and sleep disorders (Brianda et al., 2020). Furthermore, PB increases conflict between partners (both in intensity and frequency) (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018) and is believed to alter family dynamics and reduce the likelihood of having another child (Bogdán et al., 2024).

Parental burnout – between demands and resources

The last decade of PB research has focused on identifying relative risk and protective factors. Protective factors decrease the likelihood of PB, while risk factors exacerbate it. None of these factors are determinative. Moreover, protective factors are the opposite of risk factors, not merely their absence. To illustrate this, Mikolajczak and Roskam (2018, p. 2) note that having enough money for everyday life does not necessarily mean having sufficient financial support for full-time assistance with domestic or parental chores: "PB develops when parental resources are insufficient to meet the demands (whatever they are)" (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018, p. 2). This indicates a long-term imbalance between demands (risk factors) and resources (protective factors).

Based on PB research, Mikolajczak and Roskam compiled a list of protective and risk factors in 2018. They concluded that sociodemographic variables had either a trivial effect (parent's gender, child's gender, number of children, family structure, family recomposition, education, age of respondents, socioeconomic status of the family) or a small effect (child's age, work schedule). The most relevant factors were parental characteristics (particularly high levels of perfectionism and neuroticism as risk factors), characteristics of the relationship with the other parent (such as relationship satisfaction, support, agreement between co-parents, and endorsement by the partner as resources), as well as child-rearing practices (e.g., positive parenting as a protective factor).

In 2023, the list was updated, and the results were similar—variables such as age, educational level, number of children, or time spent with

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them have little or no effect. The predominant risk factors are family disorganization, neuroticism, and perfectionism. The latter trait requires further explanation: perfectionism is believed to be linked to individualistic cultures (Mikolajczak et al., 2023) and has been addressed in programs for burned-out parents (Brianda et al., 2020). However, perfectionism has different facets and not all contribute equally to PB. The most detrimental effects are associated with perfectionistic concerns in two domains: parenting and work, that is, when a parent fears making mistakes both as a caregiver and an employee. Moreover, self-oriented perfectionism (perfectionism imposed by parents on themselves) has a particularly harmful impact on PB.

Mikolajczak and colleagues (2023) argue that risk and resource factors must be treated with caution because most studies are cross-sectional, and the research lacks cross-cultural and causal approaches. Several areas remain understudied, such as the role of mental overload, information overload, and the impact of social media and new technologies on PB. Moreover, some variables can act as both risk and protective factors, depending on cultural context (Matias et al., 2023; Mikolajczak et al., 2023). One of these factors is emotional competence (EC). Intrapersonal EC is linked to the ability to identify, understand, and regulate one's emotions, focusing on one's internal state, and can serve as a protective factor. Conversely, interpersonal EC focuses on the emotions of others and can come at a prohibitive cost for some parents (Lin et al., 2023).

Ren and colleagues (2024) adopted a different approach to protective and risk factors. They embedded these factors in ecological systems theory and divided them into four systems: macro-, exo-, meso-, and micro-. The macrosystem is associated with personal and cultural values (such as the importance of individualism in a given country or for an individual), while the exosystem focuses on organizational or community factors, such as social support or child behavior problems. The mesosystem focuses on interpersonal factors, for example, marital satisfaction or the quality of the relationship with the co-parent and the child. Finally, the microsystem describes individual factors. In addition to the aforementioned personality traits, variables such as self-compassion and

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concern for others, a mother's attachment style, and a high need for control appear to be significant for PB. However, Ren and colleagues (2024) do not indicate how strong the impact of each variable is on PB.

To sum up, in general, sociodemographic factors have a smaller effect than parental characteristics. Mikolajczak and colleagues (2023) find this to be an encouraging result because some of these factors are impossible (e.g., age) or very difficult to change (e.g., neighborhood). The most important risk factors are the personality traits of the parent (more than those of the child). Parents who are highly neurotic, overprotective, rigid, perfectionistic, anxious, or possess low self-esteem, as well as those exhibiting poor or non-adaptive self-regulation strategies and difficulties in responding to their children's needs, are more prone to PB (Piotrowski et al., 2022; Mikolajczak et al., 2023; Ren et al., 2024). A lack of institutional and social support, combined with high social demands and pressures on parents, plays a crucial role. Risk factors also include difficulties in co-parenting relationships and family dysfunction. Piotrowski and colleagues (2022) also note that a stable parental identity—i.e., identifying as a parent and deriving satisfaction from that role—can protect against PB.

PB is also connected to the fact that current demands on parents are higher than ever. Today, parental responsibilities are more time- and energy-consuming (Wiśniewska-Nogaj, 2025). There is social pressure to be active, engaged, and creative in parenting, which can be highly stressful for some parents (Piotrowski et al., 2022). Moreover, social pressure can lead to the development of unrealistic beliefs among parents, making them feel inadequate, as if they do not meet social standards. This can cause frustration, anxiety, and stress, leading to the perception that parenting requires excessive effort while offering minimal rewards. Some studies indicate a mediating role of perceived family support and psychological resilience, particularly among parents of school-aged children (Zhao et al., 2023).

Several therapeutic options exist to address PB among parents; however, their efficacy remains uncertain. The primary question is which interventions produce long-lasting effects. The following are some of the methods adopted (Brianda et al., 2020; Bayot et al., 2024):

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1. Non-directive interventions—Parents are heard in nonjudgmental settings, where other parents offer their support and unconditional positive regard. This intervention aims to rebuild parents' strengths, enabling them to find their own way out of PB.
2. Directive interventions—This group-based program actively addresses the imbalance between resources and risk factors through psychoeducation and targeted exercises, focusing on parents' psychological traits (e.g., perfectionism), child-rearing practices (e.g., autonomy demands), and family functioning (e.g., relationships with and support from the co-parent).

Both approaches appear complementary; therefore, a program combining both methods (the "Parenting in Balance Program" [PBP]) is currently being evaluated (Brianda et al., 2020; Bayot et al., 2024). Programs are also emerging based, for instance, on mindfulness practices (Bayot et al., 2024; Urbanowicz et al., 2024a) and stress reduction methods (Urbanowicz et al., 2023). The CARE (Coherence, Attention, Relationship, Engagement) intervention, derived from positive psychology and designed to increase parental resources and strengths, has also been tested (Urbanowicz et al., 2024b). Generally, all examined interventions led to a reduction in PB and accompanying symptoms such as parental neglect, abuse, and biomedical markers such as hair cortisol. Overall, PB interventions can be crucial in addressing PB symptoms. However, there remain some uncertainties (e.g., the effectiveness of programs for parents with different initial levels of PB). Moreover, the area of early-stage intervention and prevention seems underdeveloped. Supporting parents with minor or no symptoms (who belong to high-risk groups) appears essential.

Parental burnout and children's educational achievement

PB is known to affect children's well-being as well as their educational achievement. However, most studies have been conducted in cultures that place a high value on education and view it as a means of improving

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one's life (e.g., Mainland China, Vietnam). Consequently, there may be doubts about how well these results can be applied to the Polish education system. Moreover, the mechanisms linking PB to lower educational achievement are not entirely clear (e.g., studies often do not account for child traits such as intelligence, motivation, or behavioral problems). Nevertheless, some conclusions can be drawn.

Parental involvement in the educational process is generally believed to enhance children's school performance (Otręba-Szklarczyk, 2015). It can reduce academic burnout and promote academic engagement. Parental involvement has been categorized into three basic types: academic socialization, home-based involvement, and school-based involvement (Li et al., 2024). However, it requires numerous resources: time, energy, money, and a good partnership with the school. Presumably, PB has a detrimental effect on the level of parental involvement in school, and a lack of such involvement negatively affects children's educational success.

Several studies support this observation. A direct link between PB and school achievement has been found among Vietnamese primary school students (An et al., 2024), Chinese elementary school students (Hong et al., 2022), and Chinese middle school students (Peng et al., 2025). In the latter study, academic self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between PB and educational achievement and was moderated in the first half of the mediating effect by gender: increased PB led to decreased self-efficacy (which hindered school performance) among female students. This indirect effect was not observed among male students.

In another study involving junior middle school students from Henan Province, results showed that PB led to poorer academic engagement and greater academic disaffection through negative parenting styles (Guo et al., 2024). Moreover, Zhang and colleagues (2023) found that PB affects academic burnout through three mechanisms:

1. It has a direct relationship with academic burnout.
2. It impacts academic burnout indirectly through the mediating role of psychological distress.

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3. It relates to academic burnout through the chain-mediating role of harsh parental discipline.

Another study confirmed that PB mediates the relationship between parental educational anxiety and children's academic burnout (Wu et al., 2022). Peng and colleagues (2025) argue that burned-out parents may show less emotional involvement with their children and may resort to more controlling or punitive parenting behaviors. Instead of supporting their children in facing academic challenges, they may apply harsher discipline. This approach does not resolve students' problems but, in turn, leads to a decline in children's academic achievement.

Parental burnout and the parent–school partnership

It should first be noted that parent–school cooperation has been widely discussed in pedagogical literature. The relationships between parents and teachers are crucial for students' development, academic achievement, and the overall school environment (Hernik & Malinowska, 2015). A positive parent–school relationship enables parents to feel responsible not only for their own child's education but also for that of other students. It also contributes to parents' lifelong development (Śliwerski, 2017).

Consequently, there is an emphasis on improving communication between teachers and parents and on making schools more parent-friendly. Certain activities have been proposed to achieve this goal, such as inviting parents before the beginning of the school year to present rules and expectations, organizing parent meetings, and maintaining communication through various channels (Nadolnik, 2016). Although Nadolnik (2016) argues that these are good examples of school–parent cooperation, doubts persist. Hernik and Malinowska (2015) note that many of these forms are primarily used to address problems with students, leading parents to believe they have little influence on the school. Consequently, they tend to withdraw from school life or become passive participants.

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Moreover, in many cases, parents who wish to advocate for changes at school are viewed as difficult or overly demanding. Paradoxically, although teachers often state that their professional training lacks courses on communication and cooperation with parents, they tend to rank these skills low on their list of professional development needs. This suggests that many perceive communication and cooperation as self-evident or intuitive (Hernik & Malinowska, 2015). Of course, years of experience can facilitate this process, but it does not guarantee that what works well with one group of parents will work with another. The task is demanding for both teachers (who must meet various needs and expectations) and parents (who may bring unresolved issues from their own school experiences).

There is also the question of whether teachers should focus on "cooperation" or "partnership." The latter implies not only a shared goal but also equal status between teachers and parents, which some may find challenging. Some studies indicate that teachers tend to position themselves as experts, superior to parents. They often limit parental involvement to financial and organizational aspects (e.g., supervising children during trips, baking cakes for school events, or helping at festivals) (Zalewska-Bujak, 2020).

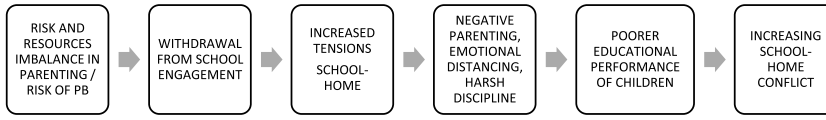
Moreover, Zalewska-Bujak (2020) reveals several concerning trends in parent–teacher cooperation. First, most teachers perceive parents as overly demanding and difficult. They believe that parents fail to fulfil their educational responsibilities while placing excessive demands on the school. Furthermore, teachers' statements suggest that schools tend to undermine parents' competencies and blame them for their children's behavior without offering constructive solutions. Teachers often pressure parents to "do something" about their child (e.g., compensate for students' learning difficulties) and to devote significant time to studying and homework without providing any clear guidance.

In summary, teachers' statements imply that their actions may increase parental stress rather than alleviate it, potentially contributing to PB. The precise mechanism is unclear; however, the following conceptual model may help in understanding the relationship between PB and the parent–school partnership (Fig. 1).

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Fig. 1. A conceptual model of PB and the parent–school partnership



The question arises: how can schools partner with parents in a context where many parents suffer from PB or high levels of stress, navigating numerous life demands, often with little or no support? On the other hand, teachers also face many challenges. Their work is not widely recognized as socially important; they are often criticized and must constantly adapt to a changing world. However, burnout among teachers is well recognized, with several solutions available to address it (including health leave). Remedies for PB, on the other hand, are still being evaluated.

Based on the literature review in the previous part of the article, several ideas can be implemented to reduce the risk of PB and improve partnership. It is crucial to acknowledge that parenting is a demanding task and may be more challenging for some parents. Moreover, a teacher with different parenting experiences may find it challenging to understand another parent's struggles. During school meetings, topics regarding parental stress and ways to alleviate it (e.g., seeking help with everyday hassles, learning self-care, including self-regulation practices, and seeking professional help) should at least be mentioned. Interventions for burned-out parents include the development of mindfulness practices, stress-reduction techniques, and emotion self-regulation strategies—similar workshops (although not embedded in eight-week programs) could be offered by school psychologists. Understanding and recognizing the first signs of PB and offering assistance (e.g., free psychological guidance) can minimize the risk of developing further symptoms. Especially, parents of children with special needs might be more prone to PB (Dzielińska et al., 2024).

Much can be achieved through everyday parent–school communication. Teachers should refrain from directly or indirectly criticizing or mocking parents and their parenting. For instance, it is natural for

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children to behave their worst in front of their parents; this does not indicate poor parenting. Rather, it may show that school can be a highly stressful environment for children who lack opportunities to unwind emotionally. Furthermore, parent–school communication should focus on resources rather than demands. For example, if a child exhibits difficult or socially unacceptable behavior or has learning difficulties, teachers should not expect parents to solve these problems on their own. Advice such as "talk to the child" or "do something about it" does not offer real solutions; instead, it shifts responsibility from the school to the parents and increases their stress. By suggesting that a child's unruly behavior is the parents' fault, teachers may reinforce parents' feelings of inadequacy, potentially leading to more negative parenting, overcontrol, and harsh discipline.

Moreover, fear of making mistakes—associated with high self-oriented perfectionism—is one of the most significant risk factors for PB (Mikolajczak et al., 2023). Thus, teachers' comments can contribute to PB and negatively affect children's development. Parent–school communication also involves a range of tasks for parents, such as remembering what to bring, keeping track of children's assessments, and participating in various competitions, among others. Although the role of mental and information overload has not yet been examined in the context of PB, it can be hypothesized that these factors may serve as risks. This calls for schools to recognize the fragility of inviting parents to become more active while avoiding overburdening them with excessive demands.

In conclusion, the parent–school partnership can be a source of stress for both parties. However, teachers, as professionals, should focus on fostering cooperation in a friendly, safe atmosphere while respecting boundaries. Their words, gestures, and actions can either support or burden parents. Teachers must work to create a safe, nonjudgmental, and respectful environment that encourages parental engagement and values their experiences, offering advice when necessary. Non-directive interventions for burned-out parents operate on a similar principle; thus, it can be assumed that teachers' behavior can help alleviate parental stress. Although little is known about the impact of children's school experience

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and parent–school cooperation on PB, the mechanisms discussed above suggest that these factors may contribute to parents feeling overwhelmed and may serve as risk factors for PB.

The discussion presented here is strongly grounded in the Polish educational system; therefore, its cultural limitations should be clearly acknowledged. Specific parent–teacher dynamics, the low professional status of teachers, and the division of responsibilities between home and school may differ across countries and cultures.

Conclusion

Parental burnout is a serious condition with potentially significant negative consequences for parents, children, and the parent–child relationship. It can contribute to students' academic burnout and hinder their school performance. Teachers are often on the front line and can either help alleviate parental stress or contribute to it. Therefore, there should be a broader discussion on how to support parents and reimagine the parent–school partnership to create a more supportive environment.

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Service learning as an opportunity to strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation between family, school, and community

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The aim of this article is to explore service learning methodology in cooperative partnerships between families, schools, and local communities. Accordingly, the following research question was posed: How can the service learning method support and strengthen cooperation between families, schools, and the local community?

Research methods: A desk research method was applied to both scholarly articles and project reports that use the service learning methodology.

Process of argumentation: Service learning is an educational method based on learning through experience and is applied in various areas of education. It can also be used to support multi-stakeholder cooperation among schools, families, and the community. These methods benefit students, parents, teachers, schools, and institutions operating in the local community.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: In today's context of a rapidly changing pace of life and ongoing social, cultural, and economic transformations, schools are continually seeking new forms of learning. Promoting the idea of service learning may be one way to achieve educational outcomes that meet students' needs, as learners are not only recipients of knowledge but also actively experience and apply it through their own involvement.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: Service learning is successfully implemented in many countries at both the secondary school

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and university levels. It benefits both learners and the local community. Further areas for the application of this method should be explored. Primary education, in particular, still seems to be an underdeveloped area for service learning. The exploration of the essence of service learning has indicated the necessity of continuing research that substantiates this approach as an effective method for cultivating communicative learning within the interactions between family, school, and community.

Introduction

The search for effective forms of learning is often a subject of reflection for both practitioners and theorists in the field of education. People learn best when they are active participants in an event or when they can acquire new knowledge and skills through direct experience. Since the time of John Dewey, learning through experience has been regarded as one of the key elements in the process of skill acquisition and human development (Dewey, 1938; Ecler-Nocoń et al., 2024; Kolb & Kolb, 2017). Today, learning through experience is implemented, among other approaches, through the idea of service learning. Service learning involves integrating learning content, instruction, reflection, and practice. Its aim is to transform social reality and to serve it in solidarity (Tapia, 2019).

Experiential learning is achieved by engaging in various forms of activity in the local environment. Participants in such activities combine working for the community with achieving learning outcomes through reflection, classroom work, discussion, and in-depth knowledge acquisition. Learning in line with the idea of service learning focuses on organizing curricula in ways that inspire students to become involved in the community (Conway, 2013).

Service learning is therefore one way in which students can apply what they learn in the curriculum to practical situations. However, it is not just a practical application of acquired knowledge. It is important that this application responds to and meets the needs of the community (Miller & Ng, 2023). This educational approach focuses on human development in all its dimensions, strengthening the empowerment of the individual

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so that learners can actively contribute to building themselves and the communities in which they live (Selmo, 2018).

Today, service learning can be observed in various areas of education, in different forms and at different educational levels. It is implemented through direct participation (service learning) as well as in the form of e-service learning. This article focuses in particular on the potential application of service learning in the context of multi-stakeholder and multidimensional cooperation among families, schools, and local communities. Desk research method was used to review existing literature on service learning, focusing on articles that define its core principles and emphasize its role in combining both academic learning and community engagement. The method also included an analysis of results from selected projects focusing on service learning to identify results, such as student skill development and strengthened school–community partnerships.

General outline of service learning

The term *service learning* was first used in 1967 by Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey, educators involved in the Manpower Development Internship Programme in Atlanta (Stanon et al., 1999). They defined service learning as a relationship among authentic community service, conscious learning, and reflection. Service learning adds value to education because, in addition to enabling students to gain experience, it also makes a positive contribution to the community (Ecler-Nocoń et al., 2024; Stanon et al., 1999).

Service learning is also described as an experience, an educational concept, a pedagogy, a learning technique, a method, a philosophical concept, and a social movement (EOSLHE, 2020). It is an approach to teaching and learning that combines planned instruction with social activity and focuses on the educational benefits for students that arise from activities that benefit the community. Knowledge is acquired through active involvement in community life and through practical solutions to real-world problems (Brozmanová-Gregorová et al., 2024a).

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Broadly speaking, service learning is an educational activity that combines knowledge acquisition, curriculum, skill development, and the fulfillment of social needs (Tapia, 2006). It therefore concerns not only students' ability to use knowledge and apply it in practice, but also ensuring that their actions benefit others and have social significance (Ecler-Nocoń et al., 2024; Gregorová et al., 2022).

The service-learning approach is based on three fundamental principles. First, it relates to social reality, i.e. it addresses the needs of a specific community. Second, the service learning method requires sufficient space and time for reflection, which enables connections to be made between the experience gained and the curriculum content. Reflection is an essential component of experiential learning. Third, the essence of service learning is characterized by reciprocity: participants in the process, both students and community partners, learn from one another by responding to each other's needs (Baumgartner et al., 2020; Brozmanová-Gregorová et al., 2024a; Gierszewski, 2023; Godfrey et al., 2005). This means that activities undertaken as part of community service not only contribute to solving community problems but also enhance the quality of learning (Tapia, 2019).

Service learning pedagogy is similar to other prosocial activities, such as: (1) fieldwork aimed at applying specific school or university knowledge in the local environment, for example through periodic work placements; (2) occasional, unsystematic solidarity initiatives that are not directly related to knowledge acquired at school or university; and (3) institutional community service through volunteering or partnership-based projects (Biela et al., 2021; Tapia, 2006, pp. 45–49).

To fully understand service learning, we should not equate it with internships or volunteering. Service learning is not volunteering because it is directly connected to school or university learning and therefore to the curriculum. Nor is service learning an internship, since during an internship the student is the main beneficiary of the activity. Service learning is more than a traditional educational activity, which is characterized by the transmission of knowledge during instruction (Brozmanová-Gregorová et al., 2024; Furco, 1996). What distinguishes service learning

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is the creation of space for students, teachers, and community partners to reflect on their mutual interactions and activities in relation to educational and social goals (Flecky, 2011).

Cooperation between the family, school, and community

Rapid social, cultural, and economic changes make it increasingly difficult for individual actors in education to function independently. It therefore seems necessary to establish cooperation not only between families and schools, but also with the community. Isolating the school from the rest of the community is not conducive to achieving educational goals (Błasiak & Michalec-Jękot, 2024; Dorczak, 2012). Effective cooperation among families, schools, and the local community should be based on dialogue, shared goals and values, mutual interdependence, and benefits for all parties involved. Creating a positive climate based on kindness and respect depends on relationships among teachers and students, among school staff, between teachers and parents, and between school staff and the community (Błasiak & Michalec-Jękot, 2024; Mendel, 2000).

One model of family–school collaboration is Joyce Epstein's model, which identifies six types of relationships between schools and families: (1) parenting; (2) communicating; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) decision-making; and (6) collaborating with communities (Epstein et al., 2018). This model is successfully used in schools that seek to develop effective family–school partnerships. The sixth type of involvement specifically refers to cooperation with the local community and involves integrating the resources of various institutions to strengthen school programs, family functioning, and students' learning and development. This approach allows for the optimal use of resources surrounding the school and the family, while also making the learning process more engaging. At the same time, the activities of schools, parents, and students can enrich the work of other institutions (Dybowska, 2024; Epstein et al., 2018).

Cooperation between schools and families is an important reference point for shaping and developing students' skills, particularly social and

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interpersonal competences. Multi-stakeholder cooperation among families, schools, and local communities enables mutual support and assistance (Błasiak, 2017). Partnership and involvement of families and the local community are important elements of good school organization and contribute to the achievement of key goals related to student learning and development (Epstein, 2019). Today, education increasingly takes place in the context of lifelong learning and should be characterized by multidimensionality, covering various aspects of reality. It is also clearly beneficial for education to be interactive, integrating individual development with the development of society. Education should fulfill specific functions: promoting democracy, civic engagement, multicultural awareness, critical analysis and evaluation of information, the ability to cope in the labor market, and active participation in shaping social reality.

Accordingly, one of the school's important tasks is to stay open to local issues, cooperate with other educational institutions, organizations, and private individuals, and interact actively and consistently with the local community (Błasiak & Michalec-Jękot, 2024). From this perspective, service learning can become a method that not only supports learners' development but also benefits the local community.

Service learning: Selected implications for practice

Families, schools, and local communities all play significant roles in students' education, development, and well-being. Local communities offer many resources—human, economic, material, and social—that can support and enrich activities undertaken at home and at school to promote children's learning and development (Epstein et al., 2018). Cooperation with the local community allows schools to take advantage of resources that they do not possess themselves. In this way, schools expand their social capital, provide students with access to new sources of experience, and enable them to acquire new knowledge.

Cooperation between teachers and parents is a natural part of school functioning. Extending this cooperation to include the surrounding local

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environment creates space for building a strong local community. Participants in such cooperation have the opportunity to get to know one another and recognize each other's resources (Hajduk, 2018). The idea of service learning can be one way to build a local community, particularly because it benefits all participants involved in the activities undertaken.

Service learning is usually organized according to the PARE model (Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Evaluation). Preparing all partners for service learning experiences increases the likelihood of positive outcomes for both students and the community. At the core of this approach is action that allows all parties involved to experience tangible, even if modest, change. Reflection is an important element of service learning and distinguishes it from traditional volunteering or community service. Evaluation is also important in order to assess the impact of the activities on both participating students and the local community (Baumgartner et al., 2020). This is a characteristic dynamic of service learning project organization.

Several key components are important when planning service learning activities. Learning is designed and organized so that experiences gained through service respond to social needs and are based on students' active participation. Service learning is intentionally and purposefully integrated into the curriculum, which means that the activities undertaken are directly linked to learning goals and content. It is also necessary to allocate time for reflection on the experiences gained through these activities. The overall aim of service learning is to develop students' civic responsibility (Brozmanová-Gregorová et al., 2024a).

Planning service learning within the framework of cooperation among families, schools, and the local community requires finding appropriate partners for cooperation. Participants in such multi-stakeholder cooperation may include local government bodies, other educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, social welfare institutions, cultural organizations, sports clubs and facilities, churches and religious associations, businesses, non-governmental organizations, fire departments and other emergency services, health care providers, and the media (Epstein et al., 2018; Hernik et al., 2012).

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The implementation of service learning projects involving partnerships among families, schools, and communities requires, first and foremost, an assessment of community needs that also takes learning content and educational objectives into account. The school is typically responsible for coordinating activities, which are led by a coordinator appointed by the school principal. In addition to determining the needs that the project is intended to address, it is also necessary to assess the resources – physical, human, and social capital – of each actor involved in the project.

Once the expectations of all participating entities have been identified, the benefits and gains of cooperation within the project are clarified. Communication channels among stakeholders and rules for cooperation are also established. After the activities have been planned and implemented, the project is evaluated. Evaluating service learning projects can help identify areas for improvement in the learning process while taking social needs and contexts into account. Evaluation is essential for recognizing the mutual benefits of experiential learning and for contributing to more sustainable outcomes and the development of future service learning initiatives (Brozmanová-Gregorová et al., 2024b).

Conclusion

María Nieves Tapia (2019) notes that service learning is used to provide real support to society, despite the limited availability of specialist terminology and bibliography on "learning through service." One of the most important goals of learning through engagement is to strengthen local democracy and support the development of civil society. Learners acquire practical skills and develop a sense of social responsibility. Another aim of experiential learning is to transform the culture of learning itself. In this approach, learners independently plan their activities, assess opportunities for involvement, discuss problems and seek effective solutions (Gierszewski, 2023). This refers to Lev S. Vygotsky's sociocultural concept, where learning takes place through social experiences, using

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cultural tools and interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Service learning actively involves participants in social action and encourages ongoing reflection on oneself and one's relationship with society. It promotes an understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants. Young people and students feel empowered by planning, implementing, and evaluating their experiences under adult guidance, and gaining knowledge through service activities (Filges et al., 2022).

Numerous resources, including academic articles, projects, and non-governmental organizations—support the implementation of service learning initiatives. Examples include the Uniservitate organization (https://www.uniservitate.org/), the European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education (https://www.eoslhe.eu/easlhe/), and International Service Learning (https://islonline.org/). Many projects aim to promote the concept of service learning and to implement concrete activities that simultaneously teach through experience and provide tangible benefits for local communities. One such example is the international project *E-SL4EU – e-Service Learning for More Digital and Inclusive EU Higher Education Systems* (https://e-sl4eu.us.edu.pl/en/home/).

Schools have long been, and continue to be, one of many closely interconnected elements of the community working for the common good (Dorczak, 2012). Although awareness of these interconnections and the need for coordinated action among social institutions operating alongside schools was rather underdeveloped for many years, such awareness has become increasingly widespread in the third decade of the twenty-first century. Multi-stakeholder cooperation among schools, families, and local communities through service learning can contribute not only to the development of competencies but also to the formation of a more responsible and humanistic society.

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Resilience education through Service-Learning methodology

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): This study promotes the use of the Service-Learning methodology to strengthen children's and young people's awareness in the face of social challenges and to foster Education for Resilience. It underscores the importance of involving students actively in their educational process to ensure responsible citizenship grounded in values that contribute to their holistic development.

Research methods: In this regard, the Service-Learning methodology is used as an educational approach that integrates the development of academic competencies with meaningful community service.

Process of argumentation: We present the theoretical framework underpinning the relationship between knowledge, social skills, and emotional competencies, which together activate mechanisms that foster resilience. In addition, we propose the design of a methodological approach and a Service-Learning project for Resilience Education, adaptable to various educational levels, from Primary Education to Higher Education.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: This proposal aims to enhance students' ability to cope

***Keywords*:**
Service-Learning, resilience, active citizenship, educational community, resilience education

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with academic and emotional challenges and to support the development of resilient educational and life trajectories.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The Service-Learning methodology provides a broad spectrum of psychological benefits aimed at safeguarding mental health aspects that may be at risk, while also fostering community resilience.

Introduction

Education, insofar as it contributes to the development of resilience, helps improve the social climate necessary for further developing the skills that will be part of meaningful learning. For this reason, we consider the practice of a Service-Learning project to be a highly valuable tool, as it promotes a comprehensive education aimed at developing the skills and abilities needed for resilience (Aguilar et al., 2016). Service-Learning, for its part, is a methodology that supports the transfer of knowledge to society through actions that facilitate the acquisition of tools for promoting resilience (Filgueira et al., 2023). Students involved in Service-Learning usually face unexpected and novel situations that guide them through a process of change, transformation, development, and personal growth, enabling them to acquire new techniques or skills along with valuable aptitudes and competences (Council of the European Union, 2012), both in their present roles as students and in their future adult and professional lives.

Participation in a Service-Learning project offers the possibility of acquiring knowledge and skills, as well as feeling empowered to contribute to social change (Blanch et al., 2020). This becomes a tool that guides education toward overcoming challenges throughout the educational trajectory, while also fostering an awareness that can evolve into a lifelong commitment. We focus on this specific area, which involves further exploring knowledge related to the development of the skills and abilities necessary for Resilience Education. We aim to achieve this through the creation and implementation of a Service-Learning methodology project, in order to enrich students' holistic development. When knowledge and skills are put into practice for the benefit of others, the competen-

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cies needed for personal growth are strengthened, allowing students to actively participate in their own development and face the challenges that may arise during this process of growth and maturation.

Resilience - brief historical development of resilience

In the current academic and non-academic landscape, resilience stands out as a construct that generates considerable interest, due to its many implications and applications in different fields. The concept of resilience has roots in material physics, but it is in psychology and sociology that it takes on the meaning most commonly used today in the social sciences (Kazmierczak, 2016). The notion of resilience dates back to the 1970s, when psychologists began studying people who, despite facing adverse circumstances, such as poverty or trauma, demonstrated a remarkable ability to bounce back and thrive. This initial focus centered on identifying the factors that promote psychological resilience (Corti et al., 2022).

In the decades that followed, resilience research expanded into a variety of fields, including developmental psychology, neuroscience, and public health. Protective factors such as social support, positive self-concept, and coping skills were identified as key contributors to resilience. The concept has since transcended individual psychology and has been applied to broader contexts such as education, public health, social work, and community development. Its importance has been recognized in promoting well-being in diverse settings and populations, from children at risk to communities affected by natural disasters or conflict.

As the concept of resilience evolved, the idea of *collective resilience* also gained prominence. It refers to the capacity of groups, communities, or entire societies to adapt and recover from adversity (Corti & de Carlos-Buján, 2024). This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of social systems and the importance of mutual support in times of crisis. In summary, in the social sciences, resilience has evolved from a psychological construct centered on the individual to a wider perspective that encompasses the strength of communities and societies in the face of diverse

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challenges. Its historical development reflects a deepening understanding of the factors that promote human well-being and adaptation under adverse conditions.

Resilience first took shape in England through the work of Rutter (1993), in the United States through the work of Werner and Smith (1992), and later spread to European countries such as France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Spain. In Latin America, it appeared somewhat later, giving rise to significant research groups as well as projects and studies of great scientific relevance.

The approaches that have shaped the development of this concept can be grouped into three distinct categories:

- currents that focus on the individual, including North American, behaviorist, and pragmatic perspectives.
- currents focusing on psychoanalytic analysis, characteristic of many European traditions.
- currents that seek to address social problems, such as the Latin American community perspective.

Today, it is important to note that many institutions and non-governmental organizations, including universities and ministries, have adopted the principles and foundations of resilience, either implicitly or explicitly.

Approach to the definition of resilience

One way to define resilience is to understand it as the capacity of individuals or systems to adapt, recover, and grow positively in the face of adversity, trauma, or significant stress. The term *resilience* has its origin in the Latin *resilio*, which means "to recoil" or "to bounce back" (Pereda, 2006). This concept refers to people's ability to maintain psychological strength even when confronted with situations of serious risks (Rutter, 1993).

Resilience involves the ability to resist, absorb, and overcome the negative effects of stressful events, as well as to learn from these experiences

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to become stronger in the future. It encompasses not only individual resilience but also the capacity of communities and societies to face and overcome collective challenges. This capacity is shaped by a combination of internal factors (such as self-esteem, coping skills, and a positive mindset) and external factors (such as social support, community resources, and government policies). In summary, resilience is a dynamic and multifaceted process that promotes adaptation, coping, and flourishing in contexts of adversity.

In contemporary scholarly literature, the concept of resilience has been defined in various ways. Lösel et al. (1989) described it as a challenge or complex, adaptive reaction to stressful or high-impact circumstances. Grotberg (2001) viewed it as the capacity to acquire skills that allow individuals to overcome adversity and apply those skills in the coping process. This includes two aspects: the ability to protect one's integrity under pressure (resilience in the face of destruction) and the ability to construct a positive life purpose despite environmental difficulties.

Masten and Garmezy (1994), who were pioneers in the study of resilience, emphasized aspects such as self-esteem and autonomy. They identified three groups of factors involved in the development of resilience: individual attributes, family-related aspects, and characteristics of the social environment. Resilience is understood as the positive interaction among these factors rather than the simple sum of them. Likewise, Luthar et al. (2000) conceptualized resilience as a dynamic process that promotes positive adaptation in the face of hostile conditions. The involvement of the family, community, and society is crucial for facilitating the development of personal resources that promote self-management and personal and social growth.

Grotberg (2001) argues that resilience education should be seen as a contribution to the promotion of mental health, stressing that early childhood is an optimal time to begin this process. He maintains that the international community should commit to this perspective, as it enriches human potential. He notes that experience has shown that not all people who encounter critical situations develop illnesses or psychopathological disorders; in fact, some manage to overcome adversity and learn from it.

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Seligman and Czikszentmihalyi (2000) likewise stress the importance of identifying and analyzing the variables that enable people to emerge stronger in the face of adversity. They also highlight that resilience contributes not only to quality of life but also acts as an effective buffer against stress.

Finally, Simarro (2016) defines resilience as the capacity to face adverse situations in a positive way and, in some cases, to emerge strengthened in specific skills after the experience. Resilience does not imply the absence of stress or difficulty in life, but the ability to confront such problems and recover from negative events.

Service-Learning and its link to the pillars of resilience

Resilience is based on a series of pillars that are essential to its development, as highlighted by authors such as Cyrulnik (2003), Vanistendael and Lecomte (2013), and Rojas Marcos (2010). These fundamental pillars include self-control, supportive relationships, a sense of purpose, realistic optimism, good humor, healthy self-esteem, the capacity for introspection, creativity, personal autonomy, and spirituality. The acquisition of these pillars unfolds throughout the lifespan, shaped by the family, social, and especially educational environments beginning in childhood.

Service-Learning (SL) is an educational methodology that combines academic learning with community service. This practice not only benefits the individuals or groups receiving the service but also enriches students' learning by providing meaningful, practical experiences that bolster personal and social development as well as autonomy (Reeve, 2002).

The link between the Service-Learning methodology and the pillars of resilience is evident in several respects:

1. Sense of purpose: Service-Learning offers students the opportunity to participate in activities that have a purpose beyond academic achievement. By engaging in projects that address real community needs, students can develop a sense of purpose and contribution,

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which strengthens their resilience by giving them a meaningful reason to overcome challenges.

2. Social connections: Service-Learning encourages interaction with different groups within the community, which promotes the development of meaningful social connections. These connections act as an important protective factor in resilience, providing emotional support and social resources that help students cope with and overcome difficult situations.
3. Skills development: By participating in Service-Learning projects, students acquire and develop a wide range of skills, ranging from communication and leadership to problem-solving and teamwork. These skills are fundamental to resilience, as they equip students with the tools needed to face and overcome challenges that may arise in their lives.
4. Empowerment: Service-Learning provides students with the opportunity to make a tangible impact on their environment and the lives of others. This empowering experience strengthens their sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to cope with difficulties, thereby contributing to their resilience.

The Service-Learning methodology and the pillars of resilience are closely connected, as this educational method provides students with experiences and opportunities that promote the development of skills, social connections, sense of purpose, autonomy, and empowerment—all of which are key elements in building individual and community resilience.

Methodological proposal and design of a Service-Learning project for Resilience Education

The study was designed as a feasible proposal based on the Service-Learning (S-L) methodology, aimed at resilience education. It was structured in three phases: diagnosis, through identifying needs and administering initial questionnaires to assess perceptions of resilience;

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implementation, which included training sessions on resilience and emotional regulation, practical activities (mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing), and community service projects focused on bullying prevention and the creation of safe spaces; and evaluation, in which tools such as surveys and interviews are proposed to be applied before and after the intervention to measure changes in socio-emotional competencies and coping skills. This methodology seeks to integrate theoretical instruction with social practice, fostering meaningful learning and the development of resilient skills in educational contexts.

Project Title:
Strengthening resilience: Learning and serving

General objective:

To promote resilience within the educational community through the implementation of a structured program that combines training sessions, practical activities, and community service projects aimed at improving socio-emotional competencies and coping skills in adverse situations.

Specific objectives:

1. Increase conceptual knowledge about resilience among participating students by conducting educational sessions that address its definition, components, and strategies for development.
2. Develop practical coping and emotional regulation skills in students through practical activities (mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing) designed to strengthen resilience in adverse contexts.
3. Apply the knowledge acquired in concrete community service actions by organizing and implementing projects focused on bullying prevention, creating safe spaces for dialogue, or supporting vulnerable groups.
4. Evaluate the impact of the project on participants' perceived and actual levels of resilience using validated instruments (surveys and in-

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terviews) before and after the intervention, with the aim of identifying significant changes among participants.

Project description

The project will be carried out in a school or educational institution, involving students, teachers, and administrative and service staff. It will consist of a series of educational and service activities that address various aspects of resilience.

1. **Educational sessions on resilience:**
   Talks and workshops will be held to inform the community about what resilience is, its components, and how it can be developed. Topics such as emotional management, self-esteem, adaptability, and seeking support will be covered.
1. **Practical activities:**
   Practical activities will be organized for participants to put into practice the skills that they have learned. These may include mindfulness exercises, group activities, role-playing, and coping techniques for stressful situations.
1. **Community service projects:**
   Participants will carry out community service projects related to resilience. For example, they may organize talks on bullying prevention, create safe spaces for dialogue, or participate in activities to support vulnerable groups, both in the school and in the community.
1. **Impact evaluation:**
   Surveys and interviews will be conducted before and after the project to evaluate changes in participants' perceptions and levels of resilience. This will make it possible to measure the impact of the project and adjust future interventions accordingly.

Resources Required:

- Space for educational sessions and practical activities
- Didactic materials (presentations, brochures, etc.)

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- Resources for community service projects (materials, transportation, etc.)
- Volunteer or contracted staff to facilitate activities
- Budget

Timeline

- **First Phase: 1 month**

This first phase involves a diagnostic and planning process in which a detailed analysis of a specific situation or social project is carried out. Surveys and interviews are conducted to assess students' level of resilience. The needs, problems, and challenges present are identified, along with the institution's capacity to respond. The goal is to design a Service-Learning project that coherently integrates pedagogical and social objectives. The physical location and geographic scope of the project are determined, as well as the recipients of the solidarity service. Both the service component and the learning activities are defined, and a timeline is established to organize tasks, stages, and deadlines. Responsibilities are assigned for specific activities and for the overall execution of the project. In addition, the necessary material and human resources are identified, and the project's design and internal coherence are evaluated.

- **Second Phase: 3 months**

In this second phase, the Service-Learning project is implemented with the aim of ensuring two essential elements for its future development: establishing institutional partnerships and securing the necessary resources. During this stage, work will be done to build collaborative relationships with relevant institutions that can provide support, expertise, or additional resources. These may include government agencies, non-governmental organizations, local businesses, or other community entities. Efforts will also be made to secure the material, financial, and human resources required to effectively carry out the planned activities. This may involve seeking funding, obtaining donations of materials or services, and mobilizing volunteers or dedicated project staff. Success in this stage is crucial for ensuring the long-term viability and sustainability of the Serv-

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ice-Learning project. At this point, the practical, pre-planned activities along with the *ad intra* and *ad extra* community service projects are carried out.

- **Third Phase: 1 month**

In the third stage, which focuses on closure and the multiplication of the Service-Learning project, a final evaluation and systematization of all activities is conducted. This includes organizing a celebration to acknowledge the crucial role played by the project's participants. A thorough evaluation is carried out, highlighting achievements and identifying areas that were not fully accomplished, as well as potential improvements for future projects. Participation in this evaluation is encouraged for all involved—students, teachers, administrative staff, and community members. The outcomes of this systematization process are documented appropriately, whether as a written report, video, or other format, to serve as a complete record of the project. In addition, an assessment is made regarding the feasibility of continuing and expanding Service-Learning projects in the future, considering available resources and the impact generated. This final stage is decisive in consolidating lessons learned and ensuring the continuity and growth of similar initiatives moving forward.

Expected results

- Improved understanding and application of resilience among participants
- Development of community service projects that positively impact the community
- Increased cohesion and well-being in the educational community

This Service-Learning project offers a valuable opportunity to promote resilience both within the educational institution and in the community at large, generating a long-term positive impact.

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Conclusion

One of the most significant challenges faced by many students in Spain, at different educational levels, is academic dropout. Some contributing factors are emotional, such as low self-esteem and loneliness—often accompanied by anxiety and depression. In this sense, the Service-Learning methodology offers a wide range of psychological benefits aimed at protecting mental health aspects that may be at risk. A Service-Learning project focused on resilience education can generate significant outcomes that demonstrate both the positive impact on participants and the lessons learned for future interventions. In this case, resilience has been successfully promoted within the educational community through the implementation of a structured program that combines training sessions, practical activities, and community service projects, helping to strengthen socio-emotional competencies and coping skills in adverse situations. Likewise, the specific objectives set for the project have been achieved:

1. **Increase conceptual knowledge about resilience:** Educational sessions enabled students to understand its definition, components, and strategies for development.
2. **Develop practical coping and emotional regulation skills:** Practical activities (mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing) strengthened resilience in adverse or high-pressure situations.
3. **Apply the knowledge acquired in concrete community service actions:** The projects promoted bullying prevention, the creation of safe spaces for dialogue, and support for vulnerable groups, thereby strengthening the educational community.
4. **Evaluate the project's impact on participants' perception and level of resilience:** Surveys and interviews conducted before and after the intervention revealed significant changes in students' perceptions and resilience-related competencies.

In this sense, the findings obtained are directly linked to the objectives set:

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- **Increase conceptual knowledge about resilience:**
  Educational sessions have enabled students to understand the definition, components, and strategies for developing resilience, reinforcing its importance as a tool for facing adverse situations.
- **Develop practical coping and emotional regulation skills:**
  Practical activities such as mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing have facilitated the acquisition of essential socio-emotional competencies for resilience.
- **Apply the knowledge acquired in concrete community service actions:**
  The projects carried out have strengthened the educational community and promoted values such as empathy and social responsibility, contributing to collective well-being.
- **Evaluate the impact of the project on participants' perception and level of resilience:**
  Surveys and interviews conducted before and after the intervention have made it possible to identify significant changes in students' perceptions and resilience-related competencies. In conclusion, this type of initiative not only contributes to the comprehensive education of students but also offers a replicable model for future interventions aimed at promoting resilience in educational and community contexts.

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Interpersonal closeness as a pedagogical category fostering the integration of educational environments: families and schools

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interpersonal closeness, educational environment, family, school, integration

Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The aim of this article is to examine the phenomenon of interpersonal closeness in relation to family–school cooperation. The author defines interpersonal closeness as a pedagogical category and discusses the unifying role of the pedagogy of interpersonal closeness in cooperation between educational environments. The following research questions were posed: *What characterizes interpersonal closeness understood as a pedagogical category? What is the unifying role of interpersonal closeness in family–school cooperation?*

Research methods: The article takes a theoretical, review-based approach, employing methods such as analysis of scientific literature and examination of existing data.

Process of argumentation: The author explores the phenomenon of interpersonal closeness, beginning with etymological analyses and references to other scientific fields. He presents interpersonal closeness as a pedagogical category, defines it, and characterizes the pedagogy of closeness. The author draws attention to family and school as educational environments in which closeness can be developed. He emphasizes the importance of cooperation between these environments and the role of interpersonal closeness in strengthening that cooperation.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The author draws attention to the relatively underexamined phenomenon of interpersonal closeness. The analyses support

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the thesis that interpersonal closeness can be treated as a pedagogical category of great importance for the development of all participants in the educational process and for their cooperation. The results indicate a need for a pedagogy of closeness, as it can guide both the building of interpersonal relationships and the overcoming of difficulties that arise in this process. The author provides pedagogical implications that are relevant to the development of interpersonal closeness in the family–school relationship.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: Referring to the pedagogical category of closeness may constitute a key to interpreting situations that occur in the family–school relationship. The analysis may serve as a basis for further discussion on the place and significance of closeness in education.

Introduction

After the period of social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for closeness became even more important. The requirement to remain apart and the inability to show closeness through words or touch caused suffering for many people (Durkin et al., 2021, p. 1). Due to immediate threats to health and even life, interpersonal closeness was curtailed precisely when it was most desperately needed. In societies emerging from the pandemic and characterized by excessive individualism (Barnat, 2009, p. 3), the need to emphasize the importance of interpersonal closeness is increasingly recognized. The need to create strong interpersonal ties also applies to education. At the interface of its formal and informal dimensions, closeness appears as a category that can foster the integration of the subjects of education.

The article takes a theoretical and review-based approach, using methods such as analysis of scientific literature and examination of available empirical data. Its aim is to present scholarly reflections on interpersonal closeness in relation to cooperation between family and school. The analysis focuses on the understanding of interpersonal closeness as a pedagogical category. The unifying role of the pedagogy of interpersonal closeness in the cooperation of educational environments is presented.

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The concept of interpersonal closeness

Etymologically, the word *closeness* is derived from Latin (*clausus*) and has its origin in Old French *clos*. Its original meanings, dating back to the 12th century, have negative overtones (to shut, cover in, close, block, make inaccessible, put an end to something) (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). The positive and warm connotation of *closeness* in English began to appear in the 16th century and led to the modern view of closeness as an intense interpersonal relationship. Relating the results of English-language analyses to the understanding of closeness in Polish, one can see a similar semantic shift. Researchers point to the affinity of the Old Polish word "close" with the Latin *fligere* (to beat, strike), suggesting that closeness has a reference to *conflict* (Latin *conflictus*) (Długosz-Kurczabowa, 2008, p. 54). In Old Polish, a close person was someone who left scars during a conflict (the similarity between the English words *close* and *scar* and the Polish words *bliski* and *blizna*). "Scarring," that is, the formation of closeness, is a process in which inflicted wounds are healed, severed fragments of the human body are united, and painful injuries are sealed. Referring to these etymological analyses, it can be assumed that the word *closeness* includes not only warmth and openness but also the effort to overcome circumstances that hinder close human relations.

The issue of close interpersonal relationships has been addressed in various scientific disciplines. In psychology, there are references to the formation and importance of interpersonal bonds, especially in relation to attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1983). In philosophy, the topic is often discussed in connection with phenomenology or philosophical hermeneutics (Lévinas, 1999; Ricoeur, 1984, p. 275). Educational sciences have also become an area in which human intimacy is explored, granting it the status of a pedagogical category.

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Characteristics of interpersonal closeness as a pedagogical category

The concept of *category* has its origins in philosophy, the natural sciences, and mathematics. Aristotle defined categories as the most general classes of entities. For Immanuel Kant, a *category* is a principle that enables us to distinguish classes of objects. Thus, categories are forms of thought through which humans organize their experiences (Frejusz, 2021, p. 34). According to Józef Górniewicz, categories are elements of "real or symbolic reality, constituting a certain functional whole, being a compilation of elements belonging to various objects of reality, also structured in some way" (Górniewicz, 2001, p. 7). A category may therefore be understood as an important concept distinguished by its significance in a particular field of scientific inquiry.

Closeness analyzed as a pedagogical category is understood as the intensified and deepened presence of two or more subjects participating in an emotional–spiritual relationship. Constructive closeness results from the educational effort involved in establishing and maintaining communication with another person (Żywczok, 2013, p. 29). Thus, interpersonal closeness may be defined as "the intense co-presence of people forming a relationship, the purpose of which is mutual endowment, and the intensity, shape, and expression of closeness depend on their individual conditions and beliefs" (Godawa, 2023, p. 303). In this conceptualization, closeness is experienced in individual, social, spatial, and spiritual contexts, which gives it the status of a universal category. It should be emphasized that closeness has a personal dimension, since only human participation in such a relationship allows its full expression. The purpose of closeness is mutual endowment, that is, the sharing of good that serves the other person.

The process of establishing and deepening closeness has the characteristics of pedagogy, in other words, a relatively coherent and lasting set of educational practices through which an individual assimilates and develops forms of conduct, knowledge, skills, and criteria for their evaluation, adopting them from a person regarded as competent to transmit

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and assess them (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2008, p. 493). Therefore, the pedagogy of interpersonal closeness may be understood as "a resource of experiences and methods undertaken to build closeness between people" (Godawa, 2023, p. 175). Achieving interpersonal closeness does not happen automatically; it requires intentional actions aimed at building bridges between people. These actions have an educational dimension. For this reason, they represent the implementation of values and the adoption of attitudes consistent with human needs, and they are aimed at supporting human development.

Closeness has internal regulations that protect against violating the well-being of the other person. One characteristic of closeness understood as a pedagogical category is discretion, which in this case involves pursuing goals that are not directly related to upbringing yet have an educational impact. This assumption of the pedagogy of closeness is particularly carried out by individuals who are explorers, those who constantly examine themselves and their surroundings, who are active and engaged, and who function effectively thanks to well-developed interpersonal communication (Waloszek, 2014, pp. 235–236). Interpersonal closeness is based on values. Values form the basis for establishing the goals of educational interactions and also inspire initiatives for building closeness. Shared values make it easier for people to develop closeness, and their interplay shapes close social relationships (van der Wal et al., 2024, p. 1066). The axiological dimension of closeness gives it an ethical context that protects the well-being of those in close relationships from abuse.

Closeness has its own methodology, which determines the actions taken to achieve the adopted educational goals. Methods for building closeness involve the systematic interaction of educational actors (Kazubowska, 2020, p. 254) and are aimed at shaping the child's personality, attitudes, values, and behavior. Methods of developing interpersonal closeness include, for example, dialogue and silence, suggestion, persuasion, instruction, task-based methods, the use of touch, organizing experiences, and self-education (Godawa, 2023, p. 176). These methods are anchored in the educational relationship, which is a special form

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of interaction between parent, teacher, and child. Building trust, communication, and an appropriate level of involvement are prerequisites for their effectiveness. The methods promote the child's independence and responsibility. They support development in a targeted, informed, and individualized manner, reinforcing values and life skills. Achieving these goals requires that those responsible for upbringing possess appropriate competencies (Jaszczyszyn & Cichocki, 2015). The process of fostering closeness is most fully realized in the family and school environments.

Family and school as educational environments that strengthen interpersonal closeness

The educational environment in which the process of upbringing takes place can be understood as a system of interrelated elements that are mutually conditioned and interact with one another. The upbringing environment includes individuals and social groups with whom the child is engaged in an educational relationship. It also encompasses educational institutions and natural communities, primarily the family, local communities, associations, mass media, and the values that shape a person (Przecławska, 2009, pp. 17–18). The environmental approach in education is aimed at meeting students' educational needs.

The family is a unique environment that enables human functioning. It is a small social group composed of parents, their children, and relatives, united by marital and parental bonds, which is the basis of educational interactions (Okoń, 2004, p. 351). The family environment responds to a child's natural needs, primarily its psychological needs, such as the need for love, a sense of security and closeness, belonging and respect, dignity and beauty, as well as the need for role models and ideals (Kawula, 2001, p. 111). Moreover, the family is the chief setting responsible for shaping personality, emotions, behavior, attention, health, and the atmosphere of the home. It constitutes the space in which human personality is formed and serves as a source of both knowledge and upbringing (Dwiningtyas & Hajaroh, 2023, p. 530).

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Among the most important factors that define the family as an educational environment are its structure, the fulfillment of its basic functions, emotional relationships within the family, and styles of upbringing. We must also note those areas of family life that may contribute to a student's educational difficulties. These include material conditions, the family's cultural background, dysfunctions and crises in upbringing, the breakdown of the parents' marriage, and the social deprivation of the mother and father (Sikorski, 2013, p. 159). The family is in the process of constant social change, which affects its current form (Błasiak, 2024).

As Andrzej Janke notes, upbringing in the family includes educational influence aimed at the development of the psyche and personality, the formation of a sense of personal identity, and changes in the behavior of those being raised. This kind of upbringing takes into account the possibility of parallel transformation in the areas of psyche, personality, sense of identity, and the educational activity of those who assume the role of educators in a given situation (Janke, 2017, p. 496). Understood in this way, upbringing is a wide-ranging activity undertaken by all actors directly or indirectly involved in educational processes. As Samita points out, family upbringing also has a socialization function:

> A family is the first social institution through which a child receives education for sociability. The family is a primary social group; it establishes relationships among individuals in a straightforward and direct way. It helps promote academic achievement and fosters the development of various social skills. Hence, the family environment has the full potential to act as a vehicle for students to improve self-esteem, develop social skills, and ultimately adjust to their school environment. (Samita, 2021, p. 985)

One of the important areas of family upbringing is the building of social ties. It is in the family that a child gains its first experiences through which it can recognize and form interpersonal relationships. Family ties result from the internal and external forces operating in the family and exerting influence on its members, expressed in family–social bonds

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(Gałęska, 2015, p. 29). In this sense, upbringing for closeness in the family consists of interactions among family members that shape the sense of closeness. The goal of upbringing for closeness is to support the child and its multifaceted development, enrich its personality and experiences, assist in self-realization, and prepare the child for self-reliance in building mature closeness in social relations.

School is described as one of the basic components of society and represents an important part of the educational environment and the life activities of children and adolescents (Rozenbajgier, 2019, p. 8). As an educational environment alongside the family home, school influences the formation of students' attitudes (Kluczyńska, 2024, p. 265). The educational environment can be defined as the physical and social context in which the teaching and learning process occurs. It includes the physical environment, teacher–student interactions, and the culture of the classroom (Ibragimov et al., 2023). Most scholars agree that students' academic achievement depends on learning conditions (Malik & Rizvi, 2018, p. 208). The more advanced a society is, the more important the role of schools becomes in preparing the younger generation for community life.

As Riaz Hussain Malik and Asad Abbas Rizvi note, formal education occurs in the context of social relations:

> The teaching–learning process cannot take place in a vacuum. In formal education settings, it occurs as a result of interaction among members of the classroom. In classroom settings, elements of the teaching–learning process include teacher, students, content, learning process and learning situation. (Malik & Rizvi, 2018, p. 208)

The pattern of interaction between teachers and students creates a particular atmosphere that may be called a learning situation. This situation is also referred to as the psychosocial environment of the classroom.

Social relations in school education form the foundation for building interpersonal closeness in the process of teaching and learning. The key assumption of closeness is subjectivity, which is an essential attribute of the educational process. As Anna Izabela Brzezińska (2008, p. 49) notes,

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building a sense of security based on respect for the autonomy of all participants in the educational process is a fundamental premise of school education. This is an important element of interpersonal closeness and, at the same time, a safeguard against abuse in school relationships. Violations of students' dignity and inviolability are a denial of true closeness and thus interfere with its proper understanding (Godawa, 2020, p. 121).

One of the factors that determines the establishment of safe closeness is the introduction and observance of boundaries between closeness and separateness. This occurs at the level of interpersonal relations, intergroup relations, and relations with the external environment (Konieczna, 2019, p. 79). By respecting these boundaries, interpersonal closeness at school does not violate the well-being of any participants in the teaching–learning process.

The role of interpersonal closeness in the cooperation of family and school

Cooperation between family and school is an important factor that strengthens the process of upbringing and the child's development. A teacher performs his or her duties most effectively when supported by the family environment. The family environment influences teacher performance, and support from family members helps create a positive environment for teachers (Dwiningtyas & Hajaroh, 2023, p. 530). Cooperation with the student's family also enhances teacher job satisfaction. It should be emphasized that this cooperation is an obligation arising from relevant legal acts; it is therefore a normative task, which further reinforces its legitimacy (Regulation of the Minister of National Education, 2017).

This collaboration is also important in situations where the family does not adequately fulfill its functions. The school environment then has the opportunity to carry out tasks that partially compensate for shortcomings in the home environment. In addition to educators and teachers, school pedagogues play an important role. They provide support

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to students and their parents who experience difficult situations that affect the student's functioning in the school environment (Kluczyńska, 2024, p. 265). Proper intervention in a family environment experiencing educational difficulties contributes to better academic performance among children. To achieve this goal, it is essential to provide tools and strategies for the integral development of children that facilitate appropriate communication, the expression of feelings, the establishment of boundaries, and forms of interaction among all members of the educational process (Manjarres Zambrano et al., 2024, p. 69).

It should be noted that within the cooperation of educational environments, tensions and conflicts arise that make it difficult to establish social relationships and achieve educational outcomes. As research shows, teachers express reservations primarily about parents' active involvement in classroom activities. Some teachers feel undervalued or even ignored (Mikler-Chwastek, 2024, p. 124). Difficulties in cooperation between family and school are also evident in relation to sociodemographic and cultural factors, parenting styles, the organization of school work or parental and teacher attitudes (2022, pp. 33–34). The formalized nature of schooling fosters the creation of barriers to contact between parents and teachers, which in turn results in an unsatisfactory level of cooperation (Wanat, 2010, p. 182). Overcoming these difficulties requires effort and commitment on the part of parents and teachers.

Referring these assumptions to the concept of interpersonal closeness, several implications can be identified for developing interpersonal closeness in the school–family relationship. Closeness is a category of considerable importance for the development of social relations. In societies marked by the effects of social isolation, the dangers of war and excessive individualism, closeness emerges as a phenomenon that facilitates the building of relationships necessary for cooperation. This has particular relevance in education, especially in the cooperation of educational environments. Building closeness between family and school is a fundamental tenet of contemporary models of education. Emphasizing the role of closeness in educational relations opens and expands the scope of cooperation.

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Closeness is a sensitive and fragile category; therefore, it must be cultivated with care, empathy, and respect for the other person's sensitivity. It is necessary to provide an axiological basis for the category of closeness. Appeals to love for the other person, respect for their dignity, seeking the good, and building on truth are important elements of interpersonal closeness. In family–school cooperation, the axiological dimension of closeness is expressed, among other ways, through high-quality interpersonal communication. Adjusting one's words to the circumstances and, above all, taking into account the dignity of the addressee serve as safeguards against abuse. From these axiological assumptions follows the need to recognize and respect boundaries within closeness. These boundaries protect the well-being of parents and teachers alike, making their clear definition and observance essential. Such boundaries help ensure that the dignity of parents, students, and teachers is not violated.

Closeness is a complex category, so it requires multifaceted efforts—not only because of the participants involved, but also because of the methods used. Therefore, a pedagogy of closeness is needed, as it may show how to build closeness in educational relationships. The pedagogy of closeness includes practical measures for establishing and strengthening social relationships. Closeness understood as a pedagogical category implies that, in family–school relations, it is necessary to take intentional actions aimed at what unites people. This does not mean overlooking difficult issues that may divide them. The pedagogy of interpersonal closeness takes into account a wide spectrum of educational concerns, emphasizing the importance of current and potential areas of cooperation, which aims to resolve complex educational situations.

Adopting the concept of a pedagogy of closeness in education implies the need for mutual learning between parents and teachers. In this sense, educators of interpersonal closeness are needed. They may be parents, teachers, or students. Teachers of closeness are those who build educational authority based on an attitude of openness, readiness to cooperate, and commitment. The pedagogy of closeness does not assign a formal meaning to the term "closeness teacher," so it can apply equally to teachers of children and adolescents. In this context, it is necessary

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to highlight good examples of relationship-building between educational environments. Good practices in this area help model the behavior of participants in the educational process.

The use of methodologies for building interpersonal closeness is also needed. The selection and use of appropriate methods facilitate the implementation of the principles of interpersonal closeness in educational practice. The methodology of interpersonal closeness is expressed in actions taken mainly by teachers. Their initiatives, such as organizing meetings for parents and students, maintaining contact between stakeholders, and creating opportunities for parents to be involved in school activities, practically express the idea of interpersonal closeness. Parents' responses to the school's initiatives should not be understood as passive acceptance of suggested forms of cooperation but rather as conscious efforts to build relationships that lead to satisfying collaboration and, above all, support the child's education.

When considering the educational dimension of interpersonal closeness, it is worth recalling its etymological meaning. Building closeness between people requires an effort to overcome the impediments inherent in relationships. It is necessary to take into account situations in which closeness is rebuilt after earlier violations of interpersonal relations, closeness created from "scars" that recall what was once a painful wound. Closeness requires openness toward the other person, and sometimes forgiveness and reconciliation. This is particularly important to remember in family–school relations, because acknowledging this assumption justifies making further attempts to establish closeness and motivates efforts to rebuild it.

Conclusion

The relationship between family and school, understood as educational environments and analyzed in the context of interpersonal closeness, reveals the need to reconsider social relationships in the educational process. Interpersonal closeness based on trust, empathy, and recognition

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of dignity can act as a key to understanding the dynamics of educational cooperation. The analyses confirm that the pedagogical category of closeness integrates the emotional, axiological, and structural dimensions of the educational process, becoming a tool for building coherent bonds among parents, teachers, and students. Introducing a pedagogy of closeness into educational practice requires both the development of relational competencies and the creation of supportive organizational and ethical conditions. This approach opens new research and practical perspectives, allowing us to understand education as a process of growing together in relationship.

Based on the research conducted, the following recommendations for educational practice can be made:

1. Interpersonal closeness should be treated as an important pedagogical category that contributes to the educational process and cooperation between educational environments.
2. The relational competencies of teachers and parents—such as empathy, communication, and active listening—should be developed through training and professional practice.
3. Cooperation between family and school requires clearly defined rules, roles, and boundaries that ensure a balance between closeness and the autonomy of participants.
4. The pedagogy of closeness should be reflected in school culture, rituals, communication practices, and everyday interactions.
5. Further empirical research on the functions and effects of closeness in education is needed, especially in the context of social change and digital communication.

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Problematic Internet use, family relationships and social support vs. depressive symptoms among adolescents during remote learning

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The study presented in this article seeks to answer the following question: What is the role of social support and the quality of family relationships in the context of depressive symptoms and problematic Internet use during the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning among adolescents?

Research methods: The study was conducted among 509 adolescents aged 11–16. Empirical data were collected using the Epidemic Difficulty Questionnaire (ATP), Family Relationships Questionnaire (KRR), Sense of Support Scale (SWS), Internet Addiction Test (IAT), and the Child and Adolescent Depression Inventory (CDI2). The results showed that 34.02% of the students had elevated depressive symptoms. Heavy Internet use affected 16.8% of respondents, including 10.86% who simultaneously showed heightened symptoms of both depression and addiction. Additionally, girls were more likely than boys to exhibit symptoms of depression.

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Process of argumentation: First, the number of individuals affected by depression and Internet addiction was determined, and four groups were identified based on the combination of these two variables. These groups were then analyzed according to gender, age, pandemic-related difficulties, quality of family relationships, and sources of support.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The study found that 34.02% of students had elevated depressive symptoms. Heavy Internet use affected 16.8% of respondents, including 10.86% who simultaneously experienced aggravated symptoms of depression and addiction. Moreover, girls were more likely than boys to report depressive symptoms. Students exhibiting both depressive and addictive symptoms experienced significantly more difficulties in relationships with family members compared to those without symptoms, and they perceived a greater number of household responsibilities as burdensome. Depressive symptoms were less severe among students whose families demonstrated mutual understanding and openness to differing views and beliefs. In such families, members communicated flexibly, cooperated effectively, and cared for one another.

Conclusions and recommendations: The results confirmed that the quality of family relationships is crucial for the healthy functioning of adolescents without depressive symptoms, even in pandemic conditions. Therefore, an important preventive measure for schools is to undertake initiatives that strengthen mutual communication and parent–child relationships, as well as to enhance the diagnostic skills of parents, caregivers, and educators in the early detection of risk behaviors among children and adolescents.

Introduction

Studies conducted during the pandemic show an increased number of depressive symptoms and instances of Internet overuse. According to the report *Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety Among Poles During the COVID-19 Epidemic,* symptoms of depression and generalized anxiety disorder were associated with difficulties experienced at home (such as strained relationships with loved ones, lack of privacy, and fatigue caused by excessive responsibilities). In addition, these symptoms were linked to anxiety and uncertainty related to the spread of the epidemic (Gambin et al., 2020). Anxiety about COVID-19 was also associated with Internet addiction disorder (including intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts)

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(Servidio et al., 2021). Heavy Internet use was found to exacerbate depressive symptoms (Zalewska et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic created new difficulties for children and adolescents. In an attempt to identify the stressors associated with functioning during this period, researchers developed several questionnaires that helped determine the most significant difficulties experienced by young people. According to the report *Tenure in the Network 2.0* (N = 806 students aged 11–18), 62% of the adolescents surveyed reported sleep problems, 43% had thoughts of death, 75% worried about the future, and 70% felt more nervous and agitated than before (Białecka & Gil, 2020). The report *Youth During the Pandemic* (N = 2,476 participants aged 15–19) showed a growing number of young people experiencing loneliness, school-related stress, depression, suicidal thoughts, and cyberbullying during the pandemic (Grzelak & Żyro, 2021). According to the report *Remote Education: What Has Happened to Students, Their Parents, and Teachers?* (N = 1,284), about 10% of the young people surveyed exhibited distinct symptoms of depressive states. Nine percent reported feeling sad all the time, 10% felt lonely and depressed, and 9% admitted that they constantly felt like crying (Ptaszek et al., 2020). Difficulties related to poor peer relationships, remote learning, and isolation were identified as contributing factors (Białecka & Gil, 2020; Ptaszek et al., 2020; Grzelak & Żyro, 2021).

The research presented in this article aimed to answer the following question: What is the role of social support and the quality of family relationships in the context of depressive symptoms and problematic Internet use during the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning among adolescents? As it was difficult to determine the detailed structure of the interdependencies between the variables analyzed, the study was primarily exploratory.

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Materials and methods

The study was conducted in March 2021 among schoolchildren aged 11–16 from the Lesser Poland Voivodeship. The analysis included data obtained from 488 respondents: 257 girls and 231 boys. The surveys were anonymous and voluntary, carried out with the permission of the school principal using an online questionnaire administered during remote learning classes.

Questionnaire for the Diagnosis of Depression in Children and Adolescents (CDI 2)

The original version of the questionnaire was developed by Kovacs (2003). Its Polish adaptation was prepared by Wrocławska-Warchala and Wujcik (2017). In the present study, a shortened self-report version was used, consisting of 12 questions related to various symptoms of depression. For each question, respondents selected one of three possible statements that best reflected their feelings over the past two weeks. An example item included the following possible responses: *I do most things well; I do many things badly; I do everything badly.* The scale demonstrates satisfactory reliability. For respondents aged 7–12, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$, and for those aged 13–18, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$.

Internet Addiction Test (IAT)

The original Internet Addiction Test (IAT), in a shortened version consisting of 8 questions, was developed by Young (1998). It was adapted for schoolchildren aged 16–17 by Solecki (2016). In his research, the scale achieved a satisfactory reliability coefficient of Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$. An example item reads: *Do you feel the need to spend more and more time using the Internet in order to achieve the desired level of satisfaction?* Respondents were asked to answer "yes" or "no" to each question based on their personal experience of Internet use.

Youth pandemic and distance learning difficulties survey (ATP)

Difficulties related to the pandemic and distance learning were assessed using the ATP, developed by Woźniak-Prus and Gambin (2021).

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The tool consists of 13 items rated on a 5-point scale (from 1 to 5), where 1 means "not at all challenging/difficult for me," and 5 means "definitely a challenge/difficulty for me." For the purposes of this study, an additional item exploring feelings of limitation in the area of religious practice was added to the original set. The content of each question is presented in Table 5.

Family Relationship Questionnaire (KRR)

The scale used to measure family relationships was developed by Plopa and Połomski (2010). Six versions of this questionnaire are available; in this study, the *My Family* version was used to assess the family as a whole. It contains 32 statements measuring the following aspects:

- Communication (8 items; Cronbach's α = 0.88): represents the mutual understanding among family members, openness to one another, the way information is exchanged, flexibility in communication, and the ability to maintain balance in the family. *Example statement:* "I understand my family members very well."
- Cohesion (8 items; Cronbach's α = 0.87): represents the quality of emotional bonds in the family, the ability to cooperate and help one another, and concern for each other's well-being. *Example statement:* "The atmosphere in our home allows everyone to feel comfortable."
- Autonomy–Control (8 items; Cronbach's α = 0.79): reflects the family's ability to regulate members' behavior through flexible or rigid strategies. It also identifies the types of sanctions and restrictions used. *Example statement:* "All members of our family are free to say what they think, even when others disagree."
- Identity (8 items; Cronbach's α = 0.86): refers to maintaining a consistent family image, fulfilling specific tasks and values, and the pressure to meet parental expectations. It also determines the permeability of external and internal family boundaries. *Example statement:* "In our family, we make sure that various problems are solved collectively."

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Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement described their family situation using a 5-point scale.

Sense of Support Scale (SWS)

This tool was developed by Solecki (2016) for his study of students aged 16–17. Participants were asked to estimate how often they sought help from the people listed in the questionnaire in difficult or critical situations, using a four-point scale: *never, rarely, sometimes,* or *often*. The content of each item is presented in Table 7.

Demographic data

Respondents were also asked to provide information about their age and gender.

Results

Using the data obtained from the IAT and CDI 2 questionnaires, corresponding categories of addiction severity and depressive symptoms were determined for each respondent. Heavy Internet use was reported by 82 participants (16.8% of the total sample). Very high scores for depression severity were recorded for 58 students (11.9%), elevated scores for 34 students (6.97%), high scores for 74 (15.16%), average scores for 231 (47.34%), and low scores for 91 (18.65%).

Based on these results, four groups of respondents were identified:

- Group 1 (NS): Students who did not exhibit Internet addiction and whose depressive symptoms were at a low or average level. This was the largest group, comprising 283 students (60.04%).
- Group 2 (DEP): Students who did not show signs of addiction but had elevated symptoms of depression (23.16% of respondents).
- Group 3 (DEP&AD): Students who, in addition to heavy Internet use, had at least elevated depressive symptoms. They accounted for 10.86% of respondents.
- Group 4 (AD): Students who showed signs of addiction only, comprising nearly 6% of respondents.

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The numerical characteristics of these groups are shown in Table 1. In total, 195 students (39.96%) experienced some form of difficulty.

Table 1. Adolescents' distribution across groups with different levels of severity of depressive symptoms and Internet addiction

Group	*N*	Percentage (%)
No symptoms (NS)	293	60.04
Depressive symptoms (DEP)	113	23.16
Depressive and addictive symptoms (DEP&AD)	53	10.86
Symptoms of addiction (AD)	29	5.94

Source: own study

In order to determine the extent to which the groups differed in the severity of depressive and addictive symptoms, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. The results are presented in Table 2. The MANOVA analysis indicated that the differences observed were highly significant ($p < 0.001$), with group membership accounting for 69.5% of the variance in CDI 2 scores and 58% of the variance in IAT scores. The severity of depressive symptoms differed significantly among all identified groups. In contrast, the group consisting of Internet addicts did not differ considerably in their level of addiction from students who also exhibited at least elevated depressive symptoms.

Table 2. Comparison of groups of adolescents in terms of the severity of depressive and addictive symptoms; results of the analysis of variance

Variable	1. NS	2. DEP	3. DEP&AD	4. AD	Differences between groups		
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	$F(3.484)$	η^2	*Post hoc* Games-Howell
CDI 2: Sym. of. dep.	2.53 (2.01)	9.58 (2.84)	12.57 (4.31)	3.66 (2.06)	366.90***	0.695	All relevant
IAT: Sym. of. Ad.	1.58 (1.40)	2.51 (1.25)	5.91 (1.06)	5.66 (0.94)	222.53***	0.580	1–2.3.4; 2–1.3.4; 3–1.2; 4–1.2

Note. Multivariate analysis of variance Wilks' $\lambda = 0.163$; $F = 237.83$; $df_1 = 6$; $df_2 = 966$; $p < 0.001$ *** $p < 0.001$
Source: own study

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Table 3 presents the results of the analysis assessing the relationship between the identified student groups and gender. The value of the Pearson's χ^2 statistic was found to be significant, indicating that more girls than boys experience symptoms of depression, as well as both depression and addiction.

Table 3. Distinct groups of adolescents by sex; cross-tabulation in the χ^2-Pearson analysis

CDI 2 Category		Sex		Total
		Boys	Girls	
1. NS	*n*	164.00	129.00	293
	n (expected)	138.70	154.31	293
	row percentage	55.97	44.03	100
2. DEP	*n*	38.00	75.00	113
	n (expected)	53.49	59.51	113
	row percentage	33.63	66.37	100
3. DEP&AD	*n*	17.00	36.00	53
	n (expected)	25.09	27.91	53
	row percentage	32.08	67.92	100
4. AD	*n*	12.00	17.00	29
	n (expected)	13.73	15.27	29
	row percentage	41.38	58.62	100

Note. Statistics $\chi^2 = 22.65$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.001$Source: own study

A significant correlation was also found between students' group membership and age. The oldest respondents were more likely than their younger peers to belong to the group with depressive symptoms (see Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of groups of young people by age; results of analysis of variance

Variable	1.NS	2. DEP	3. DEP&AD	4. AD	Differences between groups		
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	$F_{(3.482)}$	η^2	*Post hoc Games-Howell*
Age	12.92 (1.14)	13.55 (1.15)	13.29 (1.10)	12.76 (1.24)	9.52***	0.056	1–2; 2–1.4; 4–2

Note. Multivariate analysis of variance Wilks' $\lambda = 0.76$; $F = 11.62$; $df_1 = 12$; $df_2 = 1272.90$; $p < 0.001$ *** $p < 0.001$
Source: own study

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Table 5 shows the severity of pandemic-related difficulties experienced by individuals in each group. Fear of being infected with the coronavirus or of a loved one becoming ill, as well as uncertainty about the current situation and the future, were most prevalent among students who exhibited the fewest symptoms of depression.

Table 5. Comparison of groups of adolescents in terms of the severity of pandemic difficulties; results of the analysis of variance

Difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic	1. NS	2. DEP	3. DEP&AD	4. AD	Group differences		
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	$F_{(3.\ 484)}$	η^2	*Post hoc* Games-Howell
1. Fear of COVID-19 infection	2.53 (1.18)	2.08 (1.14)	2.19 (1.24)	2.55 (1.24)	4.65**	0.028	1–2; 2–1;
2. Fear of a family member/ close relative being infected by COVID-19	3.34 (1.29)	2.88 (1.30)	2.98 (1.29)	3.10 (1.42)	4.07**	0.025	1–2; 2–1;
3. Uncertainty about the current situation and the near future	2.97 (1.16)	2.47 (1.26)	3.02 (1.29)	3.10 (1.21)	5.54***	0.033	1–2; 2.1
4. Distance learning	2.66 (1.29)	2.59 (1.31)	2.74 (1.38)	2.59 (1.62)	0.17		
5. Inconvenience of wearing masks/face coverings in public places	2.98 (1.37)	2.84 (1.41)	2.77 (1.49)	3.03 (1.38)	0.54		
6. Inconvenience of having to maintain social distance and restrictions on gatherings	2.99 (1.31)	2.78 (1.47)	3.21 (1.46)	2.93 (1.33)	1.30		
7. Closure of gyms/cinemas/ theatres/restaurants/pubs	2.85 (1.45)	2.73 (1.50)	3.45 (1.54)	2.48 (1.41)	3.81**	0.023	1–3; 2–3; 3–1.2.4; 4–3
8. Limitations on physical activity	3.20 (1.36)	2.83 (1.39)	3.26 (1.38)	2.90 (1.50)	2.40		
9. Limited ability to pursue hobbies	3.35 (1.30)	2.90 (1.40)	3.21 (1.38)	3.07 (1.56)	3.04*	0.019	1–2; 2–1
10. Restrictions on meeting friends/acquaintances in person	3.46 (1.35)	3.12 (1.51)	3.28 (1.60)	3.35 (1.52)	1.60		
11. Increased use of computers/phones for relaxation or leisure	2.58 (1.20)	2.27 (1.16)	2.23 (1.27)	2.79 (1.29)	3.36*	0.019	$p = 0.070$ 1–2; 2–1
12. Difficult relationships with loved ones at home (feeling of getting on each other's nerves)	2.50 (1.17)	2.84 (1.20)	3.06 (1.38)	2.48 (1.02)	4.70**	0.028	1–3; 3–1
13. Increased number of daily responsibilities	2.53 (1.18)	2.50 (1.24)	3.17 (1.19)	2.69 (1.23)	4.65**	0.028	1–3; 2–3; 3–1.2
14. Lack of opportunity for religious practice	2.85 (1.22)	2.44 (1.26)	2.30 (1.15)	2.35 (1.20)	5.72***	0.034	1–2.3; 2-1; 3-1

Note. Multivariate analysis of variance Wilks' λ= 0.803; $F = 2.562$; $df_1 = 42$; $df_2 = 1397.98$; $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$
Source: own study

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The difficulties related to the closure of gyms, cinemas, theaters, restaurants, and pubs were experienced most strongly by the group with both depression and addiction. Limited opportunities to pursue hobbies were the most challenging restrictions for the group without symptoms. Difficulties associated with an excessive number of duties and strained relationships with loved ones were reported most often by participants with depressive and addictive symptoms.

In addition, it was observed that those without symptoms were more likely to view the increased use of computers or phones for relaxation or leisure as a difficulty. Conversely, the inability to engage in religious practices during the pandemic was reported as a significant difficulty by students without symptoms more often than by those exhibiting depressive symptoms. For items 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10, no significant differences were found between the groups. It should be noted that even when statistically significant differences were identified in the difficulties measured by the ATP, the effect sizes were small (η^2 ranged only from 0.019 to 0.034).

Subsequent analyses compared the severity of different aspects of family relationships among the groups. In this case, the correlations observed were more pronounced. Group membership explained approximately 20% of the variance in the cohesion, communication, and identity variables, and about 10% of the variance in autonomy (see Table 6).

Table 6. Comparison of groups of adolescents in terms of the quality of family relationships; results of the analysis of variance

Aspects of family relationships	1. NS	2. DEP	3. DEP&AD	4. AD	Differences between groups		
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	$F_{(3.\ 484)}$	η^2	*Post hoc Games-Howell*
KRR1. Communication	34.17 (4.45)	28.30 (6.62)	27.62 (8.33)	34.41 (5.15)	44.10***	0.215	1–2.3; 2–1.4; 3–1.4; 4–2.3
KRR2. Coherence	35.33 (4.34)	29.33 (6.92)	28.25 (8.49)	35.14 (5.25)	46.56***	0.224	1–2.3; 2–1.4; 3–1.4; 4–2.3
KRR3. Autonomy	33.06 (4.82)	29.01 (6.20)	28.43 (8.48)	33.14 (5.08)	20.56***	0.113	1–2.3; 2–1.4; 3–1.4; 4–2.3
KRR4. Identity	34.97 (4.24)	29.96 (5.92)	29.19 (7.38)	34.45 (4.99)	38.17***	0.191	1–2.3; 2–1.4; 3–1.4; 4–2.3

Note. Multivariate analysis of variance Wilks' $\lambda = 0.76$; $F = 11.62$; $df_1 = 12$; $df_2 = 1272.90$; $p < 0.001$ *** $p < 0.001$
Source: own study

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Each aspect of family relationships examined showed higher intensity in the group without symptoms compared to the groups with depressive symptoms. Table 7 presents the results of the comparison between groups in terms of seeking help.

Table 7. Comparison of groups of adolescents in terms of who they ask for help with difficulties; results of the analysis of variance

Who the teenagers asked for help	1. NS	2. DEP	3. DEP&AD	4. AD	Differences between groups		
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	$F_{(3.484)}$	η^2	*Post hoc* Games-Howell
1. Parents	4.07 (1.03)	3.18 (1.20)	2.96 (1.32)	4.07 (0.88)	28.39***	0.150	1–2.3; 2–1.4; 3–1.2; 4–2.3
2. Teachers	1.98 (0.89)	1.43 (0.68)	1.49 (0.85)	1.86 (0.95)	14.30***	0.081	1–2.3; 2–1; 3–1
3. Peers at school	2.43 (1.04)	2.31 (1.15)	2.49 (1.20)	2.52 (1.02)	0.55		
4. Online friends	1.25 (0.69)	1.94 (1.31)	2.36 (1.51)	1.31 (0.60)	27.97***	0.148	1–2.3; 2–1.4; 3–1.4; 4–2.3
5. Other friends	3.39 (1.13)	3.63 (1.20)	3.94 (1.10)	3.59 (1.09)	4.04**	0.024	1–3; 3–1
6. Siblings	3.36 (1.18)	2.74 (1.45)	2.42 (1.41)	3.03 (1.38)	12.14***	0.070	1–2.3; 2–1; 3–1
7. Grandparents	2.88 (1.31)	2.03 (1.24)	2.09 (1.28)	2.72 (1.31)	15.01***	0.085	1–2.3; 2–1; 3–1
8. Clergy	1.92 (1.07)	1.50 (0.97)	1.70 (1.19)	1.72 (1.10)	4.50**	0.027	1–2; 2–1
9. Nobody	1.73 (1.07)	2.73 (1.42)	2.62 (1.52)	2.45 (1.45)	22.42***	0.122	1–2.3.4; 2–1; 3–1; 4–1
10. Self-management	2.95 (1.13)	3.49 (1.17)	3.66 (0.96)	3.21 (1.18)	10.05***	0.059	1–2.3; 2–1; 3–1
11. Someone else	1.27 (0.79)	1.27 (0.75)	1.70 (1.30)	1.31 (1.04)	3.82**	0.023	n.i.

Note. Multivariate analysis of variance Wilks' λ= 0.618; $F = 7.521$; $df_1 = 33$; $df_2 = 1397.20$; $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$
Source: own study

Parents appeared to be the most frequent source of help. Seeking help from them correlated negatively with the severity of depression. A similar pattern of correlations was also observed in the case of grandparents,

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teachers, siblings, and clergy. Individuals with depression and addiction were significantly more likely to seek help from friends compared to those without symptoms. People experiencing difficulties were also more likely to seek support from online friends than those without symptoms. Compared to the group without symptoms, individuals in the DEP and DEP&AD groups were significantly more likely to report that they did not ask anyone for help and preferred to cope with difficulties on their own.

Discussion

The study showed that 23.16% of students exhibited increased depressive symptoms and 10.86% displayed both symptoms of depression and Internet addiction. This means that more than one-third of respondents (34.02%) showed symptoms of depression. The high prevalence of depressive symptoms among the surveyed adolescents is consistent with the findings of other studies (Modrzejewska & Bomba, 2010; Dymowska & Nowicka-Sauer, 2015). The severity of depressive mood may result not only from difficulties related to remote learning, family relationships, or school problems, but also from the developmental crisis of adolescence itself, which can intensify mood disorders. For example, symptoms of depression may accompany the existential exploration typical of older adolescents (Szczukiewicz, 2015).

The groups of students exhibiting signs of depression included older adolescents compared to those who showed no symptoms or only symptoms of addiction. The greater likelihood of mood disorders among older children and adolescents may be related to the increasing challenges of adolescence. As Wendołowska (2017) points out, these challenges can be a major burden, particularly at the onset of adolescence, when the intensity of multiple changes coincides with limited support factors.

At the same time, it was noted that girls, compared to boys, were more often found among adolescents experiencing symptoms of depression. This phenomenon corresponds to the findings of studies conducted not only in Poland, where rates of depression are sometimes even

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twice as high among females as among males (Hammen, 2006). According to Modrzejewska and Bomba (2010), depressive symptoms among 17-year-olds were observed in 33.6% of girls and 18.2% of boys.

When examining differences between the identified groups in how they experienced pandemic-related difficulties, it was noted that those with depressive symptoms expressed the least concern about their own health, the health of loved ones, and the future. However, this difference was minimal compared to students without symptoms. This may suggest that depressive mood disorders are associated with difficulties in assessing reality. Depression likely causes young people to focus more on their mood than on actual threats. They may also experience greater indifference and a sense of futility regarding their own efforts when facing difficulties (Hammen, 2006).

Symptoms of depression were clearly related to aspects of communication, cohesion, and autonomy in the family. Students exhibited less severe depressive symptoms when their families demonstrated mutual understanding and openness to alternative views and beliefs. Moreover, members of such families communicated flexibly, cooperated with one another, and provided mutual care. Overall, it can be observed that the stronger the family relationships, the better the functioning of young family members and the lower the likelihood of experiencing depressive symptoms. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of other studies (Radziwiłłowicz, 2010; Pilecki et al., 2013; Wendołowska, 2017; Radoń & Samochowiec, 2017).

Heavy Internet use affected 16.8% of respondents, including 10.86% who exhibited both aggravated symptoms of depression and addiction. These findings are consistent with those of other researchers, who report a significant proportion of adolescents experiencing problems in both areas (Grzelak & Żyro, 2021; Ptaszek et al., 2020). Students with both depressive and addictive symptoms experienced significantly more difficulties in their relationships with family members compared to the group without symptoms, and they perceived a greater number of household responsibilities as burdensome. This correlation appears evident and coincides with the results of Woźniak-Prus, Gambin, and Cudo (2020), who

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found a positive correlation between the difficulties measured by the ATP and symptoms of depression among adolescents aged 16–18. The positive association between various difficulties and levels of depression and Internet addiction has also been noted by many authors (Gambin et al., 2021; Ptaszek et al., 2020; Brudzińska & Godawa, 2021; Lin, 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Weinstein & Lejoyeux, 2010; Servidio et al., 2021).

When it comes to seeking social support, adolescents who do not exhibit symptoms of depression are significantly more likely to seek help from parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers, and clergy than those who experience depressive symptoms. At the same time, these students identified their parents as a source of support more than twice as often as their teachers. In contrast, teenagers experiencing symptoms of depression (as well as depression combined with Internet addiction) were significantly more likely to identify peers and friends as their primary sources of social support. Students with symptoms were also more likely to report that they coped on their own or did not ask anyone for help.

This situation raises concerns for parents, caregivers, and educators, as it presents a serious challenge for them. They cannot expect students to speak openly about their experiences. In order to effectively help young people, parents, caregivers, and educators must be highly empathetic toward the difficulties that these adolescents are facing. The functioning of the surveyed students who exhibited depressive symptoms may also be explained, at least in part, by broader social processes related to the acceptance of norms and social authority. Researchers have observed that the greater the level of social anomie present in a given society, the higher the prevalence of mental disorders (Szczukiewicz, 2016).

This study shows that difficulties related to the pandemic are unequally associated with depression and Internet addiction. The results confirmed that the quality of family relationships is the most important factor for the healthy functioning of adolescents without depressive symptoms, even during a pandemic. Therefore, as noted by many authors, efforts to ensure the optimal functioning of family members are essential for preventing disorders among adolescents (Bednarek & Andrzejewska, 2009; Grzelak, 2015; Porzak, 2013; Chen et al., 2020; Sela et al., 2020).

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Summary

The present study shows that more than one-third of adolescents exhibit symptoms of depression. Older respondents were more likely than their younger peers to display depressive symptoms. The findings also indicated that difficulties related to the pandemic are unevenly associated with depression and Internet addiction. The results confirmed that the quality of family relationships is of greatest importance for the functioning of adolescents without symptoms, even during a pandemic.

Symptoms of depression were clearly related to aspects of communication, cohesion, and autonomy in the family. Therefore, promoting the optimal functioning of family members remains an important preventive measure against disorders among adolescents. All actions undertaken by schools and parents to improve mutual communication with children, encourage the expression of needs and emotions, support shared leisure activities, and ensure early intervention in times of family crisis serve as valuable protective factors against depression and addiction.

Enhancing the diagnostic and educational skills of parents, caregivers, and educators to detect early risk behaviors in children, especially at the onset of puberty, is also an important preventive measure.

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Between the imagined and the existing culture: The consequences of biographical learning after conviction

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): This article analyzes the subjective trajectories of a former convict in the context of social exclusion. The aim of the study was to reconstruct the experience of becoming a free individual and to examine the opportunities offered by cultural norms. The analysis sought to identify and interpret the key features of the data corresponding to the research question.

Research methods: Based on an in-depth interview with a former female convict, the study attempted to identify her subjective world, her situation in a new, culturally sanctioned reality, and to conceptualize this reality in an interactional dimension. The collected data were examined through interpretive hermeneutic-phenomenological analysis. The research employed the biographical method and an in-depth interview.

Structure of the article: The paper presents a theoretical introduction, followed by methodological assumptions and research results.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The resulting narrative was analyzed to describe the former convict's personal journey of re-learning in a host culture. The analysis focused on the subject's social status as well as on her attempts to step into a new role and overcome mistrust toward people, places, and events. The empirical analysis revealed that the subject relied on complex self-reconstruction mechanisms operating at the intersection of the imagined and existing culture.

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Conclusions and/or recommendations: The research enabled an in-depth examination of the social adaptation strategies of both the ex-convict and the surrounding community. The added value of this study is that it provides a better understanding of the complexity of post-sentence learning processes under imposed social pressures.

Introduction

In this section of a research project focusing on a former female convict's experiences of exclusion and stigmatization in the social and cultural world, an attempt was made to reconstruct the subject's spatiotemporal reality in the process of biographical learning. The former convict's struggle to acquire a sense of agency while adapting to the cultural reality outside prison, as well as her objectification in interpersonal relationships were analyzed in the context of self-categorization, through which personal identity is projected onto social identity. These opposing poles of self-categorization, in which an individual does not "fit in" based on their understanding of a given category, have subjective consequences, as the resulting sociocultural narrative causes the individual to experience anxiety about the potential risks arising from an atrophied awareness of the host culture. From this perspective, the risk of exclusion, a dominant context in the symbolic dimension of the discourse, indicates a limited sense of personal agency, since reality can be constructed and manipulated by others.

An individual relies on culturally defined patterns of everyday life insofar as their behavior remains unquestioned and their attempts to reenter society do not expose the illusory nature of those efforts. Selective and momentary participation in culture prevents individuals from interacting fully with others and from formulating, interpreting, and defining their own responses to these interactions. At the same time, they cannot change or control personal relationships due to an inability to assess others' motives, reconstruct their attitudes, and use that understanding for their own purposes. The theoretical and empirical perspective of biographical learning in the context of an individual's cultural, social, personal,

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educational, and biographical capital (cf. Krawczyk-Bocian, 2023, pp. 70–74) requires further investigation. Peter Alheit (1995, pp. 57–74) understands biographical learning as "the self-creative actions of individuals who reflectively organize their experiences in a way that generates a coherent personality and identity, gives meaning to their life story, and provides a communicable, socially viable perspective on the world of life that guides their actions."

Elżbieta Dubas (2017, p. 71) points to the potential of using biographical knowledge through the exercise of biographical competence, which supports personal development and the successful fulfillment of life tasks, including educational processes. Reflection on one's own biography gives rise to autobiographical reflection, which reveals the phenomenon of learning from one's own life story, the aim of which is to define identity as the ongoing (re)definition of the self (Dubas, 2011, p. 212). Moreover, one's vision of personal destiny can shape a person's attitude toward events that have occurred or are yet to occur and becomes apparent through an understanding of the Other and the recognition of their experience in one's own. Thus, learning from another person's biography represents a form of encounter between the Self and the Other in biographical experience (Dubas, 2011, p. 91).

Social exclusion is both a state and a process: cumulative in nature, it manifests itself through the dissolution of social and family ties, tends to reproduce itself (cf. Budzyńska, 2018, p. 31), and deprives individuals of the ability to participate fully in social life (Giddens, 2007, p. 346). Extreme social exclusion occurs when the personal factors that hinder an individual's participation in these dimensions of social life are mutually reinforcing rather than complementary (cf. Muras, 2006, p. 14). According to Oliwa-Ciesielska (2016, p. 121), the boundary separating a sense of belonging from that of social exclusion is fluid in the modern world. Kacprzak (2023, p. 34) observes that offenders are subjected to normative exclusion because they become bound by the rules of the axiological anthroposphere.

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Methodological assumptions

This study was undertaken to analyze the biographical learning of social roles by a female ex-convict. The aim of the research was to reconstruct the events and circumstances that provided the context for the woman's biographical learning as she sought to participate in social and cultural life after her release from prison. The following research question was formulated: How did the subject adapt to a contestably evolving culture during the post-incarceration transition crisis from the perspective of biographical learning? An attempt was made to explore the former convict's microworld, a world burdened by past life events, as a distinct phenomenon (Moustakas, 2001, p. 40). The study examined the subject's efforts to develop an individual social identity in a world that was defined by her past (Schütz, 2008, p. 12), the significance that she attributed to her experiential constructs, her ability to transcend the boundaries of sociocultural adaptation, and her personal journey toward reintegration.

In line with the research concept, the ex-convict's painful experiences, potential sense of predictability, and specific activities extending beyond generalized constructs were observed. The research framework was based on an interpretivist paradigm with a biographical perspective (Urbaniak-Zając, 2011). The subject was an individual who had made a conscious decision to reflect on her life and narrate her story. Her life history was regarded as significant at the moment it was told, as it did not represent a "rigid construct" (Segiet, 2021, p. 301) and could be reinterpreted. The participant was a 45-year-old woman who had been released after serving a long-term prison sentence. She was single, had vocational education, and was living with her mother in a small town at the time of the interview. She had a son who was six years old at the time of her conviction.

Empirical data for analysis were obtained through an autobiographical narrative interview (Schütze, 2012; Kaźmierska & Waniek, 2020). The collected biographical material was regarded as a means rather than an end of the study; therefore, it was not analyzed strictly in accordance with Fritz Schütze's procedure. However, the analysis employed a context-sensitive

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approach to enhance the depth and precision of the data (Alheit, 2011, pp. 7–21). After the interview, additional questions were posed to expand the gathered knowledge and elicit information about the subject's ability to assume new roles and "stage" the imagined reality; the events accompanying her transition to life outside prison; and her capacity to emulate the time-structured patterns of life in the host culture.

The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of research ethics. The aim of the analysis was to identify and interpret the key features of the data relating to the former convict's subjective interpretation of reality and to conceptualize this reality in an interactional dimension. The subject was selected for the study because she exhibited a strong awareness of her status as an ex-convict.

Adaptation to a socially exclusive culture during the post-incarceration transition crisis in the context of biographical learning

A detailed analysis of the subject's biographical narrative, which forms the core of her life activities, suggests that the trajectory of her transition from life in prison to freedom is a conglomerate of difficult and challenging events that generate tension and that trial and error is her main learning strategy in the process of transition.

The subject is unfamiliar with social codes, which leads to misunderstandings and repeated experiences of failure in many areas of daily life:

> I got out of prison, right? But I can't comprehend what's going on. It's not like I have 'ex-convict' written on my forehead, but in the town where I live, people point at me because everyone knows everything about everyone […] I'd like to move on, but I'm alone, alone with everything. There's no point in thinking about friends; my family is a nightmare I had to live with, even though as a child I loved my mum […] I didn't know it could be different, better, and now maybe I'm paying for the home I had to live in […]. I fail at every turn, and in prison I felt

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> disappointed because I was a nobody […] I live in a moldy flat in an old tenement building where only marginalized people and gypsies live. To try to get things done in town, I hide. I go out when it's raining so I don't meet anyone. […] They gave me a job cleaning stairwells; I took it so that I have something; I try to survive. […] I was in a bank and I was shocked even to go in there, let alone ask for help with my affairs.

The stigma of a former convict is a deeply discrediting attribute (Goffman, 2005, p. 33) that opens up broad possibilities for interpreting personal development and risk-taking in the context of objectification and personal agency, since the subject is willing to take risks and change her life by releasing her transformative potential.

The sense of helplessness and the perceived need to conceal her stigma play an important role in the woman's personal growth. She has developed a personal attitude toward time that is shaped by her fear of social stigmatization. Life after prison has deprived her of a sense of agency, and she is unable to steer her life in a more constructive direction because of persistent memories of negative past events (cf. Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2007, pp. 117–124).

The woman had atoned for her transgressions by admitting guilt and serving her sentence; therefore, the process of acculturation through the motivating support of the host culture would appear both obvious and well-deserved. Life in prison and life before prison elicit intrusive memories (Nowak, 2020, p. 72) that are recalled automatically, without conscious volition, and lead to a sense of disorganizing emotional discomfort:

> I know that I killed and probably committed the greatest crime, because it was my own child […] I am still angry with myself, but no one is interested in me. I hope that something will change. Life in prison changed me. I hoped and believed in the people who brought me to my rock bottom and to drinking myself unconscious […] practically no one even visited me—I can count them on my fingers—during all these years in prison. […] In freedom—what freedom?—I feel frozen, paralyzed.

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At the same time, increasing levels of acculturation stress caused by a growing sense of social and cultural barriers prevent the subject from forming diverse and satisfying interpersonal relationships, which, in turn, may prompt her to adopt a ghettoization strategy and abandon any efforts to live independently.

A prolonged learning period, spanning her long prison sentence, followed by a terrifying freedom and a lack of personal resources for navigating cultural and social reality, constitutes the framework for yet another "stage play" that the subject must perform. In addition, the woman's choice of an extreme lifestyle and her gradual withdrawal from life can be interpreted as her inability to reconstruct or replicate life patterns that are consistent with cultural norms. This atypical adaptive mechanism manifests itself in the subject's reactive and stagnant behavior under extremely difficult conditions. Consequently, her confidence in a better future has been undermined. The stability and quality of her relationships with friends and family prior to incarceration occupy a peripheral position in her personal model of trust. Her attitude toward her gradual descent into a vicious circle contributes to her meaningless life choices.

The dynamics of her growing helplessness, the imposed need to change her life and make an educational effort to acquire projection skills, and her acceptance of her current situation are not perceptually recognized and fall outside the rational learning framework:

> I don't expect society to absolve me of violating Article 148, well, not those around me, for whom I will always be a child murderer. I was counting on my brother-in-law from Gdańsk; he told me not to worry, that when I get out, I'll live with him […] Years behind bars deprived me of even the little things I was entitled to, they took care of everything behind my back […] I didn't know there were ticket machines and computers. I get stressed at every turn. It'll sound silly, but prison helped me endure these restrictions. I didn't have anything I wanted there either, and I had to be resigned and not show any aggression. […] I don't know how much longer I can go on like this. I'd like to have the qualifications for a better job, but what can I do? I'm running around in circles;

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it's not easy. There are days when I don't know where the time has gone;
I'll just drink some kind of alcohol to make myself feel better.

The subject associates her difficult life situation with a practical strategy for coping with time, which, in her opinion, is often wasted. As a result, she is deprived of a sense of personal agency and identity that should constitute the essence of her existence, and she is unable to rely on her biographical experience to achieve a lasting sense of fulfillment. In the post-traumatic growth model described by Moskal (2023, p. 98), intrusive rumination should be regarded as a factor that promotes self-deprecation, whereas reflective rumination enhances personal growth.

The ability to share personal experiences with others is determined by their responses. The narrator remains in a precarious balance due to factors that mark the beginning of a new trajectory: destructive family members, extreme poverty, the emotional consequences of guilt, alcohol abuse, unemployment, and the inability to control her daily life. The cultural sense of time, analyzed in the context of the subject's awareness and experience of time, defines the trajectory of her struggle for time and over time (cf. Sztobryn, 2017, pp. 15–16). The framework of cultural time remains open, which leads the subject to experience cultural anchoring. Yet one might ask whether biographical time, which is embedded in cultural time and operating to the subject's disadvantage, could in fact alleviate her discomfort and enable her to construct an imagined reality.

The culturally objectified dimension of life after prison functions as a mirror in obligatory discourse and compels the woman to lead a passive existence. Traumatic experiences that result in social stigmatization could, in principle, be harnessed to search for solutions that would stabilize the subject's new life. However, due to the social and cultural interpretation of her life story and the enduring risk of the "murderer" stigma, biographical learning occurs consciously, and the subject makes an intentional effort to "unthink" (Marcela, 2002, p. 78) entrenched knowledge structures while spontaneously reflecting on her biography.

Her anxiety becomes self-reinforcing due to mounting threats, rumination over past events, adaptation to the role of an outsider, and the

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ongoing need to manage stigma. This dynamic gives rise to a complex strategy of concealment, omission, and control aimed at avoiding the risk of social exclusion. The subject is forced to submit to a rigid system of social norms that deprive her of any sense of control over her own life:

> I feel doubly humiliated, both personally and socially. I will never shake off the feeling that I was capable of taking a child's life in such a cruel way, but this present life is pulling the ground out from under my feet. I can't do anything […] maybe if my mother were alive, I would have some support, maybe she would want to listen to me. In this situation, I am mentally devastated. I can't comprehend it.

This represents a symbol of learning helplessness from one's own biography. Due to the multifaceted nature of the social reintegration process, the subject is unable to work out an effective strategy for building personal and cultural identity, overcoming trauma, and relinquishing the habit of attaching verbal and mental labels to past life events. The narrator's clash with reality is a harrowing experience that shatters her imagined world and undermines her sense of agency.

In the context of biographical learning and experimentation with cultural totality, the human condition can be defined as the daily process of dealing with stress, confronting the limitations and restrictions associated with stigma and striving for autonomy. A strategy of adaptive conformity that reinforces the subject's sense of order in her hierarchy of values comes at a personal cost that is disproportionate to its reward; namely, the return to society.

The woman's provisional consent to maintain only a peripheral awareness of the post-incarceration transition crisis, which is highly complex and perceived differently by others, attests to the uniqueness of this difficult experience (cf. Ostrowska, 2020, p. 130). An analysis of the subject's current situation indicates that past events exert a stronger hold on her reality than either the present or the future, which prevents her from developing skills of social integration. According to the narrator, most of her life activities are directed toward avoiding even the slightest public suspicion that she is indebted to society.

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The fact that she is being controlled by the host culture ceases to be obvious and predictable, and her efforts to conform to cultural patterns assume an adaptive rather than a transformative dimension. The need to lead a double life is an exhausting experience, and the subject is fully aware that returning to her pre-prison identity and reintegrating into society will not be spectacular or even rational in the long term. She adopts a manipulative strategy and a conservative approach in social interactions, which discourages her from making efforts to change her life situation.

The subject is conscious of the system of cultural sanctions resulting from transgression, crossing established boundaries, that brands her as a "deviant" ex-convict, as well as of the fact that her attempts to achieve the projected identity are illusory. The woman's biographical trajectory becomes reified in the process of constructing a false identity and is oriented toward future functioning in culture. Traumatic experiences are inseparable from the negative consequences of her past actions, and the subject is ensnared in a trap of meaningful silence and guilty conscience—if only she were able and willing to listen to her inner voice (Heidegger, 1994, pp. 380–382).

This uncertain and ambiguous reality prevents the woman from breaking through the impasse, forcing her to adopt manipulative strategies, to pretend, to lie, to avoid social interactions, to assume a passive stance, and to rely on mechanisms of illusory autonomy. The subject's biographical narrative suggests that she has not been able to process difficult emotions. The boundary between her life in prison and her "nearly attained freedom" is fragile, and the woman has internalized attempts to actively participate in social and cultural life. However, these efforts are thwarted by a non-inclusive host culture, and the subject experiences stigmatization, loss of identity, a sense of non-belonging, and powerlessness in the process of "becoming human."

By remaining "faithful" to the internalized concept of self-objectification in the host culture and the culturally imposed identity, the subject is deprived of authenticity. Instead of developing potentially functional behaviors, she resorts to behavioral patterns that are simulated for the

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sake of others. For as long as her daily activities were confined to the socializing space of the prison environment, she was unaware that her perceptions of reality were warped. Such distorted thinking prevented her from reflective learning and from achieving a sense of happiness. The subject was unable to cope with the diffusion of roles. She failed to resolve her identity crisis and, as a result, did not establish stable foundations for developing a mature sense of self. The woman never fully identified with the role that she was forced to play in prison, and she lost confidence in her ability to make sound decisions. At the same time, the experience of identity drift and its consequences, namely, her inability to establish meaningful relationships with others, led to emotional numbness.

The realization that social inclusion in an imposed space is an illusory construct (Pospiszyl, 2022, p. 73) prompted the woman to question and conceal her identity, and to develop her own theory of stigma that exacerbated her sense of inadequacy and inferiority (Żeromska-Charlińska, 2010, p. 149). The narrative of this former prisoner convicted of infanticide is a powerful story of marginalization, isolation, and self-exclusion unfolding over time. Due to the complex and multifaceted nature of biographical learning and the post-incarceration transition crisis, the subject feels that her identity has been dominated and distorted by the host culture.

Synthesis of the results

The narrator's ability to self-reflect and to perceive herself through the eyes of others suggests that she retains a sense of personal identity. In turn, her social identity, namely, her capacity to understand others, is tainted by stigma and a sense of exclusion, which in the future may pave the way for painful, total rejection: the condemnation of both the crime and the person who committed it, thus imposing a negative identity upon her. Cultural norms generate social meanings, shape the complexity of interpersonal relationships, and exert a decisive influence on the former convict's identity and her capacity to participate actively in the social world. The subject should be supported in the process of transcribing

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the cultural code (Rogalska-Marasińska, 2017, p. 329), which would enable her to open herself to others, develop her own perceptions of reality, experience the surrounding world through her own perspective, and become acquainted with new concepts and meanings.

Such support could be provided by probation officers, counselors, resocialization therapists, cultural facilitators, and experienced psychologists who, acting as cultural mediators, might organize therapeutic sessions for traumatized, victimized, socially, and culturally excluded individuals in order to improve their physical and mental well-being and their sense of public safety (cf. Kwiatkowski, 2022, pp. 213–214). The reinterpretation and reconstruction of the former convict's biography indicate that the process of her provisional adaptation to a new reality, which poses a radical barrier to social reintegration, entails a certain risk. The woman's newfound freedom, which is an extreme event in itself, forces her to adopt the role of the aggrieved, which further deepens her inability to receive and process social information. As a result, social contexts and situations not only generate specific behaviors, but also amplify and reinforce them.

The subject feels that she is experiencing an internal violation of her sense of personal agency and of undiscovered inner worlds known only to her, which remain unexplored even when decoded. The woman's illusory struggle to adapt to the new world and overcome her anxiety leads to feelings of loneliness, isolation, guilt, incompetence, frustration, and failure. She reflects on cultural and social perspectives and on her lack of personal resources that might facilitate the potential public deconstruction of her deviant identity. After serving her sentence, the woman returned to her old environment, a fact that significantly impeded any attempts at self-rationalization. Consequently, the narrator is unable to express disagreement or critically evaluate her circumstances and the process of qualitative involvement, which negatively affects her relationships with others and fosters a catatonic attitude toward social and cultural participation. The subject is left out and has no time to search for justification or rectification; she feels pressured to experience an epiphany and is once again confronted with stereotypes.

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The issue under discussion is highly complex and cannot be examined exhaustively in this article due to space constraints. Nevertheless, the present findings indicate that biographical learning during inculturation can be hindered if traumatic experiences are not adequately processed during the post-incarceration transition crisis and if transformative efforts are undertaken haphazardly and without professional support.

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The role and actions of the school in preventing domestic violence against students

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Abstract

Research objectives and problems: The aim of this article is to present the role of the school and the actions that it undertakes to prevent domestic violence against students. In line with this objective, the following research questions were posed: What role does the school play in preventing domestic violence against students? What measures should schools take to counteract domestic violence? How do school staff assess their preparedness and readiness to take action in this area? What recommendations can strengthen the school's efforts to address domestic violence against students?

Research methods: To answer the research questions, a qualitative research design was used, specifically focus group interviews (group discussions, commonly referred to as focus groups). A total of 68 participants took part in the study. The group of respondents consisted of school principals, teachers, homeroom teachers, as well as school counselors and psychologists.

Process of argumentation: The research process is both theoretical and empirical, as it combines an analysis of relevant literature with the author's own findings. It focuses on presenting the role of the school and the actions that is undertakes to support families affected by violence and to protect children experiencing domestic violence. The study highlights that building an atmosphere of trust and safety in the school environment is a vital condition for effectively supporting students at risk of violence and mitigating its negative effects.

Research findings and their impact on the development of pedagogical science: The analysis of the collected material confirms the

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key role of the school in preventing domestic violence against students and in supporting families affected by violence. The findings indicate that efforts in this area are highly interdisciplinary, especially within pedagogical science, but also reveal limits in how these responsibilities are carried out.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The research contributes to the development of the domestic violence prevention system, as well as to broader child and family support measures. The findings emphasize the need to enhance the readiness and openness of educational institutions to carry out effective interventions, provide support to children and families, and strengthen the overall system of support available to educators.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a complex social problem that has far-reaching consequences for the development of a child experiencing violence, as well as for the child's mental health and education. The school, as an institution that plays a key role in a child's life, not only carries out the educational process but also performs caregiving and educational functions, supporting both the student and the student's parents. Therefore, taking action to identify, counteract, and combat domestic violence is one of the school's priorities (Szabelska, 2006).

Child abuse has consequences that extend beyond the immediate situation, and affect the child's entire life. The negative effects of violence involve the child's psychological well-being, as well as their functioning in family and social relationships. Child abuse is therefore not just an individual tragedy but also a burden on society as a whole. One of the most tragic risks associated with violence against children is the risk of death, which may result either from direct acts of violence or from their consequences, such as self-harm or suicide attempts. Child abuse also leads to disturbances in cognitive development, learning, and peer relationships. In addition, children experiencing violence are at increased risk of serious conflict with the law and involvement in criminal activities (Szabelska, 2006; Czyżewska, 2008; *Przeciwdziałanie krzywdzeniu dzieci* 2017; Wiśniewska-Nogaj & Kwiatkowska, 2024).

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As indicated by the research report *Diagnoza przemocy wobec dzieci w Polsce* 2023 (Makaruk et al., 2023), violence from a known adult has been experienced by 32% of children and adolescents. This percentage is steadily increasing. The report shows that also psychologists or school counselors (13%), as well as teachers (11%), are among the adults whom children and adolescents most often approach in difficult situations. Polish legislation obliges the education system (Act of 29 July 2005 on the Prevention of Domestic Violence) to identify domestic violence and child abuse. In this respect, schools are required to report suspected violence by initiating the Blue Card procedure and to cooperate with interdisciplinary teams responsible for building an effective system for preventing domestic violence and providing assistance to families affected by it.

The aim of this article is to discuss the role and importance of the school in preventing domestic violence against students by analyzing measures to support child protection. The article includes research based on the qualitative method of focus group interviews. It points to the significant role of the school in providing support to families affected by violence and in protecting children, emphasizing the need to build an atmosphere of trust and safety. The conclusions stress the need to develop an effective anti-violence system and to strengthen schools' readiness to intervene and provide assistance.

The legal basis of the child protection and domestic violence prevention system – the role of the education system

The legal protection of the child is defined by the most important legal acts, beginning with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (1997), which contains several specific provisions on children's rights. The crucial article that deals with the protection and rights of children is Article 72, which states that "The Republic of Poland shall ensure the protection of the rights of the child. Everyone has the right to demand from public authorities the protection of the child against violence, cruelty, exploitation, and moral corruption. A child deprived of parental care has the right

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to care and assistance from public authorities. In the course of determining the rights of the child, public authorities and those responsible for the child are obliged to listen to and, as far as possible, take into account the views of the child." Another important document is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991). It is an international treaty that defines and protects children's rights worldwide. It guarantees the rights of the child regardless of color, religion, or origin. The Convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, and Poland was one of the initiators of its adoption. The document entered into force in 1990. In Poland, the Ombudsman for Children acts as the guardian of children's rights.

In 2025, the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (Act of 29 July 2005 on the Prevention of Domestic Violence) was enacted in Poland. This legislation defines the tasks related to preventing domestic violence, the principles of working with persons experiencing domestic violence, and the principles of working with persons who use domestic violence. The phenomenon of domestic violence is also defined in detail. According to Article 2 of the Act, violence is a single or repeated intentional act or omission, involving the use of physical, psychological, or economic advantage, that violates the rights or personal goods of a person experiencing domestic violence, in particular:

a) endangering that person's life, health, or property,
b) violating his or her dignity, physical integrity, or freedom, including sexual freedom,
c) causing physical or mental harm, suffering, or distress,
d) restricting or depriving that person of access to financial resources or the opportunity to work or become financially independent,
e) substantially invading that person's privacy or causing a sense of threat, humiliation, or anguish, including through electronic communication.

A minor who experiences violence from parents or other family members, or who witnesses domestic violence, is considered a person experiencing violence.

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Under the Act, each municipality undertakes measures to counteract domestic violence, in particular through the work of an interdisciplinary team. This team is composed, in accordance with Article 9a, of representatives from: social assistance agencies; the municipal commission for solving alcohol-related problems; the Police; the education sector; health care; non-governmental organizations; the Military Police; and the probation service. These representatives constitute the local system for preventing and counteracting domestic violence.

When information is received regarding the occurrence of domestic violence, the interdisciplinary team appoints a diagnostic and assistance group, which conducts a diagnosis and assessment of the situation in response to the reported suspicion of domestic violence and implements measures to protect and assist the family affected by violence. When the person experiencing violence is a minor, the diagnostic and assistance group also includes the student's homeroom teacher or another teacher familiar with the child's home situation. The group may also include a school teacher and a school psychologist. Members of the interdisciplinary team and of the diagnostic and assistance groups perform their tasks as part of their official or professional duties.

The tasks of the interdisciplinary team include, in particular:

a) initiating and supporting measures to prevent domestic violence;
b) monitoring actions taken to counter domestic violence;
c) issuing opinions on matters concerning the application of the Act;
d) initiating amendments to legislation on the prevention of domestic violence;
e) issuing opinions in the event of disputes between public administration bodies and non-governmental organizations carrying out tasks in the field of domestic violence prevention;
f) issuing opinions on public tasks related to counteracting domestic violence and on commissioning such tasks to entities obliged to cooperate in this area;
g) developing standards for assisting persons experiencing domestic violence and for working with perpetrators of domestic violence;

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h) establishing mechanisms, in cooperation with other actors, for providing information on standards for assisting persons experiencing domestic violence and for working with persons perpetrating domestic violence;
i) issuing opinions on domestic violence prevention projects developed on the basis of shelter programs.

The tasks of the diagnostic and assistance group include, in particular:

a) assessing, on the basis of the Blue Card procedure, the domestic situation of persons experiencing domestic violence and persons perpetrating domestic violence;
b) implementing the Blue Card procedure when domestic violence is confirmed, especially when there is a risk to life or health;
c) notifying the person suspected of committing domestic violence that a Blue Card procedure has been initiated in their absence;
d) submitting a request to the interdisciplinary team to refer a person using domestic violence to corrective and educational programs or to psychological and therapeutic programs for perpetrators of domestic violence;
e) requesting the interdisciplinary team to report that a domestic violence perpetrator has committed an offense;
f) monitoring the situation of persons experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, domestic violence, including after the conclusion of the Blue Card procedure;
g) completing the Blue Card procedure;
h) documenting the actions taken as the basis for determining that initiating the Blue Card procedure was not justified;
i) informing the chairperson of the interdisciplinary team about the results of the actions taken under the Blue Cards procedure.

The education sector is also one of the six entities entitled to initiate the Blue Card procedure (Decree of the Council of Ministers of 6 September 2023 on the "Blue Card" procedure and model "Blue Card" forms, 2023).

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As the description of tasks and powers indicates, the education system plays a significant role in the domestic violence prevention system, particularly in the area of child protection. The school, where the child spends time on a daily basis, plays a key role in ensuring the child's safety and support. Teachers, educators, and other school staff have the opportunity to observe students' behavior and psychophysical states, which allows for the early detection of concerning signs that may indicate emerging problems in the family or peer environment. Through direct contact with the student and the student's parents, schools can act both preventively and interventively. Teachers and school staff, through ongoing dialogue with the family and regular observation of the child, are able to identify the first signs of crises or violence. In this way, the school becomes not only a place of learning but also a space where children and their families can find help and guidance in overcoming difficulties and building a safe family environment.

As Monika Czyżewska (2024) points out, the tasks of the school in situations involving threats to a child's welfare have a specific preventive or intervention-oriented character, depending on the situation and stage of intervention. At the level of preventing child abuse, the school's task is to educate students, parents, and school staff, shaping attitudes and psychosocial skills related to the issue of violence. It is also important to foster a supportive atmosphere for building relationships and trust, and to follow clearly formulated rules for handling situations of suspected violence. At the level of advanced risk detection, it is crucial that school staff, supported by the psychological–educational team, are alert to symptoms that may indicate difficulties experienced in students' families. Teachers should identify signals even when they occur at long intervals or appear unrelated. Teachers and school psychologists, thanks to their specialist knowledge, are particularly well positioned to analyze crisis situations and develop an appropriate action plan. Their role is also to build trust among students and teachers so that anyone can come to them for support. The final level involves daily work with the child and the family experiencing a crisis, undertaking interdisciplinary cooperation, and monitoring the progress of the implemented measures.

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Interdisciplinary cooperation in supporting the child and the family should take place with the participation of public and non-public actors operating in the community who are involved in addressing domestic violence (Wojtanowicz, 2024). In order to protect minors from abuse, the Act of 13 May 2016 on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime and the Protection of Minors was introduced (Act on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Offences and the Protection of Minors, 2016). Under this Act, as of 15 February 2024, all entities working with children are required to have standards for the protection of minors (commonly referred to as child protection standards). These standards constitute a set of policies and procedures designed to keep children and young people safe from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Educational institutions are also required to implement these standards.

The legal provisions cited above, along with the measures taken to protect children from abuse, are intended to provide minors with safe and supportive conditions for development. However, for these measures to be effective, the school must be adequately prepared, formally, organizationally, and in terms of competence. The protection of minors requires knowledge of the law and its practical implementation, the development of a culture of safety, and an awareness of and responsibility for the welfare of children.

The role and actions of the school in preventing domestic violence against students – analysis of the author's own research

A focus group interview method was used to achieve the research objective of examining the role and actions taken by schools to prevent domestic violence against students. The focus group interview (focus group, focus discussion, commonly referred to as a focus group interview) is a qualitative research method used in psychology, sociology, and social research (Banaszak, 2017). Central to this method is the interaction that occurs within the research group, particularly among the participants

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themselves. The conversation takes place in a wider social context, often using projective techniques. Participants do not always have fully formed opinions on the topics discussed; rather, their views often develop in response to the perspectives expressed by others. The moderator, as the discussion leader, plays a significant role in guiding the process. The discussion follows a pre-developed scenario outlining the stages of the study. The discussion is recorded to allow for an in-depth analysis of the collected material (Wojtanowicz, 2024).

The study was conducted in six research groups, involving representatives of primary schools from the Małopolskie Voivodeship. A total of 68 individuals participated. The group of respondents consisted of principals, teachers, homeroom teachers, and school counselors and psychologists. The sampling was purposeful. The criterion for participation was experience working within interdisciplinary teams and diagnostic–support groups responsible for preventing domestic violence. The study included individuals actively involved in implementing the Blue Card procedure and cooperating with institutions forming part of local domestic violence prevention systems. The purpose of this selection was to gather the opinions of practitioners with knowledge and experience resulting from their direct involvement in inter-institutional activities supporting children and families affected by violence. The research was conducted between February and June 2024.

In relation to the stated research objective, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What role does the school play in preventing domestic violence against students?
2. What measures should schools take to counteract domestic violence against a student?
3. How do school staff assess their preparedness and readiness to take action in cases of domestic violence against a student?
4. What recommendations can strengthen the school's efforts to address domestic violence against a student?

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The research results are presented in an aggregated manner, encompassing the main themes and categories identified in the participants' statements. Selected quotations illustrating the diversity of opinions are included, with the analysis focusing on common trends and areas requiring support in the school's efforts to prevent domestic violence against students.

Respondents unanimously emphasize the significant role of the school in uncovering violence experienced by students in the home environment. They note "that it is increasingly common for us to diagnose such cases and to take intervention measures." "Reports come from both children and parents, most often from mothers who are also victims of violence. There are also reports from fathers." "We are also alert to children's behavior that may indicate domestic violence or show signs of physical abuse or neglect." Respondents primarily associate their role with the obligation to disclose such incidents and report them to the appropriate authorities. "We should report any such case to social welfare, the court, or the police." "It's not easy because we often don't have hard evidence… We don't want to act to the detriment of the parents or the child with conclusions that are too hasty." As they note, "when the diagnosis is clear, it is our duty to complete the Blue Card A procedure."

Respondents also point to difficulties in fulfilling their role. "Parents increasingly do not consent to their child talking to an educator or psychologist, and then our possibilities are very limited." "They intimidate us by reporting us to the Board of Education or by taking legal action against the school… This limits us and even stops us." "Hence our role is to act in a balanced way, to diagnose, and to refer the case to the interdisciplinary team or the support group, which will then confirm the presence of violence or not." Respondents indicate that their supportive role toward students is limited. "We can work with the student at school, support them, but only with parental consent." "However, our possibilities in this respect are limited… We do not want to label such a student by sending them to a counselor or psychologist." "It happens that the student and the parents, after the violence is disclosed, avoid contact with us and do not cooperate." "We are also constrained in fulfilling our role by RODO regulations."

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Among the key activities of the school, respondents include diagnosing the student's school situation and providing assistance to the student and family in the form of counseling and pedagogical and psychological support. At the same time, they stress that "we don't have much capacity to act. It is significantly limited… We are not always able to diagnose violence, and we are not allowed to go to the student's home." "However, we always try to build appropriate support and observe how the situation develops." "We work with other professionals in diagnostic and support groups and interdisciplinary teams." "We also carry out educational activities, building students' awareness of what violent behavior is, making them aware of children's rights, and pointing out where they can go if they experience harm or difficulties." "There are posters hanging in the school, leaflets distributed, talks during homeroom classes, and preventive workshops for students." "We also raise the topic at parent meetings and invite specialists from outside the school to these meetings." "We have adopted standards for the protection of minors and we train ourselves on the topic."

Awareness of the role and responsibilities incumbent on the school in addressing harm to students leads respondents to reflect that they are not fully prepared to meet these challenges. "It is difficult to say whether we are fulfilling our tasks 100 percent." "The multitude of responsibilities and difficulties we experience at school are not conducive to confronting this topic." "Parents can sometimes be demanding and uncooperative, and we don't have the tools to change this." "We also lack comprehensive knowledge in this area; we can't always see it… We try to be vigilant and act, but the regulations change so often." Respondents also point to difficulties arising from the obligation to participate in diagnostic and support groups. "Meetings often take place outside our working hours. Still, we try to attend them." "During lessons, it is difficult to provide a substitute for the teacher who needs to attend these meetings." "We have staff shortages and difficulties ensuring full staffing." "The school operates according to the school-year cycle; during breaks from teaching, it is difficult to prepare student assessments or attend meetings… Then it becomes the principal's responsibility."

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Most respondents participating in the study are experienced educators with long careers in the education system. They therefore offered recommendations aimed at strengthening the school's efforts to counteract domestic violence against students. Among the most important, they pointed to the need to clearly define the school's actions and responsibilities in providing support and assistance to the student and the student's family. "The boundary of the school's interference in a student's functioning outside school is still unclear… It used to be that an educator or teacher could visit a student's family at home, but now we are not allowed to do so. We have to ask the parents' permission for everything, and those experiencing difficulties do not give us this consent."

Participants also identify knowledge gaps in the area of domestic violence prevention. They point out that "teachers are often not trained in detecting violence and in using the BC procedures… We are still struggling with the vagueness of the actions within the procedure." They also emphasize the need to provide support and protection to teachers. "We are concerned about the reaction of the child's parents or guardians (aggression, threats, attacks against the school), as well as the escalation of violence against the child after intervention." According to the respondents, the school's interdisciplinary cooperation also needs to be strengthened. As they note, "we identify difficulties in communication with the police, family court, and social assistance." "We often encounter a lack of responsiveness from the institutions responsible for child protection, and the Blue Card procedure does not guarantee immediate protection for the child, which may discourage its use."

The school therefore plays a key role in preventing domestic violence against students, although this task presents many difficulties. Teachers, educators, and school psychologists diagnose cases of violence, which are often difficult to identify and intervene in. Respondents indicated that reports of violence come from both children and parents, and their role is mainly to respond and follow the required procedures. The school also carries out educational activities, and organizes workshops, information campaigns, and meetings with parents. However, respondents emphasized that they observe a low level of effectiveness in this area and

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face difficulties in cooperating with other institutions within the child and family support system.

Summary

Preventing child abuse and assisting families affected by violence requires a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach. The school plays a very important role in this regard. However, to be effective, several measures should be taken to better support teachers and educators. The research findings confirm the key role of the school in preventing domestic violence against students while simultaneously highlighting significant limitations in fulfilling this task. Respondents emphasize that, despite growing awareness of the problem, teachers often do not feel sufficiently prepared to undertake interventions or to cooperate with support institutions. These difficulties stem from legal and organizational constraints, fears related to parents' reactions, and the lack of clear procedures.

The collected data indicate the need to strengthen the competencies of teaching staff, clarify the scope of the school's responsibilities, and improve inter-institutional cooperation. The effectiveness of the school's actions in the area of child protection therefore depends on systemic support, better communication with institutions, and the development of a culture of safety and trust within the school environment.

One important factor determining the effectiveness of child abuse prevention is the strengthening of empathetic attitudes among teachers and educators. As Katarzyna Plutecka (2019) notes, an educator should be characterized by empathy, understood as "moving inside from outside" or "being in touch with emotions" and understanding the meaning of the other person's experience. She also stresses "empathizing with the effects and the need to respond adequately to their signs." Ultimately, she places empathy between rational reasoning, inference, and intuition. Another element of efficient school intervention is improving teachers' and educators' knowledge of how to recognize symptoms of child abuse,

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how to apply laws related to violence in practice and how to use the Blue Card procedure (Frankowiak, 2023).

It is also important to strengthen the school's interdisciplinary cooperation with other actors, particularly social welfare bodies, the police, the courts, and NGOs. Such cooperation should take on a systemic character, a permanent partnership among entities and services operating in the local environment, which will enable a holistic and complementary diagnosis of domestic violence and support the development of effective counteraction strategies (Models of Cooperation: Recommendation Book, 2021).

Addressing domestic violence is a challenge for many professionals today. To overcome these difficulties, evaluation activities that examine the effectiveness of interventions and progress in building a safe, nurturing environment for children are essential. Supervision is also helpful in this regard. In the educational system, it can address three key areas: workload management, staff development, and support (Chojak, 2021). The overarching issue is to create a safe school climate so that staff, students, and their parents feel secure. Jadwiga Przewłocka (2015) defines school climate as the quality and character of school life, encompassing norms, values, and expectations that support a sense of social, emotional, and physical security.

In conclusion, preventing domestic violence against children requires institutional and legal mechanisms as well as the development of empathy, cooperation, and shared responsibility in the school community. Schools that promote trust, openness, and partnership are better equipped to protect children and effectively respond to signs of violence.

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The capillary phenomenon of sharenting

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): This paper explores the phenomenon of sharenting—the widespread practice of parents sharing images and information about their children on social media—as an emerging area of interest in the educational sciences. The aim of the study is to critically analyze this practice from pedagogical, ethical, and socio-philosophical perspectives, with particular attention to its implications for child protection, identity formation, and educational responsibility in digital environments.

Research methods: The study employs a theoretical and argumentative methodology, using an interdisciplinary qualitative approach based on a review of academic, philosophical, and legal literature. The analysis draws on philosophical (Sartre, Foucault), pedagogical (Mortari, Rousseau), sociological (Bauman, Giddens), and media theory (Watzlawick, Barile) frameworks, as well as relevant legal and institutional sources.

Process of argumentation: The argument proceeds by first defining sharenting, then examining parental responsibility in the digital era, and finally presenting a pedagogical proposal rooted in an ethics of care, critical awareness, and the cultivation of digital citizenship.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The contribution of the study is the formulation of an educational vision that acknowledges the need to support digital parenting through reflective, dialogic, and child-centered practices. Implications for the educational sciences include the urgent need to develop training models and pedagogical tools that equip teachers, educators, and parents to address the challenges of online communication. Such efforts should incorporate media literacy and relational ethics into curricula and educational practice.

***Keywords*:**
sharenting, parenting roles, identity, relationships, publication practices

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Conclusions and/or recommendations: Sharenting is not simply a communication trend but a crucial arena for rethinking educational practice in contemporary society. It raises fundamental questions about visibility, identity, and responsibility that demand pedagogical and ethical consideration.

Introduction

In today's social fabric, profoundly shaped by digital interconnectedness, we are witnessing the spread of practices that, while appearing to be ordinary and private, have significant cultural and pedagogical implications. Among these, the phenomenon of *sharenting*, understood as the practice of parents sharing online content about their children, stands out as a pervasive trend. It embeds itself in everyday gestures, family dynamics, educational processes, and identity formation, affecting both the sphere of intimacy and that of public representation.

In a society where identity is increasingly constructed through the gaze of others and mediated by images, sharenting exposes tensions that can be interpreted through the concepts of existentialist philosophy. Sartre's notion that human beings are "condemned to be free" (1946), and therefore must take responsibility for their choices even in the absence of absolute foundations, resonates today in the educational anxieties of parents who subject their children to constant public visibility. Posting a photo is not merely an affectionate gesture; it is also a form of identity storytelling involving subjects who are still developing, and it does so in a digital realm that often escapes intentional control.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this phenomenon raises fundamental questions about the construction of childhood identity, the protection of privacy, and the role of adults as mediators between the real and virtual worlds. The educational sciences, long engaged in reflecting on the meaning of the educational relationship in contemporary society (Batini, 2017; Mortari, 2006), prompt us to consider not only the present effects of sharenting but also its long-term implications. What space is left for a child's self-determination if their image has already been narrated by others before they can define themselves?

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Sharenting, then, is not only a common habit but an emblematic manifestation of an era in which existence is exposed, observed, narrated, and often shaped by a public image constructed from birth. It is a phenomenon that raises philosophical, pedagogical, and ethical questions and merits thoughtful reflection—free of moral judgment, but attentive to its far-reaching consequences. The concept of *capillarity* is used here to convey a phenomenon that silently yet powerfully permeates the very structure of emotional relationships and family roles, revealing the fragility of a society that has made exposure a new form of existence.

This article is structured as a theoretical reflection seeking to outline both practical and reflective strategies that are capable, on the one hand, of responding coherently to contemporary sociotechnological transformations and, on the other, of preserving the foundational value of educational relationships and identity-building processes. This is achieved through a critical reconsideration of the use of digital technologies in family and social contexts. The present study adopts a methodology based on the critical reconstruction of major theoretical paradigms and available empirical evidence, with the goal of reinterpreting a phenomenon that—while not new—remains insufficiently recognized despite being deeply embedded in today's social fabric.

Sharenting: General overview and statistical data

The 1990s marked the beginning of the digital revolution. Over time, driven by globalization and the desire to bridge distances, individuals increasingly felt compelled to adapt to relentless, transformative changes in personal, social, historical, and cultural domains. This is a hallmark of a cosmopolitan society, which requires us to rethink concepts such as globalization, identity, and relationships: "Globalization is not an accident in our lives. It is a change in the very conditions of our existence" (Giddens, 1999, p. 76).

In continuity with this digitalization, the advent of social media in the 2000s gradually brought attention to a phenomenon that, in recent

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years, has shown increasingly alarming patterns due to its widespread diffusion across generations, especially among adults and children: sharenting.

What is sharenting?

Sharenting, a neologism formed from *share* and *parenting*, refers to the habitual posting and sharing of information, photos, videos, and other materials by parents who wish to "tell the story" of their children's lives on social media. The tendency to share private information is often linked to a need for approval, validation, and self-esteem. This is consistent with the notion of a "culture of narcissism" (or "parental narcissism"), in which individualism is tightly intertwined with hedonism (Lasch, 1979). For such individuals, the internet—and social media in particular—functions as a mirror, reinforcing a growing inclination to turn one's life into a kind of display window, blurring the boundaries between public and private spheres.

Although still limited, existing studies demonstrate the growing seriousness of this phenomenon, particularly in the United States. A study by the University of Michigan found that 92% of two-year-olds already have some form of online presence, and in about 45% of cases, their first names are disclosed. The research shows that parents use social media to share their daily lives and to seek advice, and that many children appear online even before birth through the posting of ultrasound images. A recent European study adds that parents share an average of 300 photos and pieces of sensitive information about their children online annually. The main platforms used are Facebook (54%), Instagram (16%), and Twitter (12%).

Moreover, research conducted by the University of Bologna in collaboration with the Children's Digital Media Center at the University of California introduces the concepts of "city-agency" and "spectacularization." For instance, children in Los Angeles are often exposed from cradle to stage, confronting unpleasant or even criminal realities because of the roles into which they are pushed, which starkly contrast with the innocence of childhood (Ferrara et al., 2023).

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This phenomenon is closely linked to the generation of digital natives, children born and raised in a highly technological world. Another key group involved in sharenting are millennials, born between the mid-1980s and the 1990s. As parents, millennials tend to prioritize digital life, documenting every stage of their children's development online.

Sharenting is not limited to spectacularization; it has also been associated with religious motivations. Sharing photos or videos of one's children may be seen as a way of highlighting the value of the gift of offspring. According to one interpretation within Islamic thought, however, displaying such gifts online may provoke envy or discomfort in others.

This phenomenon typically involves several distinct steps:

1. Collecting material on one's devices.
2. Selecting the photos and videos to be uploaded.
3. Editing the content using various tools (e.g., filters, stickers to obscure sensitive areas).
4. Adding captions to make the content more appealing.
5. Uploading, often motivated by the perception of social networks as archival spaces.
6. Waiting for feedback from followers.

Given the increasingly dense interconnectivity of today's world, there is a pressing need to exercise greater discernment and to cultivate critical judgment and deep reflection on the concepts of identity and education.

The necessary redefinition of identity and education

In light of the issues discussed above, it is essential to rethink the concepts of identity and education. These concepts must be considered alongside media education, which advocates for the sustainable and responsible use of digital technologies. It is crucial to emphasize the authenticity and reciprocity inherent in the educational relationship, as well as its ethical dimension. This ethical component speaks to the human need to relate to others, to welcome others, and, in turn, to feel welcomed and recognized. It also calls for a strong sense of responsibility from everyone

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involved in the relational or communicative process. This is referred to as co-responsibility aimed at achieving shared goals.

These elements are fundamental to communication, particularly as highlighted in the first axiom of communication, which serves as a universal reminder:

> There is no such thing as non-behavior, or, to put it more simply, it is impossible not to behave. Now, if one accepts that the entire behavior in an interactive situation has the value of a message, meaning it is communication, it follows that no matter how hard one tries, it is impossible not to communicate. (Watzlawick et al., 1967, pp. 48-49)

What emerges from this is that despite the pervasive presence of technology in our lives, which sometimes seems to suppress communication, it is impossible not to communicate.

Communication occurs between two or more identities. With the digital revolution, media have played—and continue to play—a central role in shaping individual identities. In this regard, Foucault's concept of "technologies of the self" becomes relevant: the idea that certain technologies act on one's body, mind, thoughts, and behaviors in everyday life. Sharenting becomes one of the most conspicuous expressions of these processes.

However, it is not only identity that is at stake; the notion of education is equally implicated. Statistical data make this clear: a significant proportion of parents are willing to share nearly every aspect of their children's lives on social media. This tendency reflects the fragile and fragmented nature of contemporary relationships, aligning closely with Bauman's concepts of "liquid modernity" and the "adiaphoric society." These terms describe the fluidity of identity resulting from the progressive dissolution of stable, value-oriented reference points: "The world around us is fragmented into poorly coordinated pieces, while our individual lives are fragmented into a series of loosely connected episodes" (Bauman, 2003). In today's technological and globalized society, individuals are increasingly distancing themselves from traditional forms

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of belonging—whether emotional, familial, or cultural. This shift contributes to a weakening of loyalty-based obligations toward others and a corresponding decline in parental authority. The resulting communicative void is evident in the primary relational context of the family.

As the traditional, monolithic, and stable family model has evolved (for example, the 2014 reform of Family Law in Italy, which replaced the notion of parental authority with parental responsibility and redefined roles within the so-called "2.0 family"[1]), our conceptualization of relationships has changed as well. Relationships are no longer seen as the ability to embrace diversity and coexist; increasingly, they are pursued as a means of self-fulfillment and personal happiness. "From a dual event, relationships have become personal events, situated between the private and public spheres" (Romano, 2017, p. 5).

The following quotations aptly capture the emergence of what might be called a new era of "showcased existence":

"Showcasing oneself implies an ideology of absolute transparency, that is, the obligation to make everything available for display" (Codeluppi, 2007, p. 21).

"The contemporary subject becomes a communicator of themselves in a way never experienced before, as they can, through digital means, produce a self-brand […] using the web as an optimal tool for 'staging oneself'" (Barile, 2008, pp. 2–12).

In this context, the term *showcased parenthood* is fitting. Many adults seem unaware of the risks associated with excessive technology use.

[1] In 2014, Legislative Decree No. 154/2013—effective as of February 7—replaced the term "*parental authority*" with "*parental responsibility*" in the Italian Civil Code, reflecting a shift toward a more shared and collaborative understanding of parental roles. Article 316 of the Civil Code, as amended by this decree, regulates the joint exercise of parental responsibility.
These changes reflect the evolution toward a "family 2.0," characterized by a more open nuclear structure and a model of shared parental responsibility and collaboration between partners. For the full text of the decree, see the Official Journal or other reliable legal sources reporting Legislative Decree No. 154/2013 https://www.filodiritto.com/diritto-di-famiglia-la-potesta-genitoriale-cede-il-posto-alla-responsabilita-genitoriale

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At the same time, they overlook the foundational pillars of relationships as envisioned by Buber—particularly the emphasis on the *We*, which gives value to the interpersonal space and recognizes individuality within plurality.

The concept of education must therefore be rethought in connection with the sustainable use of technology. While digital tools offer numerous innovative learning opportunities and support children and adolescents with diverse needs, they must be used judiciously. As Rousseau suggests in *Emile, or On Education*, effective educational relationships require the educator's strategic "absence" to foster autonomy, as well as the ability to initiate a developmental path that takes into account broader temporal and spatial dimensions. This illustrates how technology, when used thoughtfully, can support innovative and original teaching.

The challenge, however, is substantial: many parents, overwhelmed by rapid technological advances and the constant emergence of new apps, become caught in the web and inevitably lose their sense of direction. As a result, the authoritative parental role weakens, unable to maintain a clear boundary between the public and private spheres. The concept of education must therefore be redefined in close relation to the concept of formation. To educate is to form. Parents, as authoritative agents of change, are the architects of a child's "first form." It is in this early context that the first stages of identity development occur and where personal uniqueness begins to crystallize. This process is dynamic, evolving and taking on new nuances over time.

Dialogue, established from the earliest interactions, is of great educational and pedagogical value. It allows individuals to move beyond their individuality and to embrace otherness within the diverse contexts of social life. It is therefore crucial to make relationships *generative*: relationships that are fertile, nurturing, and oriented toward caring for the other as a person with a distinct identity. Such relationships require daily dedication and perseverance. This aligns with Don Lorenzo Milani's foundational principle: *I care*.

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Addressing sharenting: Reflections and new perspectives

As noted earlier, addressing sharenting requires beginning at its roots. The first significant challenge lies in educating adults—especially parents. This involves fostering a greater sense of responsibility and critical thinking. Responsibility here entails being aware of one's actions and their potential impact on vulnerable individuals who must be protected from harmful or inappropriate uses of the internet.

While schools, through initiatives such as the National Digital School Plan[2] and European Social Fund programs for *Digital Citizenship and Creativity*, strive to create educational pathways that instill the principles of digital citizenship in students, similar efforts must also be directed toward parents. Parents need education and training to help cultivate a more conscientious *civitas*—a community in the original, etymological sense of the term.

How can this be achieved?

- Awareness campaigns on social media that promote constructive and responsible use of digital platforms.
- In-person training sessions that draw on participants' experiences, which can then serve as bridges for building common ground.

The idea of a "school of relationships" is especially relevant here. Such a framework could help bridge the gap between truth and appearance—a gap often widened by digital technologies. Digital tools should not replace relational bonds, but should instead enhance them by providing new stimuli and opportunities for dialogue. These opportunities can be strengthened through direct, in-person interactions, allowing for a renewed appreciation of the *gratuitousness* of relationships: the ability to give without expecting anything in return.

[2] Il *Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale* (PNSD) is a multi-year strategy promoted by the Ministry of Education and Merit to support innovation and digital transformation in the Italian education system. It forms a fundamental component of Law 107/2015, *La Buona Scuola*, and aims to integrate digital technologies into teaching practices and school organization. See: https://www.mim.gov.it/scuola-digitale

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Used thoughtfully, the internet and social media can support the weaving of personal, familial, and social connections. They can help parents and educators reclaim their educational role and foster quality both in relationships and in the broader educational process.

Best practices for parents

Research on best practices indicates that parents should:

1. Familiarize themselves with the privacy settings of the platforms on which they share content.
2. Enable notifications that alert them when their child's name appears in online searches.
3. Consider anonymizing the information they share.
4. Use caution when posting location data about their children.
5. Involve children over the age of five—when self-awareness begins to develop—by seeking their consent before sharing images or information about them.
6. Avoid sharing photos that depict their children in vulnerable situations.
7. Reflect on the potential present and future implications of posting such content.

The role of pedagogy

Pedagogy plays a vital role in this context by promoting appropriate educational strategies within individuals' primary environments of interaction—early childhood centers, schools, and community organizations. Innovative teaching methodologies, such as theatrical communication, may be particularly effective. These methods yield short-, medium-, and long-term benefits and help cultivate soft skills, including relational abilities, empathy, teamwork, leadership, initiative, creativity, and imagination.

A balanced approach to digital and in-person interactions

Activities should be tailored to the age and developmental stage of the participants, gradually introducing more complex tasks that support self-discovery and identity formation. However, the solution is not to ab-

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solutize either digital or in-person interactions. Instead, the goal should be complementarity**,** combining digital tools and in-person experiences in ways that:

- Recognize the importance of educational professionals.
- Encourage sustainable use of technology without isolating families, parents, children, and adolescents from an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

Such a balanced approach could transform digital citizenship into **true citizenship**. The virtuous citizen would use sharing not to display themselves but to enrich others with their perspective and knowledge. In this way, social media could become *technologies of community*, fostering interconnectedness for social and educational purposes.

Regulatory and preventive measures

Given the scope of the issue, stronger regulatory measures are needed, such as more rigorous application of the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.[3] Although the regulation places responsibility for protecting minors' privacy in the hands of parents, these same parents often act without full awareness of the consequences. France offers a noteworthy example: authorities advise against sharing photos of children online without their consent, and violations can result in penalties of up to one year of imprisonment and significant fines.

Preventive education for younger generations

Preventive measures should focus on younger generations, who exhibit the highest internet dependency during childhood and adolescence. The principle of educational co-responsibility, first introduced in **D.P.R. 21 November 2007** n. 235 (amending **D.P.R. 24 June 1998 n. 249**), should be reinforced to reintroduce the concepts of relational complexity

[3] General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679

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and education.[4] This includes teaching young people how to build relationships, form networks, and use technology in sustainable and human-centered ways (Elia, 2017).

Educating technology and its language

The notion of "educating technology" and its related language is not far-fetched. The **Treviso Charter**,[5] drafted in 1990 by the Order of Journalists, the National Federation of the Italian Press, and Telefono Azzurro, provides relevant guidance. Inspired by the **1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, the Charter aims to protect minors' privacy and ensure their growth in a safe, respectful environment. Among its recommendations are:

- Avoiding the publication of details that could easily identify minors.
- Ensuring that minors are not exposed to situations or broadcasts that might compromise their psychological or physical well-being.

These considerations should inspire **practical initiatives**, including training sessions for adults to help them model and promote responsible practices.

A Gentle Revolution

Ultimately, coordinated action between theory and practice is essential. Individuals must come to recognize themselves as **agents of change**, capable of contributing to a **gentle revolution**—one that strengthens identity and upholds the enduring value of ***humanitas***. This ancient yet remarkably relevant concept embodies relational solidarity and attentiveness to others and their vulnerabilities.

[4] D.P.R. 21 November 2007, No. 235, amending the *Statuto delle studentesse e degli studenti* (D.P.R. 24 June 1998, No. 249): https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:presidente.repubblica:decreto:2007;235~art3

[5] The *Carta di Treviso* is a protocol signed on 5 October 1990 by the *Ordine dei Giornalisti, the Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana* (FNSI), and Telefono Azzurro. It aims to regulate media coverage involving children and adolescents by protecting the identity and rights of minors appearing in news content. https://www.odg.it/allegato-2-carta-di-treviso/24290.

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Engagement of literature influencers on Instagram: Bookstagrammer strategies to promote reading in the family context

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Bookstagrammers, social media, promotion of reading, family participation, literature influencers, Instagram, educational strategies, content analysis

Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): This study explores the influence of bookstagrammers on young readers and their families in the context of declining reading engagement among youth in the digital age. It investigates how social media, particularly Instagram, can be used to promote a love of reading and support the development of literacy skills.

Research methods: A mixed-methods approach was adopted to assess the impact of bookstagrammers on reading habits. The quantitative component analyzed the behavior of literary influencers on Instagram, examining their posts and levels of engagement (likes, comments) to identify strategies used to promote reading. The qualitative component consisted of semi-structured interviews with families, exploring their reading practices and the extent to which they followed bookstagrammer recommendations. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive picture of how digital literary influencers shape family reading habits and encourage engagement with literature.

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Process of argumentation: The article is organized into an introduction, a literature review on the educational role of social media, a methodology section outlining the research design, and a results section presenting the main findings.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The study shows that bookstagrammers create interactive content, such as reading challenges and virtual book clubs, that captures the interest of young readers. These activities promote social interaction, encourage the exploration of diverse genres, and support the development of critical thinking. The findings suggest that integrating social media into reading practices can enhance literacy development and help build a community of engaged readers.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The study recommends that educators and families actively engage with bookstagrammers to create supportive reading environments. By embracing the innovative strategies used by literary influencers, stakeholders can help foster a generation of motivated readers, ultimately contributing to long-term gains in literacy, empathy, and cultural awareness in educational settings.

Introduction

Social media have revolutionized the ways in which people interact, share information, and consume content, and their influence now extends into numerous domains, including education (Collins & Halverson, 2018). In particular, platforms such as Instagram have become powerful tools in shaping how users, especially young people, engage with literature and develop reading habits (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). This study examines how families can use Instagram to encourage reading among young people, emphasizing the positive role that social media can play in fostering reading engagement and the influence of bookstagrammers in this process (Kokko, 2023; Reddan et al., 2024).

Data indicate a continued rise in social media use among adolescents and young adults. According to Statista (2024), Instagram is among the most widely used platforms in this demographic, with more than 1.4 billion active users in 2024 interacting daily with a variety of content. This scale of popularity creates a unique opportunity to use the platform as a tool for promoting reading and supporting literary education. In the

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field of education, the use of social media to support learning has been the focus of numerous studies. Greenhow and Lewin (2019) argue that social media can be an effective tool for collaborative learning and for building communities of practice. In line with this, Instagram enables users to share and discover new books, fostering a sense of community and belonging among readers, which families can take advantage of to encourage young people to read more.

One of the most notable trends on Instagram is the rise of *bookstagrammers*, influencers who are dedicated to sharing their passion for reading (Jiménez et al., 2024). Bookstagrammers produce visually appealing, thoughtfully curated content that includes reviews, recommendations, and online discussions. They exert considerable influence, reaching thousands or even millions of followers who trust their opinions and recommendations. As Abidin (2016) notes, literary influencers do more than promote books: they create active, engaged communities of readers who interact and share their enthusiasm for reading. This phenomenon has transformed the way in which books are promoted and consumed, offering a new channel for encouraging reading among young people.

Against this backdrop, the main objective of this research is to explore how families can use Instagram and literary influencers, specifically bookstagrammers, to foster reading among young people. The specific objectives are to: (1) identify the strategies used by leading bookstagrammers to promote reading; (2) analyze how families can participate in the reading communities created by bookstagrammers; and (3) examine the potential impact of family participation in these communities on the reading habits of young people.

This research was funded by the Chair in Entrepreneurship and Family Businesses as part of its "Entrepreneurship and Social Media" research line. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of literary influencers on Instagram, commonly known as bookstagrammers, focusing on their engagement strategies and their impact on the literary community. Two additional publications have emerged from this line of research. The first, *The Engagement of Literary Influencers with Their Followers on Instagram: Content and Strategy of Bookstagrammers* (Pretel-Jiménez,

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del Olmo, & Ruíz-Viñals, 2024), published in *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, provides an in-depth analysis of the content and strategies employed by these influencers. The second, *The Engagement of Literary Influencers: A Cluster Analysis* (Pretel-Jiménez, Ruíz-Viñals, & del Olmo, in press), explores their engagement strategies through a cluster analysis and has been submitted to *Learning, Media and Technology*, published by Routledge. Together, these works contribute valuable insights into the intersection of entrepreneurship, social media, and literary influence.

Theoretical framework

Social media and education

The integration of digital technologies into education has been widely studied, with findings highlighting both benefits and challenges. According to Greenhow and Lewin (2019), social media can be effective tools for collaborative learning and for building communities of practice. In the context of literature, social networks allow users to share and discover books, fostering a sense of community and belonging among readers. Previous studies have shown that incorporating social media into educational settings can improve students' motivation and engagement. Carraro and Trinder (2021) note that social media can function as complementary platforms for formal and informal learning by providing spaces for interaction and the exchange of ideas. Such social interaction is essential for creating communities of practice in which members learn from one another and develop skills collectively.

Manca and Ranieri (2016) emphasize that social media platforms can be powerful tools in education as they offer a dynamic environment for shared knowledge creation. These platforms enable students to collaborate on projects, exchange educational resources, and participate actively in academic discussions. Through these interactions, students deepen their understanding of subject matter and cultivate critical thinking and reflective habits. For instance, group discussions on social media can encourage students to analyze different perspectives, debate complex

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issues, and work collaboratively to develop solutions, thereby enriching their overall learning experience.

Similarly, Tess (2013) underscores the role of social media in promoting self-directed learning and learner autonomy. By providing access to a vast array of educational resources—such as tutorials, webinars, and open-access research—social media allow students to take greater control of their own learning. These platforms also support self-assessment through interactive quizzes and peer feedback, enabling students to monitor their progress. Furthermore, the flexibility of social media tools allows learners to proceed at their own pace and explore topics aligned with their interests and career goals. This personalized approach can significantly enhance motivation and engagement, fostering deeper connections to the learning process.

However, although social media offer substantial potential benefits for education, they are not without drawbacks. Ali et al. (2017) caution that these platforms can lead to distraction, difficulties with time management, and raise concerns about privacy. For example, students might find themselves spending excessive time on non-educational content or struggle to concentrate amid constant notifications and updates. Additionally, the open and networked nature of social media raises important questions about the safety of personal information and online interactions.

To maximize the educational value of social media, educators must address these challenges proactively. This may involve establishing clear guidelines for appropriate use, teaching students how to manage their time effectively, and ensuring robust privacy safeguards. By taking such steps, educators can create a safe and productive environment in which social media enrich—rather than impede—students' learning experiences.

Literature influencers

Bookstagrammers are influencers who use Instagram to share their passion for reading (Jiménez et al., 2024). Through in-depth reviews, visually compelling photographs, and virtual discussions, these influencers build communities centered on literature. According to Abidin (2016), influencers shape their followers' opinions and behaviors by cultivating

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relationships of trust with their audiences. This phenomenon is particularly important in the literary sphere, where a single recommendation from an influencer can significantly influence followers' book-purchasing and reading decisions.

Bookstagrammers use a variety of strategies to sustain and expand their audiences, including posting detailed reviews, organizing giveaways and competitions, and collaborating with authors and publishers. Such activities promote literature as well as foster active and engaged reading communities. As Hellekson and Busse (2021) note, consistent interaction and authenticity are key to the success of influencers in any area, including literature.

Compared with other Instagram influencers, who may earn substantial income through sponsored posts, bookstagrammers generally receive no direct payment for their content, as they share information about books and reading activities out of personal interest (Darma et al., 2021). Nevertheless, by mobilizing their influence on the platform, bookstagrammers establish a presence in the literary ecosystem (Jiménez et al., 2024).

The rise of these literary influencers is part of wider changes brought about by the digitalization of reading and literary culture (Jiménez et al., 2024). Information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly social media, have created a virtual space for literary engagement and, more specifically, for reading (Giuria, 2021). Numerous studies have examined how technology shapes reading practices (Cassany, 2012), the experience of digital versus print books (Kretszchmar et al., 2013; Margolin et al., 2013), and the role of imagery in social media–mediated reading cultures (Dezuanni et al., 2022).

Family participation in reading

Active family participation is a cornerstone of developing strong reading habits in young people. According to Altun et al. (2022), engaging in home-based reading activities—such as reading together, sharing stories, and discussing books—has a powerful influence on children's motivation to read and their literacy development. These shared experiences not only enhance reading skills but also build a sense of emotional closeness

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and of shared purpose within the family. When families create a supportive and enthusiastic environment around books, they can profoundly influence young people's attitudes toward reading, encouraging them to view it as enjoyable and meaningful (Axelsson et al., 2020; Scholes, 2019). Such active involvement lays the foundation for a lifelong appreciation of literature and learning.

Incorporating bookstagrammers' recommendations and activities offers families new and engaging ways to inspire reading. As Dubroc (2021) explains, bookstagrammers provide a wealth of resources, including detailed reviews, virtual discussions, and collaborations with authors and publishers. Families can draw on these recommendations to broaden their reading choices, discovering books that appeal to different ages and interests. In addition, influencers often propose creative activities, such as reading challenges, themed book clubs, or crafts related to stories that families can easily integrate into their shared routines. Interacting with vibrant literary communities on platforms like Instagram exposes young readers to relatable role models who inspire them to explore new genres and authors, making reading both exciting and aspirational.

Moreover, exposure to online reading communities can help cultivate a sense of belonging and motivation among young readers. Throuvala et al. (2019) note that these digital spaces connect young people with others who share their literary interests, while also providing families with fresh ideas to enrich their reading experiences. Families might participate together in reading challenges or use community recommendations to select books that appeal to everyone in the household. According to Reid et al. (2016), such dynamic and interactive approaches make reading more attractive and engaging for young people, transforming it from a solitary activity into a shared and enjoyable experience.

Finally, Olszewski-Kubilius (2018) underscores the importance of consistent family involvement in sustaining long-term reading habits. This ongoing support can take many forms, such as creating inviting reading spaces at home, making regular visits to libraries or bookstores, or participating in local and virtual literary events. By weaving these practices into everyday life, families signal that reading is a priority and a shared

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passion. Such sustained involvement nurtures a love of books and instills in young people the habits and attitudes essential for lifelong learning and intellectual growth.

Method

A qualitative research design was used for this study, centering on an in-depth analysis of content posted by several of the most influential bookstagrammers in the international literary community. These bookstagrammers were selected based on a set of criteria, including number of followers, quality and creativity of posted content, and overall visibility and reputation in the literary sphere. The analysis examined not only the posts themselves but also the accompanying comments, audience engagement strategies, and the ways these influencers collaborated with authors and publishers. By attending to these elements, the study sought to identify how bookstagrammers cultivate interaction, build a sense of community, and shape trends in both family and individual reading habits.

In addition to the content analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 families who actively participate in online literary communities. These interviews provided valuable insights into families' experiences and perceptions of bookstagrammers' influence on their reading practices. Participants were selected to ensure a diverse range of backgrounds and varying levels of engagement with bookstagram activities. To determine the appropriate sample size, the study employed the principle of theoretical saturation, and data collection was continued until no new themes or insights emerged. This ensured a rich and nuanced dataset that captured the complexity of family reading behaviors.

The interviews explored how families received and applied bookstagrammers' recommendations, including suggested reading lists, creative activities, and interactive challenges. Participants described how these suggestions fit into their daily routines, inspired their reading selections, and enhanced their shared experiences with books. The interviews also

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shed light on the influence of bookstagrammers: how they shaped attitudes toward reading, encouraged exploration of new genres, and fostered deeper engagement with literature. Overall, the qualitative data provided a detailed understanding of how digital literary communities intersect with family life, offering meaningful insights into the evolving nature of reading in the digital age.

Results

The content analysis revealed that bookstagrammers employed a variety of effective strategies to promote literature and engage their audiences, making them highly influential in the online literary community.

In-depth reviews

Bookstagrammers produced detailed, well-structured reviews that went far beyond superficial summaries. These reviews highlighted themes, characters, and plotlines, while also blending in personal reflections and critical analysis. By sharing their emotional responses to the books, bookstagrammers conveyed a sense of authenticity that resonated with their followers. This emotional connection often inspired readers to explore new genres, revisit classic works, or pick up titles they might otherwise have overlooked. The depth and insight of these reviews helped followers make informed reading choices, which, in turn, strengthened trust and credibility in the bookstagrammers' recommendations.

Giveaways and competitions

Hosting giveaways and competitions proved to be a highly effective strategy for increasing engagement and building community. Bookstagrammers frequently offered books, merchandise, or themed prizes as incentives for participation. These activities created excitement and anticipation, while significantly boosting interaction with posts. Followers were encouraged to like, share, and comment, which created a sense of active involvement. Beyond the appeal of winning, these events offered

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opportunities for readers to connect with both the content and each other, enriching their participation in the literary community.

Virtual debates

Organizing online discussions allowed followers to exchange opinions and deepen their understanding of the texts. These virtual debates—often held in the form of comment threads, live streams, or Instagram Stories—created collaborative spaces for sharing interpretations. Participants were invited to express their views on themes, characters, and writing styles, which generated vibrant dialogue and strengthened the sense of community. By facilitating these conversations, bookstagrammers cultivated an environment in which followers felt heard and validated, and this further reinforced their enthusiasm for reading and for being part of a literary collective.

Collaborations with authors and publishers

Collaborations with authors and publishers were another powerful strategy that enhanced the authenticity and value of bookstagrammers' content. These partnerships often featured author interviews, live events such as virtual book launches, or exclusive opportunities such as signed copies and behind-the-scenes material. Such collaborations provided followers with unique access to the creators of their favorite books, deepening their engagement with the literary world. These partnerships also gave followers a sense of insider access, which increased followers' trust in—and loyalty to—the bookstagrammers who made them possible.

The interviews with families offered additional insights into the positive impact of these strategies on young people's reading habits. Families reported that bookstagrammers' recommendations helped them discover new and diverse books, keeping young readers motivated and engaged. Many parents noted that the influencers' reading suggestions introduced their children to authors and genres that they might not have encountered otherwise. Beyond individual reading, participation in discussions and activities organized by bookstagrammers encouraged meaningful family conversations about literature. Families described how

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these shared experiences strengthened their connections, as they explored books together, exchanged ideas, and discussed interpretations. These interactions reinforced the value of reading and transformed it into a communal activity that brought family members closer.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates the significant role that social media, particularly Instagram, and literary influencers known as bookstagrammers can play in promoting reading among young people. As frequent and enthusiastic users of Instagram, young people are highly responsive to the content and engagement strategies employed by these influencers. Digital platforms have revolutionized the way in which information is shared and consumed, and bookstagrammers have positioned themselves as compelling advocates for reading by using visually appealing, interactive content to spark interest in literature. This underscores the growing influence of social media not only as a form of entertainment but also as a tool for educational and cultural enrichment.

For families, bookstagrammers represent a valuable and untapped resource for inspiring young people to read more and develop consistent reading habits. By leveraging the strategies and tactics used by these influencers, families can make reading a natural part of daily life. Incorporating activities based on bookstagrammers' recommendations—such as family book discussions, themed reading sessions, or participation in literary challenges—can help transform reading into an engaging, shared experience. These practices not only increase interest in books but also cultivate a home environment rich in learning and culture, promoting intellectual development and strengthening family bonds.

Moreover, the influence of bookstagrammers extends well beyond simple book recommendations. Their ability to create interactive experiences, such as reading challenges, book giveaways, virtual book clubs, and online discussions, provides young readers with stimulating ways to connect with literature. These activities make reading more social and

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enjoyable, appealing to the digital habits and expectations of today's youth. For example, joining an online reading challenge or discussing a favorite book with a broader community can motivate young people to explore new genres, deepen their understanding of texts, and feel part of a larger, vibrant literary network.

The strategies employed by literary influencers offer families powerful tools for nurturing a lifelong love of reading. By creating an environment where reading is both enjoyable and shared, families can help children realize the long-term benefits of strong reading habits. These benefits extend beyond literacy; they encompass critical thinking, empathy, creativity, and cultural awareness—skills essential for educational success and personal growth. As this study suggests, integrating social media into family reading practices, guided by the innovative approaches of bookstagrammers, presents a promising pathway for cultivating a generation of motivated, engaged readers.

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Partnership in education: A parental view of art schools under pandemic constraints

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educational partnership, art school, remote education, COVID-19 pandemic, parents.

Abstract

Research objectives and problem(s): The aim of the study was to present the parental perspective on the partnership between art schools and families during remote education in the COVID-19 pandemic, based on a four-dimensional model of educational partnership (cognitive, volitional, emotional, and behavioral). The main research problem concerned the nature of this partnership emerging from parents' assessments.

Research methods: A diagnostic survey was conducted among 461 parents of students attending art schools—music and visual arts institutions. The research instrument was an author-developed questionnaire grounded in the theoretical partnership model and validated using the VREP expert procedure. Statistical analyses (Mann–Whitney U test, Spearman's rho, and Friedman's ANOVA) were applied to assess levels of partnership and to compare different types of art schools.

Process of argumentation: The article outlines the adopted theoretical framework of educational partnership, presents the methodological assumptions, and subsequently analyzes differences across the defined partnership dimensions in various types of art schools. The findings are interpreted in relation to national and international research on education during the pandemic.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: Parents perceived the partnership between art schools and families as incomplete and uneven across the dimensions. The behavioral and cognitive dimensions received the highest ratings, whereas the emotional and volitional dimensions were rated as the weakest.

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Significant differences were identified between music and visual arts schools. The findings reveal structural shortcomings in emotional support and collaboration mechanisms under crisis conditions, thereby contributing to knowledge on school–family relations and addressing a gap in research on art education.

Conclusions and recommendations: The results indicate a need to strengthen the emotional and volitional aspects of school–family collaboration, particularly in crisis situations. The study underscores the importance of further research into the relational and organizational factors shaping partnerships in crisis contexts, with particular attention to art schools.

Introduction

Thinking in terms of trends may be insufficient when examining the experience of a crisis that encompassed all spheres of life on a global scale, as was undoubtedly the case with the COVID-19 pandemic. In support of this argument, it is worth recalling, for example, the theory of the tripartite structure of ritual—particularly the transitional phase in processes of social transformation referred to by anthropologists A. van Gennep and Victor Turner as *liminality* (Turner, 2010). This phase resembles a suspension between what has been and what is beginning to emerge and is characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, and anxiety. Although two years have passed since students returned to in-person schooling, the consequences of the changes introduced and the solutions implemented during the pandemic are still being felt in what is conventionally referred to as the post-pandemic period (e.g., Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy). Describing such transitional states and identifying their key features is important not only for organizing and understanding the period of isolation, social distancing, and misinformation, but also for planning future-oriented educational practice.

The rapid changes associated with lockdown had a significant impact on psychosocial functioning, affecting the psychological well-being of a large portion of the population. In implementing remote—and later hybrid—education, Polish schools were required to rapidly create safe learning conditions, enhance teachers' and students' competence in using various technological tools, applications, and communication platforms,

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and ensure appropriate standards of educational and therapeutic support for students with diverse educational needs. Against this backdrop, an additional challenge emerged: the relationship among schools or teachers, students, and parents or family homes in educational partnerships.

The literature employs various terms to describe relationships between schools and parents, including *collaboration*, *cooperation*, and *partnership*. Many practitioners—both parents and teachers—as well as researchers treat these concepts, or at least some of them, as interchangeable (Łobocki, 1985; Segiet, 1999; Winiarski, 1975). According to Barbara Lulek (2008), this lack of clarity may contribute to misunderstandings that affect school practice. Jan Szczepański (1978) defines partnership as a relationship between individuals or groups, or between an institution and an individual, which is regulated by custom, often in a formalized manner, and established in order to achieve a specific, shared goal. As the author emphasizes, such a relationship is voluntary and based on the assumption of equality between the parties. Krzysztof Polak (2011) highlights that partnership is a complex construct that encounters numerous obstacles, such as intolerance, manipulative tendencies, and reluctance to recognize the other party as an equal. In the implementation of partnership, action is considered key; according to Maria Mendel (2000), it is action that shapes partnerships and gives them a collaborative character. The necessary conditions for educational partnerships arise from relationships that are characterized by acceptance of the other party, mutual trust, shared goals and values, goodwill, support, and the mutual sharing of successes and failures (Radziewicz, 1979).

An educational partnership, defined as an association of actors pursuing a common goal through joint activities, may take several forms. According to Mendel, it can be a type of partnership in which participants pursue shared educational objectives; a form of relationship involving mutual influence; or a type of community bound by a shared sense of purpose (Mendel, 2009). The basis of a partnership understood in this way is recognition of, and commitment to, cooperation for the common good—namely, the well-being of students and pupils. Such a focus stimulates innovative ideas and can generate satisfaction derived

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from working together for the benefit of the child. The concept of educational partnership as defined by Mendel (2009) is also characterized by a broad perspective that emphasizes cooperation with the local community. This type of cooperation, which constitutes an integral part of the functioning and activities of art schools, had to be suspended during the lockdown period.

When identifying the most important features of educational partnerships, it is important to emphasize the equal rights and responsibilities of partners in decision-making and to acknowledge the creative role of all parties involved. A partnership based on active involvement allows for the joint determination of tasks, while its implementation relies on mutual trust, acceptance, loyalty, and the free flow of information (Lulek, 2008). Some researchers distinguish between different forms of parental activation, such as involvement understood as carrying out activities assigned by teachers, and spontaneous parental engagement, defined as actions arising from parents' internal motivation (Ferlazzo, 2011). In this view, engagement is regarded as the most desirable form of participation.

In the spring of 2020, approximately 85,000 students attending art schools in Poland (music, visual arts, and ballet) joined nearly 1.5 billion of their peers in more than 190 countries worldwide (United Nations, 2020) in transitioning to remote learning. Within a few weeks of the introduction of lockdown measures, the first reports and academic studies on education during the pandemic began to appear. Both in Poland and internationally, scholars drew attention to the key role of parents in the educational reality during the pandemic (Bubb & Jones, 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2020; Ho et al., 2021; Kostelecká, Komárková, Novotná, 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Mußél & Kondratjuk, 2020; Trzcińska-Król, 2020; Wai-Cook, 2020; Wiatr, 2023).

These reports took into account the specific characteristics of the functioning of art schools (Weiner, 2021). In some of these institutions, so-called afternoon music schools, children and adolescents learn and develop their interests or prepare for a future career in music. In others, including general music schools, general ballet schools, and artistic vocational secondary schools, professional artistic training is conducted

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alongside compulsory general education. Mandatory remote learning placed parents of art school students in a particular role for which they were neither prepared nor could have anticipated when selecting an educational pathway for their children. The nature of the partnership between art schools and parents of students attending these institutions constitutes the subject of this article and fills the previous gap in the academic literature.

Methodology

The aim of the study was to present the parents' perspective on the school–family partnership during remote education in the COVID-19 pandemic, based on an adopted model of educational partnership encompassing cognitive, volitional, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

The main research question was as follows: *What view of the school–family partnership emerges from parents' assessments of its individual dimensions during remote education in the COVID-19 pandemic?*

The study employed a diagnostic survey method using an author-designed questionnaire based on the adopted model of educational partnership. Each of the four dimensions (cognitive, emotional, volitional, and behavioral) was represented by five items rated on a 0–4 scale. Content validity was assessed by six expert reviewers using the VREP (Survey/Interview Validation Rubric for Expert Panel; Marilyn K. Simon & Jacquelyn White), and all items achieved acceptable content validity index (CVI) values of at least 0.75 (Polit & Beck, 2006). Consequently, all items were retained. Dimension scores were calculated as the mean of the items assigned to each dimension.

The detailed research questions referred to the defined dimensions of educational partnership: cognitive (cooperation between the school and parents; the school's organizational and substantive preparation for remote education; the amount of students' free time during remote learning); volitional (the extent to which the needs of students and parents were met; the necessity of parental support in remote learning);

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emotional (art school students' motivation to learn during remote education and its dynamics); and behavioral (the workload of students and parents, assigned tasks, teaching methods used by teachers and schools, and assessment practices during remote education).

The survey—an anonymous online questionnaire—was conducted between March and June 2020 among parents of students attending all types of art schools in the Lubelskie Voivodeship (exhaustive survey, purposive sampling). A total of 461 respondents participated, including 24.9% parents of students attending visual arts schools (upper-secondary level, combining artistic and general education) and 75.1% parents of students enrolled in music schools (general music schools combining artistic and general education, as well as afternoon schools offering music education only).

For the interpretation of the collected data, the concept of educational partnership as defined by Polak (2011) was adopted. According to this framework, full partnership (between parents and schools, and between parents and teachers) is possible through the integration of all four dimensions: cognitive, volitional, emotional, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension is realized through understanding the aims and arguments of the partner and through the ability to view a situation from multiple perspectives, allowing participants to move beyond their own viewpoints and consider those of others. The volitional dimension refers to the willingness to provide mutual support, particularly in difficult situations, and to base the relationship on full trust. The emotional dimension is a prerequisite for conflict resolution and enables compromise, as it is built on positive emotions, especially kindness. The final behavioral dimension concerns the concrete actions undertaken by the partners.

In order to answer the research questions, statistical analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 29. These included basic descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the Mann–Whitney U test, Spearman's rho correlation analysis, and Friedman's ANOVA test. The level of statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

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A parental image of educational partnership

Basic descriptive statistics were used to present the overall picture of educational partnership among parents (N = 461), covering all theoretically defined dimensions. During the operationalization of variables, indicators were established in the form of scores obtained for each dimension. These scores were calculated as the mean of the items assigned to each dimension, with all items weighted equally. Each item was scored on a scale from 0 to 4, with 4 representing the highest possible score. Consequently, the overall level of educational partnership was calculated as the sum of the mean scores across the individual dimensions, in accordance with the adopted theoretical model of educational partnership.

Table 1. The image of educational partnership – Total sample

Dependent variable	*M*	*Me*	*SD*	*Sk.*	*Kurt.*	*Min.*	*Max*	*D*	*p*
Author-designed tool									
Cognitive dimension	2.77	3.00	0.85	-0.56	-0.26	0.33	4.00	0.15	<0.001
Emotional dimension	1.86	1.00	1.66	0.35	-1.61	0.00	4.00	0.29	<0.001
Volitional dimension	2.18	2.00	1.06	-0.17	-0.98	0.00	4.00	0.14	<0.001
Behavioral dimension	2.89	3.00	0.93	-0.72	-0.41	0.33	4.00	0.19	<0.001
Educational partnership – overall score	9.71	9.83	3.30	-0.22	-0.70	1.33	16.00	0.07	<0.001

According to the adopted assumptions, a fully developed educational partnership would approach a maximum value of 16 points. The obtained result—9.71 points falls considerably below this benchmark. When converted to a percentage scale (60.7%), this score corresponds to a *sufficient* level. Parents' assessments varied across the different dimensions of partnership. The behavioral dimension received the highest rating, with a mean score of 2.89 points (72.2%), followed by the cognitive dimension at 2.77 points (69.3%), the volitional dimension at 2.18 points (54.5%), and the emotional dimension, which received the lowest rating at 1.86 points (46.5%). Because the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated

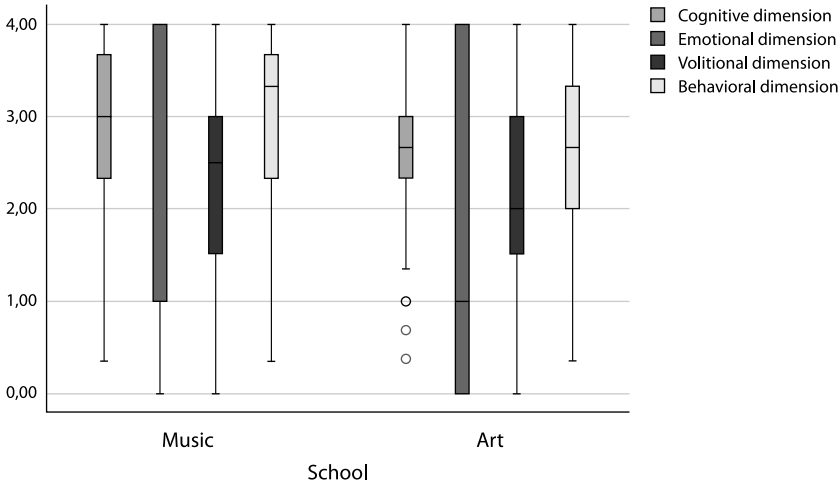
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that all distributions differed significantly from normality ($p < 0.001$), non-parametric tests were applied in subsequent analyses.

The respondents were divided into two groups based on whether their child or children attended a music school or a visual arts school. Accordingly, differences in parents' perceptions of educational partnership were examined.

Figure 1. The image of educational partnership by type of art school (music vs. visual arts)



The analysis revealed statistically significant differences between parents from the two types of schools only with respect to two dimensions of educational partnership: the cognitive dimension ($p = 0.035$) and the behavioral dimension ($p < 0.001$). In both cases, the difference was found to be in favor of music schools. With regard to the remaining dimensions, parents' perceptions of the school–family partnership can therefore be considered comparable.

For both the theoretical and empirical representations of educational partnership, it was considered important to analyze the interrelationships among the individual dimensions.

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Table 2. Relationships between the dimensions of educational partnership – Total sample

Variable		1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Cognitive dimension	Spearman's *rho*	-			
	significance				
2. Emotional dimension	Spearman's *rho*	**0.35**	-		
	significance	**<0.001**			
3. Volitional dimension	Spearman's *rho*	**0.44**	**0.22**	-	
	significance	**<0.001**	**<0.001**		
4. Behavioral dimension	Spearman's *rho*	**0.63**	**0.37**	**0.38**	-
	significance	**<0.001**	**<0.001**	**<0.001**	
5. Educational partnership – overall result	Spearman's *rho*	**0.74**	**0.77**	**0.64**	**0.74**
	significance	**<0.001**	**<0.001**	**<0.001**	**<0.001**

The analysis identified positive, statistically significant, and strong correlations between all dimensions of educational partnership and the overall partnership score. This finding indicates that all theoretically defined dimensions are essential for explaining the overall construct of educational partnership.

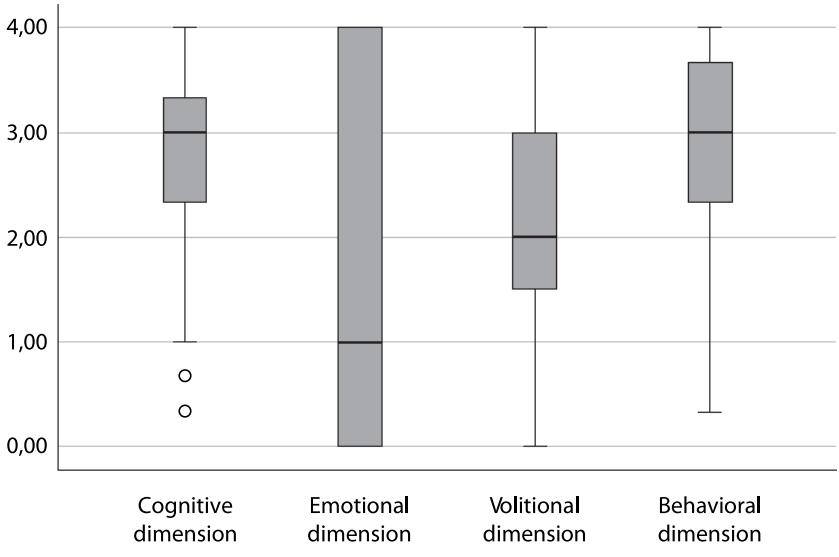
When comparing art schools and music schools, the interrelationships among the dimensions of educational partnership differ. In music schools, the relationship between the cognitive and behavioral dimensions appears to play the most prominent role in explaining parents' perceptions of educational partnership (rs = 0.65), relative to other correlations. In art schools, however, this relationship is weaker (rs = 0.49). Notably, in parents' perceptions of partnerships in art schools, the emotional dimension shows no correlation with the other dimensions, emerging as a distinct component, while simultaneously exhibiting the strongest association with the overall partnership image (rs = 0.75).

Subsequently, differences among the dimensions of educational partnership in art schools were examined. Analysis of variance revealed statistically significant, though weak, differences between the individual dimensions ($p < 0.001$; $W = 0.15$ in Friedman's ANOVA).

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Chart 2. Levels of educational partnership dimensions in the group of art school students – Total



The pairwise comparison test (Dunn–Bonferroni post hoc), conducted as a subsequent step in the analysis of variance, showed that the cognitive and behavioral dimensions—which did not differ significantly from each other ($p = 1$)—differed significantly from the remaining dimensions ($p < 0.001$) in the entire group of parents studied (Chart 2).

Discussion of the results

Parents, as the closest adults in their children's environment, are also their natural role models for behavior and for coping with various situations, including the most challenging ones. During the lockdown period, the amount of time that parents and children spent together increased substantially. According to survey data, 80% of parents in German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) supported governmental decisions to close schools; at the same time, more than

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30% expressed concern that children's academic performance might decline as a result (Śliwerski, 2022).

The research conducted during the period of social isolation presented in this article portrays the relationship between schools and families (parents and students) as a full-scale educational partnership covering all of its dimensions, each of which contributed differently to the characteristics observed in various types of art schools. Nevertheless, parents' overall perceptions of their partnership with schools appear far from ideal.

The highest scores were recorded for the behavioral dimension, indicating a satisfactory assessment of teacher-related practices, including instructional methods, approaches to assessment, and the amount of homework assigned. In the context of art schools, such tasks mainly involve specialized activities, such as vocal exercises, instrumental practice, or studio-based classes in painting, drawing, sculpture, graphic design, and related fields. The strong emphasis on this dimension suggests a high level of parental trust in teachers' professional competence. This was particularly evident in music schools, where learning to play an instrument usually involves individualized instruction between teacher and student, whereas this model is not commonly found in visual arts schools. Such an organization of the educational process undoubtedly fosters closer relationships among students, teachers, schools, and families.

Slightly greater reservations emerged with regard to the cognitive dimension. Parents pointed to an insufficient level of partnership in terms of the school's organizational and substantive readiness to cooperate. They also expressed concern about changes in the structure of their children's free time, which became dominated by remote learning. Numerous reports from this period confirm that the amount of time children and adolescents spent in front of computers increased dramatically (Thierry et al., 2021; Thompson, Spencer, & Curtis, 2021). Parents in German-speaking countries most often indicated that their children were overburdened with an excessive number of activities (Śliwerski, 2022).

Surveys of parents of art school students revealed an unsatisfactory level of partnership with respect to the school's readiness to support families in a new and challenging situation. Parents attempted to compensate

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for shortcomings in meeting students' needs by providing or organizing learning support themselves. The subject matter they were required to address (e.g., music notation or graphic design) often proved too demanding, leading to a sense of helplessness. The compensatory role assumed by parents during the pandemic is documented in numerous studies (e.g., Girard & Prado, 2022; Krents et al., 2020), which report increased parental involvement in children's learning, including creating learning conditions at home, explaining content, monitoring academic progress, and motivating children to learn (Bhamani et al., 2020; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Budhrani et al., 2021; Parczewska, 2021). This role was particularly challenging, as parents were required to balance professional responsibilities with increased caregiving and educational demands (Budhrani et al., 2021).

The emotional dimension of the partnership in art schools was rated by parents as the weakest component of the partnership. This assessment is partly attributable to the fact that the emotional functioning of children and adolescents was most strongly affected during the pandemic, which, among other consequences, led to changes in learning motivation. The distinctive nature of art schools, which require appropriate physical conditions and materials for practical workshops that could not be provided in most homes during the pandemic, caused frustration among parents. Combined with prolonged social isolation, this frustration affected the emotional climate of entire families and significantly undermined young people's motivation to learn. For parents of art students, the emotional dimension thus became a decisive factor in evaluating the overall level of partnership in schools.

The above conclusions are supported by a research report based on a representative sample of Czech parents, which indicates that nearly 30% of children developed symptoms of moderate to severe depression and anxiety during the pandemic. Other reports show that motivating students to complete school tasks was the most difficult challenge for almost 30% of parents surveyed in German-speaking countries during this period (Śliwerski, 2022). It has also been noted that parental support may have been the most important factor protecting students' mental health

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during the pandemic (Fidelus, 2022; Matulessy et al., 2021). Researchers emphasize that although parents were highly motivated, they were often unable to provide sufficiently comprehensive support for their children (Scarpellini et al., 2021).

The internally complex structure of parental images of educational partnership across different types of art schools revealed hidden patterns and assumptions underlying the hastily implemented solutions. Schools' lack of organizational and substantive readiness to support students and parents, including efforts to foster positive emotions and seek compromise, prevented parents from perceiving this relationship as a partnership. The pandemic, which confronted Polish schools with unprecedented challenges and difficulties, exposed persistent problems related to participation and democratization in cooperation with parents.

Conclusion and limitations of the study

The diverse and multidimensional parental image of educational partnership must be understood in the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the centralized and hierarchical structures characteristic of Polish schools (Śliwerski, 2022). This temporary disruption created an opportunity to redefine the categories of partnership and engagement in line with conceptions of rapid school change—an opportunity that, as the findings indicate, was ultimately not realized.

The parents' view of the school–family relationship, seen as incorporating an element of mutual recognition, revealed the needs and expectations of families toward schools operating under new and unprecedented conditions. The pandemic exposed limited space and a lack of institutional readiness for active, cooperative interaction. At the same time, more advanced forms of participation become possible only when parents feel respected by the school and perceive that their perspectives and values are taken into account (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The study showed that parents perceived the school–family partnership during remote education as incomplete and uneven across its

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dimensions. The behavioral and cognitive dimensions received the highest ratings, while the emotional dimension emerged as the weakest element of cooperation. Significant differences were also observed between music and visual arts schools, with parents of music school students reporting higher levels of partnership. These findings point to the need to strengthen the emotional and supportive aspects of collaboration with families, particularly in crisis situations.

Comparable conclusions emerge from international studies on music education during the pandemic. Research conducted in music schools and conservatories in Spain and Germany indicates difficulties related to limited technological preparedness, reduced opportunities for practical instruction, and increased parental burden. These challenges mirror the organizational and cognitive issues identified in the present study (Calderón-Garrido et al., 2021). International research also confirms declines in student motivation and emotional well-being, alongside teachers' limited capacity to provide adequate support. These findings are consistent with the low ratings observed for the emotional and volitional dimensions of partnership (Spahn et al., 2022). Global literature reviews further indicate that the pandemic has had a particularly disruptive impact on music education worldwide, underscoring the urgent need to rebuild the relational and emotional foundations of school–family collaboration (Stramkale, 2022).

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Social communication as a necessary condition for community-building: Lessons from Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas for modern education

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Abstract

Research objectives and problems: The aim of this research is to rediscover the educational sources of social and political community. Since these sources originated in antiquity and the Middle Ages, it is useful to revisit the ideas of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. The article is a comparative inquiry into their views on the social and political value of education.

Research methods: The source materials consist of texts written by both authors. In my study, I use the method of hermeneutic text analysis to uncover the meaning of their writings, alongside comparative analysis—the main method used—which examines the two authors' texts in their historical and cultural contexts.

Process of argumentation: Such a comparison is possible and legitimate because Aquinas repeatedly commented on, and creatively interpreted, the thought of the Stagirite. Both classical thinkers emphasized the role of proper communication in the co-creation of a social community. Multidimensional education—transmitting knowledge and virtues—served this purpose by constructing a community of shared values. However, while Aristotle's doctrine focuses on the political dimension of communication and pedagogy (the first part of the article), Aquinas discovers and analyzes the social, pre-political reality of community life (the second part). This generates important differences between them. While Aristotle maintains a strictly political orientation in his understanding of education, Thomas Aquinas emphasizes the more familial nature of social dialogue and instruction (the third part).

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Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The analysis shows the need for education oriented toward community-building. These authors' reflections on social relations and the necessity of mutual communication in a political community remind us of the importance of social education. In Aristotle, we find a strong call for conscious political education of citizens, whereas in Thomas Aquinas, we encounter an appeal for education in social relations and for building smaller communities such as families, associations, and congregations.

Conclusions and recommendations: The purpose of this article is to show the importance that classical authors attached to social education as a prerequisite for the existence of a political community. This is important in our postmodern times, which are characterized by radical individualism and the breakdown of community ties. In this commentary, I propose rediscovering the ideas of both philosophers for contemporary education, which help us appreciate and properly apply communication in the creation of social and political bonds.

Introduction

Both Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle emphasized the role of proper communication in the co-creation of a social community. Multidimensional education—ensuring the transmission of knowledge and virtues—served this purpose by helping to build a community based on shared values. However, whereas Aristotle's doctrine focuses on the political dimension of communication and pedagogy, Thomas Aquinas emphasizes the more familial nature of social dialogue and instruction.

I. A political community needs its own education system

As Aristotle states in the *Politics*, any political system requires proper education. Only under this condition does any political community have a chance to survive and develop.

Now nobody would dispute that the education of the young requires the special attention of the lawgiver. Indeed, the neglect of this in states is injurious to their constitutions; for education ought to be adapted

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to the particular form of constitution, since the particular character belonging to each constitution both guards the constitution generally and originally establishes it—for instance the democratic spirit promotes democracy and the oligarchic spirit oligarchy; and the best spirit always causes a better constitution. (Aristotle, 1944, 1337a)

A properly targeted education system becomes, in effect, a guarantor of a well-functioning political system, while disregarding it leads to political turbulence.

But a political community and education are not possible without proper communication. This is what allows any polis to configure its inherent ethos, so importantly created and shared by all citizens. This is the crucial role of language and literacy, which the barbarians did not possess, according to Aristotle, and were therefore incapable of forming a civic community. This view was characteristic not only of Aristotle, but of all Greeks. "The Greeks have been distinguished since ancient times from the barbarians as being cannier and freer from silly simple-mindedness, and the Athenians are considered first in wisdom among the Greeks" (Gottesman, 2014, p. 119).

It can be said that language or the ability to communicate is not an end in itself, but its purpose is to create a common ethos of political life. Without this ethos, living together is simply impossible. A common ethos is something that integrates individuals and families into the polis. Language and human communication are not just important for communication in ordinary daily affairs, but also for discerning what is just and unjust. As Aristotle writes in Book I of *Politics*, "but speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state" (Aristotle, 1944, 1253a). As Naomi T. Campa (2024) notes, the Greeks explicitly emphasized the importance of a common language and equal voice for all citizens as something that forms the common foundation of their political system.

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> So Athens came to flourish—and to make manifest how important it is for everyone in a city to have an equal voice (isēgoria), not just on one level but on all. For although the Athenians, while subjects of a tyrant, had been no more proficient in battle than any of their neighbors, they emerged as supreme by far once liberated from tyranny. This is proof enough that the oppressed will never willingly pull their weight, since their labors are all in the service of a master—whereas when freed, each was eager to achieve for himself. Freedom from tyrants is tied to equality of speech (ἡ ἰσηγορίη), the type of speech that is associated with political participation, such as in the Assembly, and that is a hallmark of democracy. (Campa, 2024, p. 31)

Human speech provides equal access to shared concepts, shared education, and shared life, while the sounds made by animals as an expression of only basic feelings cannot form the basis of such a highly developed community.

Moreover, according to the Stagirite, this distinguishes human communication from that of animals, who warn each other of danger and indicate pleasure, but are unable to construct a political community. "The mere voice, it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have sensations of what is painful and pleasant and to indicate those sensations to one another)" (Aristotle, 1944, 1253a).

Without proper communication and education, it becomes impossible to construct a political community or for that community to realize its goals, including the most important one: a good life for its citizens, that is, a life lived in accordance with virtue. Hence, *aretē* itself in the Stagirite's doctrine is strictly political in nature. Aristotle dedicated his other major work, the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 2014), to this subject. As Lang explains, "The book that follows from this one is *The Politics*, in which he sets out what kinds of citizens and political arrangements can best inculcate the virtues. Importantly, *The Politics* ends by discussing education, because it is only through education that we can create good citizens" (Lang, 2023, p. 315).

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Linguistic communication, education, and a virtuous life enable human beings, in Aristotle's account, to transcend the limits of mere biological existence. This introduces a contrast between the natural state and political existence, what later neo-Scholastics would call "second nature" to distinguish it from the original, biological nature of man. Therefore, the political community has an exclusive/inclusive character: on the one hand, it excludes those who do not use language as being incapable of teaching and living according to virtue and participating in political life in general, while on the other hand, language, education, and virtue (ethos) make it possible to create a polis.

> The question "in what way does the living have language?" corresponds exactly to this other: "in what way does the naked life inhabit the polis?" The living has logos by removing and retaining in it one's own voice, in the same way, it inhabits the polis by leaving relegated in it one's own naked life. Politics then presents itself as the structure in the fundamental proper sense of Western metaphysics, given that it occupies the threshold at which the articulation between the living and the logos is fulfilled. In bare life, "politicization" is the metaphysical task par excellence, in which the humanity of the living man is decided, and in taking on this task Modernity does no more than declare itself faithful to the essential structure of the metaphysical tradition. The fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not friend–enemy, but rather naked life–political existence, zoe–bios, exclusion–inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes to himself his own naked life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to it in an inclusive exclusion. (Agamben, 2018, p. 21)

Therefore, the political community in Aristotle is something qualitatively and radically different from other, pre-political communal forms of human life. It is not just a matter of the number of people who make it up. For Aristotle, human rationality and communicative/linguistic abilities are strictly political in nature. In this way, he radically opposes the biological structure as such. Human rationality in politics realizes its dynamism

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and creativity in a way unknown to the physical and biological structures that exist in the world (Martinez Barrera, 2006, pp. 17–19). The physical and biological constitution of human beings must also be taken into account here. This is why only a political community is a perfect community (*communitas perfecta*), one that ensures the fulfillment of human goals in a unique way.

II. Aquinas' perception of the difference between the political and the social

However, Aquinas, interpreting Aristotle's texts, identifies a sphere that connects the political with the natural: the pre-political, social sphere of human life which is strongly linked to family life. We can see this in the very reformulation of the Greek *zoon politikon* into the Latin *animal politicum et sociale*. Some interpreters consider this merely a repetition by Thomas referencing one sentence in Aristotle's *Politics*, without a difference in meaning (Rocha Martins, 2049, p. 1560–61), but in my opinion, Aquinas intentionally introduces here the second term *sociale* with the desire to go beyond what the Stagirite expressed (Machowski, 2023, p. 49).

Firstly, social reality is far more present in his writings than in Aristotle's. The latter, after mentioning the family at the beginning of *Politics* and comparing it to the political community, basically abandons the topic. For him, ethics, virtue, and morality are strictly related to political life. Meanwhile, for Aquinas, morality is also pre-political in nature, which I show later in the article using the example of the virtues attached to justice. The perception of this sphere of human functioning as moral was influenced by Christianity (as shown by Hanna Arendt) and by Roman thought, with its concept of *societas* being adopted and expanded by Aquinas (Arendt, 2016).

Some even believe that, with the help of Roman terminology, Aquinas simply converted the political into the social:

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> By seemingly attempting to equate the city with the domestic community, surreptitiously transforming the former into the latter, Thomas Aquinas performs a social metamorphosis of the political, making society (societas) the true mold of the political. For this reason, contrary to Albert the Great's own view, Thomas Aquinas interprets the term civis in the sense of socius, manipulating its meaning inherent in the Aristotelian polis. By stating that "man is a political animal," Aquinas as philosopher actually means that "man is a social animal." (Habermas, 1963, p. 54)

But, in my opinion, Aquinas does not go this far—he retains the political, but at the same time emphasizes the social (Machowski, 2023, p. 4132–33).

Secondly, Aquinas elaborates much more than Aristotle on the issues of nature and its influence on the functioning of society. Admittedly, Aristotle himself notes that the marital or family community is more natural than the political community (Aquinas also notes this when commenting on the *Nicomachean Ethics*), but he does not elaborate on this topic, while Thomas draws out the implications as noted by Piwowarski (1960). I will quote a passage in which Aquinas, referring directly to Aristotle's teaching, emphasizes more strongly the more natural character of the family in comparison to the state.

> *Praeterea, in 8* Ethic., *cap. 12, dicit Philosophus, quod homo magis est naturaliter conjugale animal quam politicum. Sed homo est naturaliter animal politicum et gregale, ut ipse dicit. Ergo naturaliter est conjugale; et sic conjugium, sive matrimonium, est naturale*
>
> Furthermore, in *Ethics* 8, chapter 12, the Philosopher says that a human being is more naturally a conjugal animal than a political one. But man is naturally political and social, as he himself says. Therefore, man is naturally conjugal, and thus wedlock, or marriage, is natural. (Aquinas, 1858, dist. 26, a. 1., s. c. 2)

A consequence of the naturalness of human family life is that it is very similar to animal life, which cannot be said of political functioning.

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In what is familial, the human natural state is closer to animal nature. This is why the term *gregale* appears in Aquinas' writings as a synonym for social life and for the word *sociale*. In fact, Aquinas' books actually contain passages in which he speaks of real social life among animals without any mention of their political functioning (if only by analogy) (Aquinas, 1979). For example, as Thomas notes in his commentary on the *Ethics*: "*Est quidem enim naturale homini ut sit animal mansuetum, secundum communem naturam speciei, in quantum est animal sociale; omne enim animal gregale est naturaliter tale*" ["To be a peaceful animal is natural to man by the common nature of the species, inasmuch as he is a social animal (for every gregarious animal is naturally of this kind)"] (Aquinas, 1969, n. 1391). In this sense, what is social in Aquinas is closer to the natural world of herd animals. He does not make such a radical distinction as Aristotle between what is political (human) and biological (animal). *Homo socialis* appears in Aquinas as a kind of bridge between *homo politicus* and *animal gregale*.

III. The strictly political nature of Aristotle's education and Aquinas' social/familial education

This proximity to the state of nature results in the chronological precedence of the family community over the political community, and reflects the fact that the family fulfills more basic human needs such as giving birth, feeding, and educating. The tasks of the political community are different, such as ensuring peaceful coexistence among citizens. "*Propagatores autem et ordinatores corporalis vitae secundum duo attenduntur: scilicet secundum originem naturalem, quod ad parentes pertinet; et secundum regimen politicum, per quod vita hominis pacifica conservatur, et hoc pertinet ad reges et principes*" ["The propagators and directors of the life of the body are required from two points of view, namely, in respect of natural origin, which concerns the parents, and in respect of political order (whereby man is assured a peaceful life), and this regards kings and governors"]] (Aquinas, 1961, lib. 4, c. 58).

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For Aristotle, education has the same purpose as communication: to prepare a person for civic life. In the development of a young man, a number of virtues are needed for political functioning. "Moreover, in regard to all the faculties and crafts certain forms of preliminary education and training in their various operations are necessary so that manifestly this is also requisite in regard to the actions of virtue" (Aristotle, 1944, 1337a).

As we have seen, Aristotle makes his points about human communication and education by directly applying them to political life. This is the exact fulfillment of the scheme of purposeful cause, according to which a political community is the ultimate goal of human nature.

> And inasmuch as the end for the whole state is one, it is manifest that education also must necessarily be one and the same for all and that the superintendence of this must be public, and not on private lines, in the way in which at present each man superintends the education of his own children, teaching them privately, and whatever special branch of knowledge he thinks fit. But matters of public interest ought to be under public supervision; at the same time we ought not to think that any of the citizens belongs to himself, but that all belong to the state, for each is a part of the state, and it is natural for the superintendence of the several parts to have regard to the superintendence of the whole. And one might praise the Spartans in respect of this, for they pay the greatest attention to the training of their children, and conduct it on a public system. (Aristotle, 1944, 1337a)

For this reason, according to Aristotle, education should be organized or at least controlled by the state.

Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, while adopting most of Aristotle's views, introduces some modifications. In his writings, communication and education have a distinctly pre-political character. Aquinas emphasizes the very social role of the family and of other communities smaller than the state. They are necessary for proper education and learning interpersonal communication.

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It is true that Aristotle, contrary to Plato, also mentioned the need for their existence, though he did not elaborate on their particular role in communication and education. Aquinas, in turn, recognizes this role and seeks to describe it. We can see this most clearly in the treatise on social virtues attached to the virtue of justice as the principal virtue. While justice and prudence remain primarily political virtues for Aquinas, the virtues associated with them belong to the social (pre-political) forms of life. This is the case, for example, with the virtue of friendliness, which Aquinas relates to domestic and neighborly relationships. We must remember at this point that Aristotle, writing about friendship, had in mind relationships that were primarily political. For Aquinas, this is not the case. Friendliness enables one to communicate at a more basic level, among the people with whom one interacts in daily life. We can see this in the text on natural law, where Aquinas uses the Latin term *conversare* to show the necessity of friendliness and mutual communication of the people among whom we live.

> *Et secundum hoc, ad legem naturalem pertinent ea quae ad huiusmodi inclinationem spectant, utpote quod homo ignorantiam vitet, quod alios non offendat cum quibus debet conversari, et cetera huiusmodi quae ad hoc spectant*
>
> And in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law—for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination. (Aquinas, 1891, q. 94, a. 2, corp.)

The same process of depoliticizing Aristotle's thought, so to speak, can be observed in Aquinas' interpretation of educational issues. For him, education belongs mainly to the family or to the community of the church. One could say that somehow the state is disappearing here. Historical conditions probably played their part, i.e., the already long and relatively stable position of the polis in the case of Aristotle and the weak medieval states that were only being formed and the great role of the Church in the case of Thomas.

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Aquinas also recognizes—with the spirit of his age—the value of proper communication in economic life or other pre-political forms of social life. This difference between ancient and medieval approaches was noted, for example, by Hannah Arendt (2016) in *Human Condition* and by Anthony Black (1961) in *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought from the Twelfth Century to the Present*. Human communities that are smaller and qualitatively different from political communities are capable of creating bonds and moral principles and transmitting shared values (Machowski, 2023, p. 260).

Aquinas also evidently describes the family as the place where virtues are formed and notes their pre-political—i.e., social—functioning. This can be seen, for example, in his treatment of the virtue of generosity, in which the point of reference is the family and its welfare. Similarly, religious formation—concerning the virtue of religiosity—takes place in the family, which is why marriage is a sacrament. "*Matrimonium igitur secundum quod consistit in coniunctione maris et feminae intendentium prolem ad cultum Dei generare et educare est Ecclesiae sacramentum: unde et quaedam benedictio nubentibus per ministros Ecclesiae adhibetur.*" ["Therefore, matrimony, as consisting in the union of a man and woman who intend to beget and educate children for the glory of God, is a sacrament of the Church; hence the bridal pair receive a blessing from the ministers of the Church"] (Aquinas, 1961, lib. 4, c. 78).

This can also be seen in the case of the virtue of liberality. Aquinas argues the need to exercise some moderation in this virtue in order to be able to support one's family, whereas Aristotle only warns against spending too much, taking into account the possible future donations that may be more necessary and important than current ones. Aquinas's stance is evident in the following passage from the *Summa Theologiae*: *"Et tamen etiam in temporalibus rebus non pertinet ad liberalem ut sic aliis intendat quod omnino se et suos despiciat. Unde Ambrosius dicit, in I de Offic., est illa probanda liberalitas ut proximos seminis tui non despicias, si egere cognoscas"* ["And yet it does not belong to the liberal man even in temporal things to attend so much to others as to lose sight of himself and those belonging to him. Wherefore Ambrose says (in *De Offic*. I),

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'It is a commendable liberality not to neglect your relatives if you know them to be in want'"] (Aquinas, 1899, q. 117, a. 1, ad. 1).

Aristotle's position, which Aquinas cites in his reply to the following argument, does not refer to the family situation, but only to individual life. "*Ad secundum dicendum quod ad liberalem non pertinet sic divitias emittere ut non sibi remaneat unde sustentetur, et unde virtutis opera exequatur, quibus ad felicitatem pervenitur. Unde philosophus dicit, in IV Ethic., quod liberalis curat propria, volens per hoc quibusdam sufficere*." ["It does not belong to a liberal man to give away his riches that nothing is left for his own support, nor the wherewithal to perform those acts of virtue whereby happiness is acquired. Hence the Philosopher says (in *Ethics* IV) that 'the liberal man does not neglect his own, wishing thus to be of help to certain people'"] (Aquinas, 1899, q. 117, a. 1, ad. 2). A very characteristic passage can be found in the *Ethics*, where Aristotle, speaking of the vice of excess in relation to the virtue of generosity, mentions boasting instead of the need to protect the family and its goods—contrary to Aquinas's later interpretation (Aristotle, 2014, 1192a–b).

Aquinas generally describes these abilities as auxiliary to justice, which, like prudence, is strictly political in nature, as in Aristotle. In questions 80 to 120 of the *Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae* (Aquinas, 1899, q. 80–120), Thomas discusses the virtues connected to the principal virtue of justice; they are primarily developed and exercised in family life and in local communities. It is only later that the man thus formed moves on to political life. However, virtues such as friendship and vengeance are important in relationships other than political ones. As quoted by Anthony Black (1961), the orders of the Guild of London state: "For friendship as well as for vengeance we shall remain united, come what may" (pp. 4–5). In Aristotle, meanwhile, the question of friendship is discussed and considered possible only in terms of political relationships.

A similar process of depoliticizing Aristotelian virtue can be seen in Aquinas's treatment of vengeance, which he associates more with natural human inclinations than with political life. As Aquinas writes about the virtue of vengeance:

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> I answer that, as the Philosopher states (Aristotle, 2014, II, 1), aptitude to virtue is in us by nature, but the fulfillment of virtue is in us through habituation or some other cause. Hence it is evident that virtues perfect us so that we follow in due manner our natural inclinations, which belong to the natural right. Wherefore to every definite natural inclination there corresponds a special virtue. Now there is a special inclination of nature to remove harm, for which reason animals have the irascible power distinct from the concupiscible. Man resists harm by defending himself against wrongs, lest they be inflicted on him, or he avenges those which have already been inflicted on him, with the intention, not of harming, but of removing the harm done. And this belongs to vengeance, for Tully says (in *Invent*. Rhet. ii) that by "vengeance we resist force, or wrong, and in general whatever is obscure (i.e., derogatory), either by self-defense or by avenging it." Therefore, vengeance is a special virtue. (Aquinas, 1899, q. 108, a. 2, ad. 1)

Thomas Aquinas, recognizing and emphasizing the natural, pre-political nature of human morality and education, establishes a clear continuum in human relations and communication from smaller communities to the political community. This smooth transition is missing in Aristotle, which means that his vision of political life can be seen as suspended in a kind of social vacuum.

This is one of the reasons why contemporary politics is detached from social issues. The postmodern elites tend to shut themselves off in their own elite world, losing touch with what ordinary people feel and experience. Communication fails and think tanks provide analyses that are politically in demand; hence the growing wave of populist movements, which, in the eyes of the people, identify their problems and speak their language.

One solution could be to rediscover the political value of smaller communities, such as the family, and to recognize their community-building potential. This can also make political issues and actions more realistic and renew our political communities. This, in turn, would imply a task for education, at least in the Western world, to rediscover and promote

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the family and other smaller social communities as those that create common bonds and shared values. Only such a remedy can cure the diseases of postmodernism, such as extreme individualism and the erosion of common values (Bauman, 2000).

Conclusions

Both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas state clearly that a lack of proper communication and education leads to the dissolution of the political community and its regression into atomized forms of individual or tribal life. The human condition will then be worse than before and will revert to "the law of the jungle" and the ruthless competition and struggle of each against each.

For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst of all when sundered from law and justice. For unrighteousness is most pernicious when possessed of weapons, and man is born possessing weapons for the use of wisdom and virtue, which it is possible to employ entirely for the opposite ends. Hence when devoid of virtue man is the most unholy and savage of animals, and the worst in regard to sexual indulgence and gluttony. (Aristotle, 1944, 1253a)

Some observers of the postmodern era we are living in identify similar trends in the current disintegration of political communities. Aristotle and Aquinas agree that without proper communication and education, a human community cannot be formed and existing political communities will be progressively destroyed.

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Learning coping strategies in the narratives of young bloggers with SMA: The role of family, school, and community

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educational environment, school, family, disability, coping with illness

Abstract

Research objectives and problems: This study investigates how environmental contexts—family, school, and the social environment—shape the development of coping strategies among young bloggers living with SMA. The analysis focuses on turning points in their lives and the influence of significant others in learning to manage illness-related challenges.

Research methods: The study employs a qualitative methodology grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology. Proxemic analysis (Walulik 2022) served as the primary analytical tool. Blog content was supplemented with semi-structured interviews with the authors, providing a broader understanding of their lived experiences.

Process of argumentation: The article opens with an introduction outlining the conceptual motivations, research aims, and contextual background on SMA. It then describes the methodological framework, including the methods used, analytical techniques, characteristics of the research sample (five bloggers), and data sources (blog entries and interviews). A subsequent section discusses the main theories and key concepts, which is followed by an analysis of the empirical findings. The final section concludes with a summary and pedagogical implications.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The findings underscore the importance of the environmental context. Family members, teachers, peers, professionals, and clergy emerged as influential figures supporting the development of both task-oriented and meaning-oriented coping styles. The study

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also highlights the value of blogs as research material, as they offer authentic insights into the daily experiences of individuals with SMA. These findings may inform and enrich the training of future professionals.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The study emphasizes the importance of developing coping competences among children and adolescents with disabilities while ensuring that parents do not fall into patterns of overprotection. Mechanisms such as modeling, resilience, and transgression play a key role in helping young people overcome their limitations.

Research objectives

In this article, I examine the impact of environmental context on how young bloggers with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) learn to cope with their illness. The reflections presented here are drawn from my doctoral research on this process, published in my dissertation (2023). That work documented the stories of patients who, despite significant health challenges, have learned effective strategies for coping with life's demands. These individuals demonstrate notable resilience and seek to inspire others.

The impetus for this research came from observing the blogging activity of people living with SMA, particularly the narrative of my friend, Kamil Cierniak, a doctoral student and blogger whose work became an important reference point for this analysis. Kamil could move only three fingers on one hand. Despite significant functional disability, he remained active both academically and socially. His posts blended reflection and humor in a distinctive narrative style. His example and outlook inspired me to search for other narratives created by people in similar circumstances. The analyzed stories reveal mechanisms that build psychological resilience and illustrate how experiences of illness are presented in the public sphere.

Before presenting the study itself, a brief explanation of SMA is necessary. SMA is a rare genetic disease that affects the neurons responsible for muscle contraction and relaxation, resulting in varying degrees of symptoms (Saniewska & Saniewska 2019). The condition leads to the loss of motor function in different parts of the body, though the severity varies

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widely. Some patients require ventilatory support and cannot eat or speak independently. Others use wheelchairs but can still perform some self-care activities. Still others experience only mild muscle weakness.

For many years, SMA was considered incurable, until 2016, when a drug was introduced that halts the progression of the disease (Saniewska & Saniewska 2019). Unfortunately, the treatment does not reverse existing damage or restore full function. Approximately 1,000 patients with the condition have been registered in Poland, some of whom participate in the SMA patient association. Prognoses vary greatly, and there are no official statistics on long-term outcomes. Before turning to the interpretation of findings, a summary of results, and recommendations for pedagogical practice, I will briefly outline the theoretical background.

Research methods

This article presents the results of research that I conducted in 2022 and 2023 on the role of primary environments—family, school, and community—in shaping coping strategies among young bloggers living with SMA. The main aim of the study was to identify the role of the educational environment (family, school, and local or national institutions) in the process of learning new strategies for living with the illness. I sought answers to questions concerning:

- coping strategies modeled by significant others,
- turning points in the participants' lives that led to the development or modification of coping strategies, and
- the influence of other people—parents, significant others, mentors, and professionals (e.g., doctors and physiotherapists), as well as friends, co-workers, and teachers—in learning these strategies.

In my dissertation, I employed qualitative methods, drawing on the interpretive paradigm, which focuses on the search for meaning and the interpretation of statements in a broad context. The analysis combined

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phenomenological-hermeneutic and biographical approaches, treating blog posts as first-person narratives. I used Marek Walulik's proxemic analysis technique (Walulik 2022), which distinguishes five stable categories that reflect the context of human life particularly well: place, time, actors, values, and expectations.

Semi-structured interviews served as a complementary technique, enabling structured organization of information, analysis of key moments, and examination of the influence of significant individuals. Although the questions were prepared in advance, the conversations remained flexible and unfolded naturally. For ethical reasons, informed consent was obtained both before and after each interview to ensure that participants fully understood the purpose of the study and felt comfortable throughout the process.

The research materials were blogs, supplemented by additional sources: pre-existing materials (press articles, interviews with the authors) and materials generated for the study (interviews conducted by me with the bloggers). Although blogs are still used relatively rarely as research data, they offer valuable insights into individuals' experiences and interpretations of life events. They are distinctive sources and should be treated as such. Their structure—often reverse chronological and interconnected through hyperlinks—allows readers to engage with the authors' present experiences and then explore their past. In many ways, blogs resemble diaries: first-person narratives about one's life and the surrounding world. They are virtual and interactive, but they may also function as forms of self-presentation or, as some scholars describe them, online self-creation.

The study focused on five purposively selected blog authors, all living with SMA. The group included several well-known figures—a wheelchair-using model and foundation president, a lifestyle and fashion blogger, and a writer and journalist—as well as less widely recognized individuals, such as a social activist residing in a care facility and a late friend, a doctoral student with journalistic experience. The shared inclusion criteria were active blogging for at least one year, a confirmed SMA diagnosis, and being in early adulthood (Erikson, 2021). Three participants

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agreed to be interviewed; one had passed away and another declined to participate.

During the dissertation evaluation, it was noted that the sample does not fully represent the SMA population. While this limitation is acknowledged, the sample does accurately reflect the population of SMA *bloggers*. The study therefore centers on individuals whose coping strategies are more task-oriented and outward-directed. People with more avoidant or emotionally destructive coping tendencies appear to be underrepresented in the blogging community. Only one participant described negative experiences related to parental attitudes, which she perceived as a source of later difficulties.

Although some depressive passages appeared in the narratives, they constituted only a small fraction of the entries. For example: "It was a difficult year. All the plans fell through. Everything is not as I would like it to be. I started to think about what I'm grateful for this year and, all in all, despite everything, there's still a bit to be thankful for." Such entries, even when describing hardship, also reveal strategies of positive reappraisal and meaning-making. They cannot be categorized as escapism. It is also important to note that the Internet is a form of self-expression, and authors may not always wish to disclose their vulnerabilities. The assisted-living system for people with disabilities in Poland generally does not allow for full independence, and not all individuals with disabilities lead highly active or eventful lives. In my dissertation, however, I aimed to present examples of active coping in the face of difficulties, such as stereotypes, architectural barriers, and insufficient systemic support.

Process of argumentation

In the theoretical section of my dissertation, I examined in detail several coping strategies: task-oriented, avoidance-oriented, and emotion-oriented coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), as well as meaning-oriented coping (Park & Folkman, 1997). I sought to identify the context in which these strategies are learned—specifically, the role of primary educational

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environments such as the family (significant others), school, religious communities, and the local environment.

The theoretical layer of analysis built upon several concepts, including Tomaszewski's Theory of Difficult Situations (1975) and Park and Folkman's Model of Meaning-Making (1997). I also referenced Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development (2011) and Jarvis's work on Lifelong Learning and Existential Learning (1987). In addition, the dissertation incorporated the human ecosystem model, known as the *Mandala of Health*.

As a researcher, I approach health from a holistic perspective, conceptualizing it as a state of physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being arising from multiple factors, rather than the absence of observable disease symptoms. Similarly, I view illness as a subjective experience: a disruption of well-being in various spheres that impedes everyday functioning. In my approach to disability, I include the principles of inclusion, normalization, and social integration, understood as processes aimed at combating discrimination, promoting self-determination, and ensuring that marginalized groups can fully participate in and co-create social and cultural life.

I understand the environment as a set of life conditions that influence human development and upbringing. Following Kowalski (in Dykcik, 2001), I adopt a three-part division of the environment:

1. natural environment (immediate surroundings—family, neighborhood, friends, peer groups);
2. institutions of formal education (e.g., preschools and schools, educational centers);
3. institutions of informal or non-formal socialization (e.g., workplaces, healthcare institutions, the military, foundations, associations, religious organizations).

A key concept related to the environment—and one I refer to frequently—is "situation." I understand this as an individual's life situation: a set of circumstances connected to a particular person, shaped by their unique life experience, at a specific place and time. I assume that situations

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influence behavior to some extent, but do not fully determine it. Here, the concept of *transgression* is especially meaningful to me—understood as the act of transcending one's limitations and engaging in the humanistic process of "becoming," the development of one's individual potentials. In Tomaszewski's (1975) view, behavior is not simply a response to stimuli or the result of fixed individual predispositions, but emerges from an individual's interaction with others in a specific context. Situations can be classified as *ordinary*, which do not require changes in coping strategies, or *difficult*, which require adaptation either to the task or to the demands of the environment.

I assume that life difficulties do not prevent individuals from developing. The phenomenon of resilience—an individual's capacity to withstand adverse life conditions—demonstrates this clearly. However, the presence of difficulties does not always allow for the full development of a person's potential. In the literature, illness is often conceptualized as a difficult situation. Yet it is worth noting that patients themselves sometimes describe their experiences simply as "the only life they know"—that is, as ordinary life situations, especially when the illness has been present since childhood.

Findings

I will now present the findings of the study. In my dissertation, I analyzed each case individually and then conducted a horizontal comparison, identifying shared and divergent categories. During my interviews with bloggers, I was struck by the strength of their will to live and their inclination to transcend personal limitations. They primarily seek "ordinary treatment" and equal access to everyday conveniences. The respondents were oriented toward self-development and relied on many constructive coping strategies: mostly task-oriented, but also meaning-oriented. Despite significant differences in personality, they shared a tendency to use escapist strategies only rarely; they neither withdrew nor gave up easily and generally exhibited optimistic attitudes.

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Without question, these people possess significant personal resources: intelligence, a strong sense of agency, a sense of humor, determination, and well-developed intrinsic motivation. In this study, however, the factors shaping these traits are of particular interest. While intelligence and temperament have genetic components, it is life context, unique experiences and interactions with others, especially significant others, that determine a person's character and outlook on life. Based on my interpretations, I identified the fundamental importance of environmental context in the process of learning coping strategies. Participants emphasized the influence of family and early school experiences—particularly the attitudes of teachers and peers toward their disabilities. They also pointed to religious communities as important formative environments in their lives. Some highlighted the role of patient-oriented communities, such as the SMA Foundation. Finally, the online blogging community itself emerged as an environment in which participants learned coping strategies.

What emerged clearly from my research was the importance of modeling, that is, learning from the behaviors and attitudes of significant others, in the development of coping strategies. Children often mirror the behaviors of their parents. The role of parents—especially those raising children with disabilities—is to create the right conditions for development: to meet their children's needs while also supporting independence, showing encouragement without slipping into overprotection. As Radziewicz-Winnicki observes, the family plays a crucial role in shaping a child's personality during the early stages of life, whereas school, as an educational institution, becomes most influential during adolescence. This pattern was also evident in my findings.

Regarding behavioral models for coping strategies, four bloggers described their parents as teaching them not to give up but to face difficulties directly. One blogger quoted her mother: "I am proud that your dad and I raised you to be a happy, joyful, and ambitious woman, despite your physical limitations." In another post, I read, "Even when we didn't always feel up for it, we were all very determined. And it worked." The participants emphasized that their parents tried not to create a "glass

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bubble" around them, which is more commonly referred to in English as "helicopter parenting." As Agatha wrote in one entry: "My parents expected me to overcome my own difficulties, to smile at people. I know that this helps everyone, not just me." This is an example of parental influence on the development of coping strategies, such as optimism and positive reappraisal.

One respondent noted: "My mother is with me 99% of the time, 24 hours a day." This illustrates how much influence a parent can have. Other participants no longer lived with their parents and were not dependent on them in adulthood, yet still emphasized how deeply their parents' attitudes toward illness had shaped their own.

Bloggers usually described school as a difficult but valuable experience. One interviewee told me:

> There was a period in my life when I think I saw more of my deficiencies. That I couldn't dance at school parties like my friends, that I couldn't go out on my own, that someone always had to be with me. That I needed someone's help. That I couldn't use the restroom by myself. I think that during that adolescent period, I noticed my limitations more.

In school, they had to face the fear of being different, curious stares, and exclusion from certain activities. For every blogger in the study, entering school marked a turning point in their narratives. Another participant recalled:

> I don't think I ever really had that moment of asking, "why me?" I think I accepted it from the beginning. Maybe also because my parents sent me to school with non-disabled kids, and those kids always played with me—they never excluded me. I think that also mattered.

School was often the place where they first encountered major practical barriers: inaccessible bathrooms, inadequate ramps, and the absence of elevators. One blogger's words had a powerful impact on me:

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> When I was seven, I was sent to school. A school attended by non-disabled kids. Was the school accessible? No, it wasn't. Even getting to the first floor required climbing stairs. But that didn't change my parents' or the school administration's decision. And I am very grateful to them for that.

This illustrates that, from an adult perspective, exposure to adverse events and critical life junctures does not necessarily lead to trauma; individual coping strategies and resilience mechanisms can mediate how such experiences are processed.

Another important factor seems to be the level of collaboration between these primary environments. Gaś (2016) writes about the risks associated with a lack of coordination between family and school:

> It is important for parents and teachers to speak with one voice on important issues. When the values that they communicate conflict, a rift can form within the child, resulting in the development of double standards of behavior and only superficial internalization of the prevailing norms.

The living environment of a child with a disability can also be understood as an institutional one. Kamil joked: "I've got no shortage of muscles, muscle atrophy, scoliosis, dealings with ZUS (Social Security Association), and category E." In his narratives, ZUS is personified and treated as one of the actors in the text. This represents a humorous coping strategy for managing bureaucratic challenges. At the same time, these entries address serious issues, such as systemic inefficiencies and the lack of clear regulations.

A key institution for the SMA community in Poland, frequently mentioned by the bloggers, is the SMA Foundation. Kamil wrote about the organization: "I generally felt like I was among my own. I have met many open-minded and ambitious people who, despite their illness, are doing something with their lives to the best of their ability." He described a meeting organized by the foundation as a major turning point that changed his attitude toward his illness and himself.

The foundation was established in 2013 by parents of children with SMA. Its main goals include gathering and disseminating comprehensive

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knowledge about SMA, maintaining patient statistics and a national registry, and supporting families of those affected. It collaborates with international research initiatives and is a member of the European Organization for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS), a pan-European scientific research network. The community brings together a large portion of SMA patients in Poland, organizes conferences for families and specialists, and runs various educational and social campaigns. It plays a vital role in shaping the lived environment of patients.

Another environment, specifically, a network of institutions, that has a significant impact on patients' lives is the healthcare system. People with SMA must make frequent hospital visits, including lumbar punctures required for administering the medication that slows disease progression, as well as regular monitoring during treatment. Their interactions with the medical community also influence their perception of the disease and their attitudes toward their own bodies.

In one of the blog narratives, the author wrote, "Doctors made various diagnoses, including some that completely baffled my parents. They were told I would die during puberty, that I would stop breathing." One participant described on her blog the inappropriate behavior of a gynecologist who refused to examine her and spoke about her in the third person, addressing only her mother, despite the fact that she was already an adult woman at the time.

During an interview, another blogger recounted an incident involving a nurse's inappropriate conduct in a hospital. She had been a teenager at the time. She described the experience as follows:

> There was this spiteful woman on the ward, and in her anger, she started whispering to me that she wasn't surprised that my parents had left me there, that they couldn't stand me. I think that's something that left a very strong mark on me. I don't know exactly how it changed me or in what way, but it definitely affected me—how I saw myself.

Such experiences are not without impact on the patients' perception of themselves and the world. It is important to recognize that certain

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personality traits—especially in professions involving direct human contact—should be taken into account in hiring. When inappropriate behavior is reported to a supervisor, appropriate action should be taken immediately. Unfortunately, those who experience such mistreatment are not always able to report the trauma that they endure.

Because my respondents are bloggers, the role of the virtual environment in coping with difficult situations must also be considered. Maciąg (2013) refers to this as a virtual space of social life, in which certain norms, values, and rules of functioning develop. The online world not only co-creates contemporary culture but also meets various needs; it is both a tool and an environment in which we live. In one of her classifications, Tomaszewska (2012) identifies four functions of new technologies: building group cohesion, shaping individual identity, organizing daily life, and providing access to information and assistance. These same functions can be observed in the blogs analyzed for this study. Other authors see blogs as a form of communication, a tool for building community, a way of expressing experiences of illness and social exclusion, and, for some, a form of self-creation or even self-therapy.

What became clear in my research is that blogging serves multiple functions in the lives of the authors whose narratives I analyzed. One blogger wrote that she publishes posts "to relive emotions that feel powerful now, even though I know myself—and in a week they'll fade. That's why I collect, photograph, and publish things: to strengthen my memories." Most of the narratives function as diary-like accounts of experiences, enriched by potential interactions with readers. In the posts examined, a process of sharing experiences and forming connections between authors and readers was evident. One blogger described the self-therapeutic role that writing plays for her:

> When I first disclosed here that I live in a DPS (a social welfare center), I didn't expect anyone to find that information useful (…). I think I did it partly as therapy for myself, because for quite a long time I didn't like saying out loud that I was a resident of a DPS.

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Simply "telling" one's story requires a degree of reflection one's own life and circumstances.

The influence of blogging on learning new coping strategies can also be viewed from another angle. Blogs are interactive spaces, and the authors' narratives are subject to readers' reactions. Bloggers may receive both support and criticism. Both confronting negative feedback and finding others who think the same way often becomes a motivation for personal growth. In the online environment, people with disabilities may be exposed to hate speech, but their posts also help normalize issues related to illness and disability. The virtual world has its own peculiarities, such as a sense of anonymity, immediacy, and the lack of face-to-face communication. This may facilitate certain phenomena, but they do not determine them outright.

In special education, the virtual environment is sometimes portrayed in an overly simplistic way—either as a "window to the world" that removes all barriers, or as an escape from reality that leads to addiction. Plichta (2017) describes these extremes as techno-optimism and technophobia. Plichta and Pyżalski (2016), however, propose a more nuanced view of the Internet: as a catalyst or a unique environment that amplifies existing predispositions. In my research, bloggers frequently emphasized that barriers are an inherent part of life for people with SMA. Yet it is individual perception that determines the degree of their impact. In line with principles of equality, efforts should be made to eliminate these barriers, for example, by submitting petitions regarding high curbs or the lack of ramps and elevators. The Internet plays an important role in facilitating the visibility and advocacy of these issues.

The presence of these obstacles, though undeniably negative, often became a motivating force for the bloggers. The proactive attitudes of the parents of four participants helped them develop task-oriented coping strategies and a readiness to seek support. In crisis situations, people may experience personal growth through transgression, which can be understood as the act of transcending one's own limitations (Kozielecki, 1987). One blogger described how she is actively working through her tendency to avoid difficulties by engaging in self-reflection. She realized

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that her parents had exhibited anxiety, embarrassment about her illness, and a tendency to withdraw. Over time, however, she encountered people who motivated her, encouraged her self-development, and helped her recognize her strengths. Educational and other supportive environments can partially compensate for early-life deficits. The developmental trajectory of individuals in adulthood may be interpreted through the lens of resilience, understood as a form of post-traumatic growth (Kaźmierczak, 2017).

Conclusions and recommendations

The Internet should also be considered a living environment, rich with opportunities. For people with disabilities, blogs can be extraordinarily valuable, particularly when seen as a "window to the world." They can serve therapeutic purposes and build a sense of community. At the same time, they may function as a form of self-therapy or even as an escape from the real world. Blogs also play an important role in raising awareness about rare diseases and normalizing disability. Even viewing photographs of people with disabilities in everyday contexts helps humanize them, revealing their interests, personalities, and values—not just their medical condition.

For educators, electronic diaries can be a valuable research resource, particularly in studies that focus on environmental context. First-person autobiographical narratives have a tremendous power to move readers through language and to make the themes of transgression and resilience visible. Such narratives allow readers to "enter into" the author's world (Miąso, 2014). This is especially valuable in the education of future medical professionals and teachers: in helping to cultivate sensitivity, empathy, and a fuller understanding of difficult life situations.

The aim of this study was to describe the role of the environmental context—family, school, and society—in the process of learning to cope with illness among young bloggers with SMA. The research focused on key turning points and the influence of significant others. Because this

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was a qualitative study, it does not allow for broad generalizations or the identification of universal patterns. Nevertheless, careful interpretation of the blogs reveals several important themes. As demonstrated, the development of coping strategies is influenced by multiple environmental factors, including the attitudes of parents, living conditions, interactions with significant individuals, and the functioning of institutions such as government agencies, hospitals, and other support systems. Government policy also plays a role in shaping these processes.

At this point, I would like to put forward several recommendations related to this article, which stems from my doctoral dissertation. When it comes to developing appropriate coping mechanisms, it is very important to support parents of children with disabilities and to sensitize professionals to the difficulties faced by people with disabilities. Several factors may negatively affect a child's self-image and self-perception:

- isolation of the child,
- overprotection,
- avoidance of challenges,
- limiting the child's opportunities to develop effective coping strategies independently,
- lack of parental involvement or excessive permissiveness.

In this context, the mechanism of learning through behavioral modeling (observation and imitation) appears particularly important (Plichta, 2017).

These challenges also concern universities, which educate the medical professionals, teachers, and specialists whom children with disabilities encounter throughout their lives. Their knowledge, as well as their sensitivity and attitudes toward illness, can influence how children and families understand and respond to disability—which my respondents also emphasized. Using blogs as source materials in education can help instill empathetic attitudes among future professionals.

In conclusion, the coping strategies that people with disabilities develop are significant at the individual and social levels. It should be self-evident that people with disabilities have full rights to self-determination,

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development, education, employment, and participation in shaping social policy. As Radziewicz-Winnicki (2002) notes, the role of educators is to raise public awareness of the various social barriers that limit people's ability to participate fully and satisfactorily in society. Studying blogs written by people with disabilities can contribute to this aim. I hope that my research has, in some measure, helped to illuminate the environmental context of coping with illness and demonstrated the value of blogs as a source of knowledge about the experiences of people living with disease.

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Critical thinking in teachers' perception: Critical remarks based on research

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***Keywords*:**
critical thinking competence; educational management; teachers' perception of critical thinking; self-management; educational challenges in the information society

Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): This study investigates teachers' perceptions of critical thinking (CT) as an essential competence in contemporary education. It examines teachers' self-assessed levels of CT, their preparedness to develop CT in students, and the barriers that hinder its effective implementation in teaching practice.

Research methods: A quantitative survey was conducted among 213 teachers from various educational levels in southern Poland. The structured questionnaire included self-assessment items and Likert-scale questions measuring teachers' attitudes toward CT. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and nonparametric tests (Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis).

Structure of the article: The article begins with a conceptual overview of CT in the context of the information society, followed by a description

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of the research methodology. Subsequent sections present and discuss the empirical findings and their implications for educational practice.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: Teachers highly value CT but often feel underprepared to teach it. Only 7.5% reported being very well prepared, and many cited obstacles such as a lack of methodological tools, insufficient training, and low student motivation. The results emphasize the need for systematic support and teacher education focused on CT instruction.

Conclusions: The study underscores the importance of professional development that enhances teachers' competence and confidence in fostering CT. Strengthening CT-oriented curricula and training programs is vital for preparing students to think critically in a complex, information-driven world.

Introduction

In the face of today's global challenges, the practice and theory of contemporary education inevitably focus on developing competencies that help individuals find meaning in their social and professional lives, understand the impact of local actions on global processes, and solve real problems. In this sense, education plays a transformative role, and its content must address important issues of social development, while nurturing the values of cooperation, solidarity, equality, and inclusiveness. Individuals must learn to cope with unpredictable and unknown future situations (Colomer et al., 2021).

In today's mediatized society (Krotz, 2007) and globalized world (McLuhan, 2004), interconnected through dense networks of interdependencies, complex problems at global, local, and individual levels are increasingly becoming a challenge for both individuals and social groups. Citizens now face the need to evaluate the reliability of information, protect themselves and their loved ones from manipulation, especially media manipulation, and make decisions and judgments based on information that is not always as accurate as one would wish.

In this context, the development of critical thinking (CT) in the educational process becomes a key issue (Yasir & Alnoori, 2020; Duron et al., 2006), as does teacher perception of CT; that is, an assessment of how

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teachers understand this competence and to what extent they are willing and able to develop it among their students (Choy & Cheah, 2009). As Joanna M. Łukasik (2016) notes, teachers present themselves in the classroom as unique individuals whose self-understanding and worldview are shaped by their own biographies.

In today's digitalized world, in which individuals are bombarded with information, the ability to critically evaluate facts, information, and phenomena observed is an extremely important competence. Therefore, teachers' attitudes toward critical thinking, as well as their understanding of this phenomenon are crucial. These attitudes help shape students' own views on CT, their understanding of it, and their perceived need to acquire and develop this competence.

According to researchers, teachers face many barriers to developing CT among students (Aliakbari & Sadeghdaghighi, 2013). However, the most important factor supporting students' acquisition and development of this competence is the opportunity to observe it in their teacher, who should model strong critical thinking skills themselves. Teachers should be open to different perspectives and capable of discussing and adopting various positions. It is also essential for teachers to reflect on CT: what they think about this competence, how prepared they are to develop it, and how much importance they assign to it in their work.

Critical thinking is described as a key competence in efforts to transform the current unfavorable development model into one oriented toward sustainable development (SD) (Rieckmann, 2012). Faced with the challenges of the information society in a global context, each individual must critically assess social, economic, and environmental realities and make decisions based on this critical analysis. Without the support of teachers in the formal education system, the acquisition of this competence by young citizens, future decision-makers, is very difficult, if not impossible.

In this text, we focus on the issue of teachers' views on critical thinking in the didactic process. After attempting to conceptualize the term *critical thinking*, we present the methodological assumptions of the study. We then analyze the opinions expressed by teachers on the importance

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of critical thinking in a "global information society" (van Dijk, 2020). The article concludes with a discussion of the results and final conclusions.

Critical thinking: An attempt at conceptualization

Critical thinking has been analyzed by researchers in various scientific fields. The twentieth century can be characterized as a period of in-depth reflection on what critical thinking is, how it can be taught, and how individuals can be supported in acquiring and developing this competence (Glaser, 1941; Ennis, 1985; Paul & Elder, 2006). Many authors also emphasize the importance of education and teachers' actions in shaping students' CT at every educational stage (Laabidi & Laabidi, 2023; Phillips, 2023; Lombardi et al., 2022; Alsaleh, 2020; Behar-Horenstein & Niu, 2011; Choy & Cheah, 2009).

To conceptualize the term *critical thinking*, it is worth recalling John Dewey's classic definition from the early 20th century: critical thinking is "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1910). A more contemporary, and also very simple, definition is presented by Robert Ennis, who argues that "critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do."

In the 1980s, Michael Scriven and Richard Paul (1987) offered a definition that describes critical thinking as "an intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action." At the end of the 20th century, Diane F. Halpern (1998) proposed her conceptualization of the term: "Critical thinking is the use of cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. It is purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed." She later continued her reflections and research on critical thinking (Halpern, 2007, 2013, 2014).

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Currently, one of the best-known and most highly regarded definitions is the one proposed by Facione (1990), who defines critical thinking as "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (p. 2).

Critical thinking is a multifaceted concept that has received many definitions in the scientific literature. All of the aforementioned definitions emphasize key characteristics such as reflexivity, logic, and the ability to evaluate information independently. Critical thinking is understood as a competence that facilitates active, informed, and safe functioning in the complex reality of the global information society. In this regard, it becomes crucial to understand how teachers view critical thinking, as their approach affects the effectiveness of its development in the educational process.

Teachers' perceptions of critical thinking

According to the literature, "perception" is shaped, among other factors, by a person's experiences, needs, and professional or educational context. Through these experiences and needs, individuals develop a coherent model of the world that enables them to react appropriately and anticipate various situations (Sainn et al., 1980). Therefore, teachers' perceptions of critical thinking have a significant impact on how these skills are integrated into educational settings. Recent research has examined various aspects of this topic, shedding light on both the understanding and implementation of CT in classrooms (Brookfield, 2012).

Teachers' perspectives play a key role in how CT is incorporated into the educational process. Their views influence how they design lessons, engage students in reasoning processes, and assess students' ability to think independently. Moreover, teachers' attitudes toward critical thinking determine their willingness to create an open, inquiry-based learning environment in which students are encouraged to question assumptions, analyze arguments, and formulate well-founded conclusions.

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Understanding how teachers perceive critical thinking is therefore crucial for improving learning strategies and supporting the development of this competence in education. The next stage of this project presents the methodological assumptions that form the foundation for the detailed analysis and interpretation of the results that follow.

Methodological assumptions of the study

The purpose of the study was to diagnose and describe teachers' opinions on CT, with particular emphasis on their self-assessment of this competence, satisfaction with its level, and perceived importance in a mediatized society. The study employed a quantitative survey method within the nomothetic paradigm.

The research tool was an author-constructed questionnaire developed specifically for this study, consisting of 25 items divided into three parts:

- Self-assessment of critical thinking competence – 10 statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = definitely not; 5 = definitely yes). *Example item:* "I am able to evaluate the credibility of information presented in the media."
- Evaluation of teaching and developing critical thinking – 9 statements referring to methods and strategies that teachers use to foster students' CT, also measured with 5-point Likert scales. *Example item:* "I encourage students to verify sources of information before accepting them as true."
- Teachers' needs and attitudes toward improving critical thinking – 6 semi-open and open-ended questions related to perceived barriers, needs, and preferred forms of professional development.

Only the closed-ended items were used to calculate internal consistency, yielding Cronbach's $\alpha = .894$, which indicates high reliability. Open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively and served to complement the quantitative data. The main research problem was formulated

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as follows: *What is teachers' perception of critical thinking as a key competence in contemporary education?*

The sampling method was convenience sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Questionnaires were distributed electronically to schools in southern Poland, and participation was voluntary and anonymous.

A total of 213 teachers participated in the study. The sample characteristics were as follows:

- Gender: 77% female, 23% male
- Level of education taught: kindergarten – 2.8%; early childhood (grades 1–3) – 9.4%; elementary (grades 4–8) – 34.3%; secondary school – 53.5%
- Teaching experience: <6 years – 13.1%; 6–10 years – 15%; 11–15 years – 12.2%; 16–20 years – 15%; 21–25 years – 19.7%; >25 years – 13.1%
- Place of work: large city – 55%; small city – 28.6%; rural area – 15.5%
- Subjects taught: science (math, physics, biology, chemistry, geography) – 25.3%; humanities (Polish, history, social studies) – 24.8%; foreign languages – 13.1%; computer science – 6%; early education and kindergarten – 14.6%; special education, psychology, pedagogy, or speech therapy – 16.4%

These sociodemographic variables were treated as independent variables (see Table 1) and were used to test for potential differences in teachers' self-assessment of critical thinking and in their approaches to developing this competence among students. The study thus provides insight into how demographic and professional factors relate to teachers' understanding and development of critical thinking in the context of modern education.

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Table 1. Variables included in the study

Independent variables	Dependent variables
Gender	Preparedness to develop CT
Years of teaching experience	Self-assessed CT
Level of education taught	Perceived impact of CT on student success
School location	Willingness to participate in CT training
	Preparedness to develop CT

Source: own research

Critical thinking in the context of teachers' perception – based on research results

The collected data were analyzed using frequency distributions and basic descriptive statistics (mean, median, and standard deviation). Non-parametric tests (Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis H) were used for ordinal and quantitative variables, while correlations were assessed using Spearman's ρ coefficient. All analyses were performed at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

a) Perceived importance and benefits of critical thinking

Teachers were asked to assess the importance of critical thinking (CT) in the contemporary social, economic, and environmental context, which constitute the three pillars of sustainable development. Respondents most often indicated that CT protects against manipulation and persuasion (41.8%) and enables the recognition of falsehoods, misinformation, and fake news (37.6%). About one-third (31.5%) stated that CT helps in formulating constructive criticism, and one in four teachers (26.3%) considered it essential for self-monitoring and planning professional development. Nearly one-fifth (19.7%) believed that CT supports the solving of complex problems. Other responses (e.g., improving communication, supporting independent opinion formation) were selected by fewer than

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10% of respondents. No significant relationships were observed between these responses and independent variables such as gender, workplace, or subject taught.

b) Teachers' preparedness to develop CT

On a five-point scale (1 = completely unprepared; 5 = very well prepared), the median level of teachers' readiness to develop critical thinking skills in students was M = 3.18 (SD = 0.97; Median = 3.0), which reflects a moderate level of preparedness. Almost half (47.9%) of respondents reported moderate preparation, 26.3% good preparation, and only 7.5% very good preparation. Meanwhile, 13.1% considered themselves poorly prepared, and 5.2% completely unprepared. There were no significant differences in preparation between men and women (U = 4467.5, p = .203) or among teachers with different levels of teaching experience (p > .05).

c) Self-assessment of critical thinking

When asked to assess their own CT skills, most respondents rated them as average or sufficient for their profession (27.7% each). About one-quarter (25.8%) expressed a desire to further develop their CT skills, while 11.7% rated their CT level as too low and only 6.1% as very high. A positive and statistically significant correlation was found between CT self-assessment and the willingness to develop CT in students (Spearman's ρ = .316, $p < .001$), which suggests that teachers who rate their CT more highly also feel more confident in developing it. Male teachers tended to rate their critical thinking skills slightly higher than female teachers (M = 3.46 vs. 3.27; U = 4918.0, $p = .042$), although the effect size was small.

d) Perceived impact of CT on students' educational success

Respondents generally attached high importance to CT for student learning outcomes (M = 4.06, Median = 4.0). In fact, 34.3% rated the impact as "very high" and 39.4% as "high," while 23.0% considered it moderate. Only 3.8% viewed the impact as low or insignificant. The Kruskal–Wallis analysis showed a significant effect of teaching experience (H(5) = 13.90, $p = .016$): teachers with more than 25 years of experience perceived

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the impact of CT on achievement as greater (Mdn = 4.39) compared to teachers with 11–15 years of experience (Mdn = 3.76; U = 393.0, adj. p = .026). No significant effect of gender or workplace was found.

e) Barriers to developing critical thinking

Teachers most often highlighted low student motivation (38.0%), low teacher motivation (37.6%), and a lack of methodological competence (36.2%) as the main barriers to developing critical thinking. Other notable obstacles included an overloaded curriculum (30.5%), a lack of appropriate teaching materials (22.5%), and students' insufficient logical-thinking skills (21.6%). The results indicate that both systemic and individual factors hinder the effective promotion of critical thinking in schools.

Table 2 presents the benefits and barriers to developing CT as reported by the teachers who participated in the study.

Table 2. Benefits and barriers to developing CT according to teachers

Category	Response	% of respondents
Benefits	Protects against manipulation/persuasion	41.8
	Helps recognize fake news/disinformation	37.6
	Builds constructive criticism	31.5
	Supports self-management and personal development	26.3
	Helps solve complex problems	19.7
	Improves communication and decision-making	<10
Barriers	Lack of student motivation	38.0
	Lack of teacher motivation	37.6
	Lack of methodological competence	36.2
	Curriculum overload/time constraints	30.5
	Lack of materials	22.5
	Low student logical-thinking skills	21.6

Note. Multiple responses were allowed.
Source: own research

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f) Willingness to participate in training

Almost all respondents expressed interest in training aimed at improving CT instruction: 46.0% answered "definitely yes" and 43.2% "rather yes" (M = 4.32; Median = 4.0). Female teachers showed a significantly greater willingness to participate in training compared to male teachers (U = 5085.0, p = .0019). Readiness to participate in training was not correlated with the level of preparation (ρ = .028, p = .689), indicating that teachers at all levels of readiness are open to professional development. Nevertheless, teachers with less experience (<10 years) demonstrated slightly greater motivation to participate in training than teachers with more than 25 years of experience (Mdn = 4.71 vs. 4.27). Table 3 presents teachers' readiness, perceived impact, CT self-assessment, and willingness to participate in training.

Table 3. Teachers' preparedness, perceived impact, self-assessed CT and willingness to participate in training

Variable	M	Mdn	SD	Scale range	% Low (1–2)	% Moderate (3)	% High (4–5)
Preparedness to develop CT	3.18	3.0	0.97	1–5	18.3	47.9	33.8
Self-assessed CT	3.32	3.0	0.91	1–5	17.8	55.4	26.8
Perceived impact of CT on student success	4.06	4.0	0.88	1–5	3.8	23.0	73.6
Willingness to participate in CT training	4.32	4.0	0.81	1–5	2.3	8.5	89.2

Note. Higher means indicate stronger agreement or greater perceived preparedness/impact. CT = critical thinking.
Source: own research

g) Protective function of CT in the media context

A large majority of teachers (66%) considered CT to be *very* protective against manipulation and risks associated with new media use, while 26.7% rated it as *moderately* protective and 7.3% as *weakly* protective. Teachers working in large cities were significantly more likely to perceive CT as a protective factor than those in small towns (Mdn = 4.74 vs. 4.46; U = 4321.0, p = .041). This suggests greater media awareness among educators in urban environments.

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Overall, the data indicate that teachers highly value critical thinking but often feel inadequately prepared to teach it effectively. The results highlight a gap between awareness and practical competences in teaching CT; significant links between CT self-assessment and teaching confidence; gender differences in motivation for training; and the need for targeted professional development, especially for less experienced teachers.

Table 2. Group differences by gender, workplace, and seniority (nonparametric tests)

Variable	Test	Test statistic	p-value	Direction of difference / Comment
Preparedness (F vs. M)	Mann–Whitney U	4467.5	.203	n.s. (no significant difference)
Willingness to participate in training (F vs. M)	Mann–Whitney U	5085.0	**.0019**	Women > Men
Self-assessed CT (F vs. M)	Mann–Whitney U	4918.0	**.042**	Men > Women (small effect)
Perceived impact of CT × Workplace	Kruskal–Wallis H(2)	4.69	.096	n.s.

Source: own research

Discussion and conclusions

"Throughout nearly 300 years of policymaking in the United States, educators have promoted eight broad goals of schooling: basic academic skills, critical thinking and problem solving, social skills and work ethic, citizenship, physical health, emotional health, the arts and literature, and preparation for skilled employment" (Rothstein, Wilder, & Jacobsen, 2007, p. 8). This quotation alone shows that critical thinking is currently considered an extremely important competence.

The results of the survey highlight the key role of teachers in developing this competence in today's global information society. The majority of teachers surveyed (more than 66%) consider critical thinking an important factor in protecting against media manipulation and supporting students' educational success. This is in line with international

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research demonstrating that critical thinking skills are crucial for functioning in a complex, globalized world (Brookfield, 2012; Facione, 1990). In addition, a study conducted in Chile by Martín Cáceres and colleagues (2020) concluded that "critical thinking skills are a stronger predictor of successful life decisions than other factors, such as intelligence" (p. 1).

One of the key findings of the survey concerns teachers' self-assessment of their critical thinking competences. Only 6.1% of respondents rated their CT level as very high, which indicates the need for further development of this skill. These results support Halpern's (1998) observations, which emphasize that developing critical thinking requires not only knowledge but also appropriate strategies and a conscious approach to teaching.

Similarly, the findings regarding teachers' preparation to develop CT among students are concerning: only 7.5% of respondents feel very well prepared for this task. According to Aliakbari and Sadeghdaghighi's (2013) study, the lack of appropriate methodological tools and teaching materials can be serious barriers to teaching critical thinking. Comparable results were reported by Wei Liu (2023), who found no significant effect of gender or professional experience on teachers' perceptions of CT. However, teachers who lacked confidence and clear strategies for teaching CT had difficulty nurturing these skills among students.

The respondents identified several barriers to developing CT among students, including a lack of motivation among students (38%) and teachers (37.6%) and a lack of methodological competence (36.2%). These findings are consistent with the global literature, where similar factors are cited as obstacles to implementing CT in classrooms (Behar-Horenstein & Niu, 2011). At the same time, as Choy and Cheah (2009) point out, teachers' attitudes and their ability to model CT are crucial to the development of this competence in students. Similarly, Ab Kadir (2018) suggests that both teachers' knowledge and attitudes about CT are essential to promoting it in classrooms.

The survey results show that teachers recognize the great importance of CT in managing and protecting themselves from misinformation. More than 41.8% of respondents considered CT to be crucial for protection

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against manipulation, which is in line with van Dijk's (2020) findings emphasizing the role of critical analysis in understanding networked reality.

However, only 17.7% of surveyed teachers identified CT as a helpful skill in solving complex problems. This result points to a potential gap in teachers' awareness of how CT can be applied in decision-making. This issue was discussed extensively by Rieckmann (2012) in the context of education for sustainable development. Augustine Enabueale (2011), on the other hand, stresses that CT includes elements such as analyzing and evaluating information, drawing reasoned conclusions, considering different perspectives, distinguishing fact from false information, engaging in inquiry, and applying higher-order thinking to problem solving.

The results of the study underscore the need for training and workshops that help teachers develop their CT competencies. Brookfield (2012) suggests that such training should focus on practical techniques to support CT instruction. Similarly, Arthur L. Costa (2001) argues that teacher training should emphasize practical teaching methods, such as interacting with students and providing feedback because these aspects are more important than the content of instruction itself. It is also necessary to create and provide teachers with teaching materials that support CT development. As Facione (1990) notes, structured learning tools can significantly influence the quality of critical thinking instruction.

There is a clear need for further research in this area, particularly on the specific needs of teachers in Poland in the context of global educational challenges. In conclusion, the results of this study contribute to international discussions on the importance of CT in education and point to the need for comprehensive teacher support in this domain.

Recommendations for educational practice

Based on the research conducted, the following implications for educational practice can be proposed to improve the development of CT among both teachers and students:

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a) Reform of teacher training programs

- Introduction of compulsory CT modules: Teacher training programs should include practical courses and workshops on teaching critical thinking, including strategies for developing this competence in students. These classes should focus on modeling CT in didactic practice, not just on theory.
- Use of activating methods: Courses for teachers should employ problem-based learning (PBL) and case studies, which require information analysis, argumentation, and decision-making.
- Training on misinformation and fake news: Teacher training should include the analysis of disinformation and fake news so that teachers can effectively cultivate students' ability to assess the credibility of information.

b) Evaluation and development of teachers' competences

- Implementation of self-assessment tools: Teacher education and professional development should incorporate self-assessment of CT skills (e.g., through questionnaires and evaluations).
- Regular professional development: Continuous training opportunities should be offered for teachers at different stages of their careers.

c) Implementation of changes in education policy

- Mandatory CT training for teachers: As part of their professional development, teachers should participate in continuing education courses designed to develop CT skills. Such training should span different subjects and educational levels, as critical thinking is not limited to a single discipline.
- Provision of teaching materials: Teachers should be supported with ready-made lesson plans and instructional resources to facilitate CT development.
- Creation of educational platforms: Educational platforms should be developed to provide materials, examples of analyses, and interactive exercises.

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d) Modification of the core curriculum

- Increased emphasis on CT: Official educational documents and curricula should place greater emphasis on CT. Skills such as information analysis and argumentation should be integrated into assessments of student progress.
- School-level changes: Schools should create environments that promote CT, for example, by introducing debates, research projects, and teamwork opportunities so that students can regularly practice CT. Teacher-leaders who implement CT-oriented methods should be supported in sharing their expertise with colleagues.

e) Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness

- Regular evaluation: Schools should implement ongoing evaluation of CT curricula and conduct research on the effectiveness of teaching methods and their impact on student development.

Method limitations

Like any research approach, the one we used also has its limitations. First, the data collected in the study were declarative (self-reported), that is, we relied on teachers' statements regarding their perception of CT competence. In future research using more in-depth qualitative methods, we will seek to understand the meaning that teachers assign to CT: what their beliefs, understandings, and conceptualizations of CT are.

In addition, it would be worthwhile to use a sampling method other than convenience sampling in future studies, because with this nonprobabilistic approach, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. Nevertheless, our study provides valuable insight into teachers' perceptions of critical thinking at different levels of education and offers a useful starting point for further discussion and research.

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Conflict of interest

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Educational ideas within the Peasant Movement in the early 20th century: Three engaged voices

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The aim of this paper is to present the key ideas and proposals for educational work that emerged within the Polish peasant movement in the first half of the 20th century. It examines the principal educational and upbringing concepts advanced during this period by three prominent peasant movement activists: Stanisław Thugutt, Juliusz Poniatowski, and Ignacy Solarz. The basic research problem considered in the article is the question of which pedagogical achievements of these three activists can be considered timeless and valuable today.

Research methods: The study mainly makes use of original publications by the selected peasant-movement activists, as well as the methodological assumptions of the social history of education.

Process of argumentation: Based on an analysis of the collected source material, an attempt was made to identify the most important educational ideas proposed by each of the three rural educators.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: In total, twelve educational ideas and proposals formulated by Thugutt, Poniatowski, and Solarz are identified, many of which may be regarded as timeless and still relevant today.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The author argues that the pedagogical achievements of Thugutt, Poniatowski, and Solarz should be recognized as an important illustration of Polish contributions to the New Education Movement and considered a valuable and still relevant component of Polish educational heritage.

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Introduction

The views of Polish activists of the peasant movement during the first half of the 20th century offer inspiration for organizing many aspects of contemporary social life. Many of these activists also advanced influential ideas on education, and some had the opportunity to put their educational concepts into practice. Among them were Stanisław Thugutt (1873–1941), Juliusz Poniatowski (1886–1975), and Ignacy Solarz (1891–1940). Each was driven by a desire to improve the cultural and economic conditions of rural Poland (and beyond) through extensive educational initiatives. Although their visions for achieving this goal differed, all three recognized education as a priority for the socio-economic development of the entire country. The purpose of this paper is not to present or evaluate the entirety of the educational contributions made by these prominent figures of the peasant movement. Rather, its more modest goal is to identify those aspects of the educational ideas and practical suggestions of Thugutt, Poniatowski, and Solarz that can today be regarded not merely as interesting yet limited historical proposals for rural education, but as an important part of Poland's national educational heritage, worthy of broad recognition for their universal significance.

Stanisław Thugutt (1873–1941) – a politician with an interest in education

The educational views of Stanisław Thugutt, now largely forgotten, are particularly interesting and worthy of wider dissemination today due to their contemporary relevance. Even after World War II, Thugutt was regarded by peasant movement activists as one of the foremost leaders of the interwar period. In the ensuing decades of the Polish People's Republic, however, his role was marginalized, and, knowledge of his political, social, and educational ideas gradually diminished. Nevertheless, these ideas merit closer examination.

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a) (Inter)regional education as "building Poland from the ground up"

Stanisław Thugutt was one of the educators who had a significant impact on shaping domestic concepts of regional and patriotic education, as well as on the development of the Polish tourist and sightseeing movement. His work in the *Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze* (Polish Sightseeing Society), established in 1906, and as editor of its periodical *Ziemia* (Land), founded in 1910, positions him among the key precursors in these fields in Poland. A review of his sightseeing writings, published even before World War I, confirms the enduring value of Thugutt's contributions in this area (Marcinkowska, 2006).

It is particularly noteworthy that he emphasized the importance of educational efforts related to learning about one's region and country, because "different parts [of Poland] today present an infinite richness of shades and contrasts" (Boruta, 1911).[1] Another idea, highly relevant today, reads:

> We are not the owners of these things but merely their custodians, and we should pass them on to our successors in as good, if not better, condition as we received them from our ancestors (Boruta, 1910).

As these quotations show, it would be worthwhile today to remind society of Thugutt's views on sightseeing and related matters. At present, he remains almost entirely unknown among educators specializing in regional studies, patriotic education, or intercultural education, specialists who are largely responsible for providing regional education to young Poles. Why, then, should they rely primarily on foreign models? Poland itself has a rich domestic legacy in this area, exemplified by the works of Thugutt from the early 20th century.

b) Education for grassroots social self-organization

Thugutt devoted considerable attention in his work to popularizing and developing the Polish cooperative movement. In the 1930s, he was

[1] All quotations in this paper are the author's own translations.

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an active member and president of the *Towarzystwo Kooperatystów* (Cooperative Society) and also directed the *Spółdzielczy Instytut Naukowy* (Cooperative Scientific Institute). Among his educational initiatives, it seems that only his endeavors in education for cooperativism and the promotion of the cooperative movement are relatively well known (see e.g., Maliszewski, 2010a, pp. 111–126). He regarded these activities not only as an opportunity to effectively raise the standard of living of economically disadvantaged communities, initially in the Polish countryside and later among other social groups and classes, but also an important instrument for building democracy and civil society (see e.g., Thugutt, 1934).

Thugutt's views on education for cooperativism remain highly relevant today, as they promote grassroots self-organization in local communities and society as a whole, while emphasizing the importance of community life. They are undoubtedly worthy of further dissemination.

c) Self-education as a path to personal agency

Thugutt was also a strong advocate of self-education. In the last years of his life, he was regarded as one of the main mentors and educators of rural youth during the interwar period, which made his contemporary proposals in the field of educational practice highly significant socially. It was precisely through his pamphlet *Listy do Młodego Przyjaciela* (Letters to a Young Friend), which promoted the idea of self-education, that almost an entire generation of young Polish peasants was shaped. The significance of *Letters…* in the 1930s and immediately after the war was so great that the booklet came to be known as the "catechism of rural youth." The publication functioned as a kind of educational guide addressed to young villagers (Thugutt, 1st ed.: 1929; 2nd ed.: 1939; 3rd ed.: 1944; 4th ed.: 1946; 5th ed.: 2002), although many of its recommendations could just as well be applied beyond rural communities. The author emphasized the guidebook-like character of the entire work in the foreword. He also noted that the addressees of his *Letters…* could include all those "who have already gained some education, but who do not quite know what to do with this treasure […], [for] the young fighter

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feels lonely and abandoned, lost among a thousand paths, not knowing which one leads to the goal" (Thugutt, 2002, p. 9).

Let us therefore devote somewhat more attention to *Letters…* and attempt to recall its most important guidelines.

Letter I: Learn so that you will not be a beast of burden, but a conscious creator of a new life.

Stanisław Thugutt, relying largely on the concept of self-education, makes the following appeal: "to learn means to understand what is happening around you and when things go badly, to find an effective remedy for the ailment" (p. 12). The author does not stop at this general appeal but goes on to provide specific guidance: what should one learn, and why? He emphasizes two main points:

> Learn as a farmer. Learn no less diligently as a citizen […] No one will give you advice for free; it is best to manage on your own. You want to be a steward of Poland. Rightly so, but you must know all her pains, worries, and needs (p. 13).

Thus, as one can see, civic education for Thugutt is no less important than vocational education.

Letter II: Organize yourself so that you are not a heap of loose sand, but a dam against the storm.

In the next letter, Thugutt includes an appeal for the self-organization of local communities. Only the unification of a group of people around a common idea or cause allows its weaker members to express their opinions in a way that others must take seriously. He also teaches elements of social group interaction, such as the ability to engage in discussion and to persuade others in public debate.

By advocating the independent organization of members of the local community, he calls for building that community through its own efforts (p. 14). It is worth noting that the slogan "building Poland from the ground up" appears repeatedly in Thugutt's writings (Thugutt, 1984, p. 73).

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He does not, however, promise easy success, because "one must awaken the blind and the deaf, fight against selfishness and abuse" (Thugutt, 2002, p. 15), and he urges: "shout aloud, fearing nothing, for the truth is on your side" (p. 15).

Letter III: Let money be your servant, not your master.

Thugutt encourages finding effective ways to improve one's own wealth, while emphasizing that accumulating property must not become the ultimate goal in life. He writes in the first paragraph of the third letter, "I will not urge you to remain in poverty […]. On the contrary, I advise you—acquire wealth" (Thugutt, 2002, p. 18). He then explains that prosperity can be achieved through greed or through justice, and he clearly supports the latter method (pp. 19–20).

Letter IV: Be yourself and have faith in yourself.

The guiding idea of the fourth letter is Thugutt's call to be oneself and not to seek the approval of others: to trust in one's own strength and to maintain hope for success, both personal and for the entire community: "Therefore I tell you: go alone, looking to no one […]. Purify your soul from all mold, from bad memories of slavery and decline; purify it until you reach the water that gives life, the healthy and pure […] strength" (p. 23).

Letter V: Be good and just, and never cease fighting evil.

According to Thugutt, goodness and justice can be realized only through interaction with others: "To be truly good means to wish good for all. Whoever is good has eyes and ears, and above all a heart constantly open to all suffering and misery" (p. 24). He further adds, "If there were no people in the world who […] fight for justice and cannot tolerate injustice, this whole world would long ago have rotted like carrion" (p. 25).

Letter VI: Be courageous, for your path is long.

Stanisław Thugutt also calls for perseverance and resilience in the face of life's adversities. He warns, however, that it is all too easy to be misled by an illusory sense of strength:

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> At times it may seem to you that victory is easy and certain. […] Who could stand against you? And yet you are both right and mistaken. There is in you a truly unconquerable power, but when it comes to action, you yourself know how unpracticed that power still is (p. 27).

Letter VII: Never forget Poland.

The entire collection of *Letters…* concludes with a call to remember the homeland unceasingly, an impassioned encouragement to cultivate deep patriotism. Thugutt writes, among other things: "This is your home—do not destroy it. […] Do not lose faith in Poland, for beyond Poland there is nothing for you" (pp. 29–30). For Thugutt, this appeal to cultivate patriotism within oneself and others is closely linked to the injunction to serve Poland with one's whole life, without regard for personal gain (p. 30).

There is no doubt that the recommendations contained in *Letters to a Young Friend* could just as well define the aims and directions of self-improvement for people today. Their remarkable freshness makes them worth revisiting. As the above remarks show, Stanisław Thugutt's educational views in the three highlighted areas have not lost their relevance. Even today, his ideas deserve to be recognized as both timely and socially significant.

Juliusz Poniatowski (1886–1975) – politician and educator

Juliusz Poniatowski was not only a politician but also a social activist, scholar, and educator. In the field of educational studies, however, his educational views remain almost entirely unknown. Today, he is mentioned in textbooks on the history of education primarily as the curator of the elite Krzemieniec Lyceum in Volhynia, which he directed between 1927 and 1934 (Maliszewski, 2010b, pp. 294–311; Szmyt & Stroiński, eds., 2015). Yet his educational legacy is richer and more valuable. He addressed numerous educational issues affecting rural inhabitants, such as agricultural schools, problems of agricultural training, folk high schools, rural libraries, and more. At the same time, many of the problems that he engaged with

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extended well beyond the rural sphere. His reflections on the modern school, for instance, were shaped over the years by three distinct contexts: the Second Polish Republic, when, as a politician, he sought to develop schooling and out-of-school education in rural areas; Western Europe, where he remained after the war, observing local school reforms; and the Polish People's Republic, to which he returned in order to pursue academic and educational work related to the modernization of agriculture. Drawing on these broad experiences, Poniatowski formulated educational ideas that were unique among Polish educators of his time. He was able to discern then what many would only recognize years later.

Let us now turn to those of Poniatowski's reflections on the school that retain universal significance.

a) The school as an institution "perfecting continuity"

Poniatowski repeatedly emphasized that the school is a component of its social environment. For this reason, it should serve the community in which it operates, drawing on the natural strengths and capacities of that local setting. He also stressed that the school is a dynamic institution, undergoing constant transformation, since at every stage of social development, it is necessary to seek optimal solutions suited to the needs of the time (Poniatowski, 1985, p. 183).

He also cautioned against making overly abrupt changes when modernizing the education system, arguing that school reforms should be carried out gradually and consistently in accordance with a coherent, carefully thought-out plan. The guiding principle for reform practice should be "perfecting continuity!" (Hermaszewski, 1977, p. 44), because, as he explained, "if a bad school is ineffective, this does not at all mean that the school as such is a bad instrument" (Poniatowski, 1963). Changes should be made toward ensuring that the school once again becomes " a school in the service of life" (Poniatowski, 1931, pp. 3–4). It is important to note that he applied this principle both to the modernization of individual schools and to broader, systemic reforms.

As he further emphasized, the most effective schools are those that, while perfecting continuity, do not forget their social mission. They should

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be capable of collaborating with the local community, including families, and of undertaking the task of organizing out-of-school education within that community. As he observed, "influence on adult society, beyond the youth, must be treated as an absolute obligation" (Poniatowski, 1931, p. 6).

b) The necessity of skillfully linking theory with practice

Today, much attention in discussions among educators and policymakers about the condition of the modern school is devoted to shifting the focus of curricula toward the practical application of knowledge acquired in school. Juliusz Poniatowski, an early advocate of such change, proposed similar ideas decades ago: "Requirements have increased, and the time when the simple transmission of accumulated knowledge and tradition was the main goal of the school has passed. Today, goals have multiplied, and conflicts among them are apparent" (Poniatowski, 1985, p. 181).

His approach to the tasks of the modern school was undoubtedly shaped by his connections with rural areas and agricultural education. Viewing educational issues from the perspective of the countryside, where the need for practical orientation in educational processes was far more evident than elsewhere, led him to important generalizations. His students recalled this, writing, "Everywhere, where, unlike the mass processing of inert material, there is a need to treat each unique and unrepeatable case individually, the preference for actions in the style of 'unity of mind and hand' is natural" (Górecki & Groszyński, 1985, p. 19).

This was a clear advocacy for skillfully linking theory with practice, limiting the school's role as a repository of encyclopedic knowledge, and promoting knowledge and skills with practical application in both professional work and social life.

c) Individualization of the approach to each pupil

In describing the student as a "unique, unrepeatable case," Juliusz Poniatowski advocated for individualized approaches to education, positioning himself as one of the precursors of an idea that remains highly relevant in contemporary educational reforms and debates. Polish society and the state, concerned with the development of their citizens,

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> should undertake the education of citizens "on the whole front." Any narrowing of this activity diminishes its chances […]. Every ambitious nation that refuses to be relegated to the role of imitator of others' achievements, seeking to avoid the position of a poor relative and to participate in creating values of universal human culture, strives not to lose its "pearls." [For] the emergence of exceptional abilities is the result of a very diverse combination of factors and often occurs contrary to expectations. (Poniatowski, 1962, p. 75)

Everyone should be given a chance, and no society should allow itself to neglect the search for and development of talents. To bring out the most valuable qualities in each pupil, one must approach each individual separately. Such far-reaching empowerment, supported by a carefully selected curriculum, teaching methods, and educational activities, provides an opportunity to prepare students for adult life as "complete individuals," open to the future and to others, and adaptable in a changing labor market. Importantly, "the essence of the school's achievement is [also] to ensure that the student wants and knows how to continue learning" (Poniatowski, 1985, p. 75).

d) The teacher feeling "the anxiety of continuous improvement"

Particularly interesting and strikingly relevant today are Poniatowski's views on the teacher. They may be considered among the most compelling pedeutological concepts in the history of twentieth-century Polish educational thought. He repeatedly emphasized the need to care for the condition of Polish teachers, as they are largely the guarantors of a good school: "The teaching staff must naturally constitute the primary concern in preparing any school reform" (Poniatowski, 1985, p. 139). According to his proposals, the teaching staff of every school should consist exclusively of teachers who are creatively active, well-educated, and socially engaged, for "we have a deep contempt for preachy justifications of idleness and fear of risk" (Poniatowski, 1943, pp. 32–33).

He acknowledged the economic constraints of the teaching profession and regretted that insufficient financial resources are all too often used as an excuse for a lack of motivation for self-improvement, which,

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in turn, contributes to the poor condition of the profession. Yet it is every teacher's duty to enhance their qualifications. According to Poniatowski, each teacher, regardless of circumstances, must "feel the anxiety of continuous improvement" (Hermaszewski, 1977, p. 44).

These elements outline a framework for school education that remains remarkably relevant today. Despite being largely forgotten by contemporary scholars, Poniatowski recognized these principles decades ago. In the context of modern Polish debates on shaping the contemporary school, it is worthwhile to recall, even briefly, his figure and the most important educational ideas that he promoted. Among them, we may find inspiration for our own reflections and initiatives.

Concluding remarks on Poniatowski's concept of the modern school should note that he viewed the school as one element of a broader educational system: important, but not the only one. He emphasized that a modern society requires coordinated actions by multiple educational actors to fully utilize opportunities for optimal development (Poniatowski, 1985, p. 184).

Ignacy Solarz (1891–1940) – an educator with an interest in politics

The educational views of Ignacy Solarz, particularly his reflections on the place and role of folk high schools in educating rural Polish youth, are the best known among those discussed in this paper. This is not the place to examine them in detail, as readers may consult the extensive literature on the subject. Instead, this paper highlights only a few elements of his educational thought that remain inspiring from a pedagogical perspective, even today (see, e.g., Nowicki, 1947, pp. 10–14; Turos, 1983; Maliszewski, 2023, pp. 63–80).

a) Full participation in civil society as the goal of education

This postulate, strikingly relevant today, was most fully articulated by Ignacy Solarz in a kind of educational manifesto, *Wiejski Uniwersytet*

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Orkanowy (The Rural High School named after Orkan), published by the Instytut Oświaty Dorosłych (Warsaw Institute for Adult Education) in the second half of the 1930s. Already on the very first page of this work, there appears a statement that may be regarded as the credo of his entire educational work:

> To bring the rural masses into an active and leading creative role in history. From the "social groundwork" to transform them into a personal, self-reliant force in every field of culture. To cultivate within the rural masses the ability to realize a mature, highly ethical, resourceful democracy (Solarz, 1937, p. 1).

This may be regarded as an early prototype of today's highly relevant idea of empowering all members of society as citizens. Indeed, numerous Polish (and international) works in the social sciences contain similar demands, and many distinguished educators, sociologists, philosophers, and political scientists have articulated related ideas. Why, then, should we not acknowledge today that one of the precursors of this socially powerful and still relevant concept of building civil society was none other than Ignacy Solarz and that his call for "education towards the realization of a mature, highly ethical, resourceful democracy" remains a profoundly significant social postulate, even in the twenty-first century?

b) Being an educator as passion and vocation

The ancient Greek principle that one must remain faithful to one's declared convictions, regardless of the consequences, ought to be constantly affirmed through the life choices of any educator animated by genuine passion. Today, it seems that too many educators and teachers forget this demanding rule. Yet it is precisely this principle that should once again be incorporated into the educational canon of our time. This was exactly how Solarz conducted his educational work several decades ago. One extant description of this outstanding peasant movement educator captures his personal (and educational) stance with striking accuracy:

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> At the head of a modest high school, hidden away in a remote village, stands an educator, thinker, and poet who, through commands born of deep reflection on the fate of humanity, creates a type of worker striving to transform himself, his people, his nation, and humanity. Word and deed united in daily toil. (Wiktor, 1983, p. 370)

Many similar testimonies could be cited. Yet if we agree on the need to reintroduce into the world of education the principle of consistency between declared ideals and lived practice, then, alongside figures such as Comenius and Pestalozzi, and in the Polish tradition, Janusz Korczak and Maria Grzegorzewska, we should also recall and more widely disseminate the figure of Ignacy Solarz. His life consistently demonstrates that to be an educator is, above all, to embody an irrepressible passion for action: it is a vocation.

c) Full empowerment of the pupil as an inalienable principle of educational practice

As many authors emphasize, a key attribute of Ignacy Solarz's educational thought was the full partnership between pupil and teacher (Stopińska-Pająk, 2010, p. 19). For Solarz, dialogue, student self-government, shared decision-making on the curriculum, the incorporation of cooperative practices, and the collective organization of daily life (dormitory, meals, housekeeping, etc.) were all constitutive of this empowerment. His educational concepts, which sought to empower all participants in the educational process, represent a methodological approach that extends far beyond the folk high schools which he successively directed in Szyce near Kraków and in Gać Przeworska. Their significance is universal.

d) Cooperation between the educational institution and the social environment as a duty

A particularly strong theme in Ignacy Solarz's thought was his insistence that every educational institution be rooted in the local community in which it operates through the development of a wide range of social connections. A creative and innovative educational institution must

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cooperate with its immediate (and broader) social environment not only to demonstrate its social usefulness, but also to cultivate in its pupils a sense of civic engagement and responsibility for their local communities. As Solarz emphasized, an educational institution "must be rooted […] not only in the life of the entire country, but also in that of the nearest neighborhood" ([Solarz], n.d., p. 1).

Today, when cooperation between educational institutions and their social environments has become one of the central principles of educational theory and practice, it is worth recalling that we also have valuable Polish models in this regard. Solarz's concept of community-based work deserves broader recognition in educational circles.

e) Creative use of the global educational heritage as a value

The last, though by no means least important, aspect of Solarz's educational thought that deserves attention is his ability to creatively engage with the educational achievements of other nations. His concept of the folk high school was, in fact, a creative adaptation of the "School for Life" idea developed by the Nordic thinker Nikolai Grundtvig. At the same time, the institution that he created was neither a simple nor an uncritical borrowing of Scandinavian models, nor an attempt to implement them rigidly in the social realities of the Polish countryside. It must be stressed that his reception of Nordic models was only the first step in developing an educational formula suited to the needs of the Polish people. That formula had to be adapted to respond to the specific educational requirements of the community to which it was addressed. Solarz was fully aware of this. His approach to incorporating foreign educational innovations may rightly be regarded as exemplary (Solarzowa, 1985, p. 249).

The few ideas outlined above from Solarz's educational work demonstrate that he—like the two figures previously discussed in this study—can provide contemporary educators with a wide range of insights: from shaping the ideological inspirations and organizational-methodological foundations of educational institutions to designing their internal functioning and defining their relations with the surrounding community.

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Conclusions

In the foregoing discussion, admittedly selective, twelve areas of educational and upbringing concern have been drawn from the views of three prominent Polish figures of the past: Stanisław Thugutt—a politician with an educational inclination; Juliusz Poniatowski—a politician and educator; and Ignacy Solarz—an educator with a political inclination. The first emphasized self-organization, self-education, and learning through everyday life experiences, that is, informal education. The second promoted schools and vocational training institutions (particularly agricultural ones), thereby focusing on the improvement of formal education. The third developed original concepts of the folk high school and youth associations, that is, non-formal education.

Taken together, the educational views of these three leading peasant movement activists reveal the extraordinary contemporary relevance of educational concepts formulated many decades ago. Many historians of education and educators will recognize in their writings and practical educational initiatives an effort to challenge the still-dominant post-Herbartian educational order of their time. In this context, Thugutt, Poniatowski, and Solarz may appear to today's readers, alongside such towering educational figures as John Dewey, Célestin Freinet, Ellen Key, Maria Montessori, and Helen Parkhurst, as Polish representatives of the ideologically rich reformist current in early twentieth-century education: the New Education Movement.

It seems likely that deeper explorations of the Polish educational heritage from earlier historical periods will continue to yield new and inspiring "discoveries," particularly if we, as educators and historians of education, succeed in moving beyond the familiar, almost canonical sets of figures and texts from the past. As the educational sciences continue to seek grounding in history, it is also worth considering the educational ideas that emerged within the broadly understood Polish peasant movement (see the views of the figures discussed here). Both educational theorists and practitioners, whether concerned with modern visions of formal education, non-formal education, or self-education, will surely find in such "discoveries" a wealth of inspiration for shaping their own educational concepts and practices.

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The word as a pedagogical sign: Lessons from fairy tales

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): Education—in all its manifestations—is a process that enables people to grow and improve. In educational institutions, this process takes place through teaching, understood as the transmission of knowledge through signs; and for the teacher, the most significant sign is the word. Its pedagogical power is so great and mysterious that, when used well, it educates. To explain this aspect, this paper aims to provide a theoretical discussion of the educational power of words through fairy tales. Specifically, we seek to identify the difference between education and teaching, the importance of words in both processes, and to present an example from a case study in which the narrated words of stories convey educational elements because they reflect goodness, truth, and beauty.

Research methods: This research is qualitative in nature, and the methods used included bibliographic review and analysis. In addition, data from a previous study of our own—a case study based on a survey technique—were incorporated and valued for the purposes of this work.

Process of argumentation: The argumentation process was characterized by the identification of central ideas, the relationships between concepts, and examples drawn from the results of earlier research.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: Among the most significant findings, we note that the influence of stories has withstood the test of time due to their richness, depth, and meaning. This influence emerges through experiences of reading or listening to stories, the words associated with these readings, identification with the characters, and the reflection of human nature expressed in them.

***Keywords*:**
education, teaching, words, fairy tales, good, truth, beauty

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Conclusions and/or recommendations: In conclusion, we find that stories exert a great influence on people because of the beauty, truth, and goodness that they convey. The word that emerges from them becomes a necessary sign in education, which leads people toward their personal fulfillment.

Introduction

Plato famously defined education as the task "to endow the body and soul with all possible beauty and perfection"—that is, to help a person, through self-cultivation, reach their fullest splendor by growing in different dimensions (intellectual, emotional, volitional, social, etc.). This means that education enables the perfection of what is most human in the human person. At the beginning of *Politics*, Aristotle says that "of the living only man has speech" (I, c. 1, 1253a 10), which allows us to recognize that the word is essential to the perfective development of the human being. What place, then, does the word occupy in this process? "At the origin of education is the word" (Martínez, 2002, p. 10).

To explore this idea, we draw on a literary form: fairy tales. If stories serve as the medium through which these words are expressed, we ask the following research questions: What influence do these words have on those who receive them? Are all words educational? To address these questions, this paper aims to offer a theoretical reflection on the educational power of language through the lens of fairy tales. To this end, we identify the concepts of education and teaching and present the role of language in each of these processes. We then examine the words found in fairy tales as carriers of educational potential. The pedagogical power of words drawn from fairy tales can support the educator's mission, who "fully exercises his magisterium when he enables the learner to freely choose to lead himself toward goodness, truth, and beauty" (Ballesteros, 1987).

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Education and teaching: The importance of the word

Does all teaching educate? How important are words in this process? To contextualize this topic, we will examine education, teaching, and the role of words. In every society, there are various educational institutions, foremost among them the family and, subsequently, the school. The educational mission of both is indisputable, "because the soul goes to Hades with nothing but its education and upbringing" (Plato, 107d). This leads us to agree with Caponnetto (2016, pp. 50–51), who observes that

> The salvation of men depends largely on how they have been raised. Because upbringing is the formation of the inner self and right conscience, of the most intimate and integrative part of the person, of the standards of conduct, and of the identifying style of all actions.

Education, then, is a form of help or service—an aid to a person so that, through self-direction toward the goods that perfect their nature, they may reach fulfillment (Ruiz Sánchez, 1978). In this sense, all education is conducive to personal improvement. In educational institutions, upbringing and education occur through teaching, and "what does it mean to teach if not to transmit knowledge? It means, in the first place, to provide (…) true judgments, clear perceptions and correct concepts" (Stein, 1923, p. 66). In other words, teaching is "the transmission [or communication] of knowledge through signs" (Hernández de Lamas, 2000, p. 8). Thus, teaching, essentially a pedagogical practice, has its roots in the signs through which reality is signified.

Regarding signs, Umberto Eco writes: "Everyone agrees on defining the sign as a physical unit produced by man or recognized as capable of functioning as an expression of something different" (1976, p. 13). This is why every teaching process involves three elements: the one who teaches, the one who learns, and the signified content, which is transmitted through signs. As we see, all education necessarily perfects the person, but the same cannot be said of teaching, because other factors and aims come into play. For example, education can help a person

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improve and grow in many aspects, while teaching may increase one's knowledge but not necessarily in ways that perfect the person, such as teaching someone how to steal, how to lie, or how to adopt a strong ideological bias.

This leads us to recognize, on the one hand, the need for correspondence between reality and the truth that is taught, and on the other hand, the importance of signs for the teacher, among which the most important is the word. When teaching is loaded with ideology, falsehoods, or does not reflect reality, "language, which should be the realm of truth, translucent, becomes an opaque reality that distances us from things" (Ferro, 2015). It is no coincidence that the Greeks gave the word such an important place in education. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," says the Gospel of John (1:1–18). These signs make explicit the extraordinarily high value of the word, for it founds and reveals reality. "And what is 'word'?" asks Komar (2005), to which he responds:

> The Greek term for "word" is lógos. Lógos means thought and word. Each thing has a meaning, and it is through this meaning that we can understand it. Beings have been made thanks to Meaning with a capital letter. To discover and penetrate it, [inner] silence is necessary (…) It is therefore necessary to be silent [internally] in order to discover meaning (p. 11).

Let us recall the words of the Book of Wisdom, later taken up again in the Christmas Liturgy: "For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, your all-powerful Word leapt from heaven." Thus, in order to teach, every educator must first contemplate so that they may later make known what has been contemplated. This means that the *verbum mentis*, or inner word, must occupy a primary place in those who will later communicate their teachings. All education is carried out through teaching, and teaching is mediated through the word. But for the process to be truly educational, this teaching must be perfective.

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The word that educates. Teaching through fairy tales

In the educational institutions that we are concerned with here (the family and the school), where both teaching and education are based on the word, there is a literary element that has a particularly significant place: fairy tales. We will therefore identify how the word that teaches—embodied in fairy tales—educates when it reflects what is good, beautiful, and true. When we speak of fairy tales—also called "marvelous tales"—we encounter a curious fact: they do not necessarily contain fairies. Their most characteristic elements are their structure, functions, and characters.

Possibly, their most distinctive characteristic is that these tales are as old as humanity itself and as contemporary as history itself. It is likely that there is no person in the world who has not heard or read one of these tales at some point in life, given the unimaginable breadth of their oral and written tradition. We will then analyze the influence that these stories can have on people and the impact they can exert on their own education. The marvelous tale presents, moreover, the structure of an extraordinarily serious and responsible adventure, for it is ultimately reduced to an initiatory scenario: initiatory trials (struggles against monsters, seemingly insurmountable obstacles, riddles to solve, impossible tasks to perform, etc.), the descent into hell or ascent to Heaven, or even death and resurrection are always encountered…. Its actual content refers to an extremely serious reality… (Eliade, 1968, p. 201). It is not without reason that Lewis (2000) cautions: "one day you will be old enough to read fairy tales again" (p. 3).

This reality, transmitted from the earliest years of life through the fantastic and the magical, is precisely what a child needs, as it shapes his or her early moral imagination through wonder. But not just any morality, "but the morality with the face of the auxiliary fairy of Beauty" (Anzoátegui, 1954, p. 99). The archetypal meanings and exemplary motifs imbued with meaning, help forge character, cultivate courage, and orient the child toward what is good and noble:

> The child will not only remember with admiration the character as a character, but also to the extent that the character is the living

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> embodiment of the values that move his/her childlike sensibility. Or to put it another way: to the extent that he/she is the incarnation of the archetypes (Pastoriza de Etchebarne, 1962, p. 202).

These stories, characterized by the hero's journey (Campbell, 1990), do nothing more than show the path of human life—the adventure of daily existence, the difficulties to be faced, and the possible solutions to be found. This is precisely the message that fairy tales convey to children: that the struggle against the serious difficulties of life is inevitable; it is an intrinsic part of human existence. But if one does not flee, and instead confronts them… one comes to master the obstacles and rises, at last, victorious (Bettelheim, 1980, p. 12). Frodo's poetry could well summarize all these mysteries of the heart:

"La copa de cerveza, el viento manso,
la quilla de navega,
la paz de la comarca solariega
con su verdor, su sol y su remanso.
Todo es ausencia, de penar me canso.
Todo dolor al alma no sosiega,
el odio de Sauron quebranta y siega,
tengo sed, voy herido ya no avanzo.
Pero vi las esfinges sobre el río,
testigo del pasado más glorioso,
del rey que vuelve a restaurar el brillo.
Entonces, Sam, contágiame tu brío,
vayamos hasta el fuego tenebroso,
sucumba el mal y quien forjó este anillo"

[The glass of beer, the gentle wind,
the sailing keel,
the peace of the ancestral region
with its greenery, its sun and its backwater.
Everything is absence, I grow weary of sorrow.

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No pain to the soul finds calm,
Sauron's hatred breaks and reaps,
I am thirsty, wounded, and can go no farther.
But I saw the sphinxes over the river,
witnesses of a most glorious past,
of the king who restores the shine again.
So, Sam, give me your spirit
let us go to the dark fire;
evil succumbs, and he who forged this ring.]
(Caponnetto, 2014, p. 74)

The fairy tale shows the darkness but also offers us the way to conquer it. As Chesterton (1998) said, such tales do not only present us with dragons; rather, they "offer a St. George to slay the dragon." Happy endings, always affirmative and optimistic, generate nothing but hope and openness to the transcendent. Do not the stories in which warriors cross forests and thresholds to reach their beloved speak of courage? Or of hope when fairy godmothers appear to help princesses who have suffered misfortune? Or of sorrow when orphaned girls must live under the dominion of their wicked stepmothers? Or of fidelity when a friend accompanies the hero on his epic adventure?

Perhaps most significantly, they speak of human nature:

> Fairy tales, on the other hand, uncover true reality. That of the human person and that of the cosmos. That of the revelation prefigured in enchantment and that of the salvation inferred through so many singular episodes. The reality that the miracle is possible, that heaven and earth are joined by an invisible and solid drawbridge, that inanimate beings may come to life, and that men resemble stones when their hearts have hardened (Caponnetto, 2016, p. 103).

And when we speak of fairy tales, the phrases "Once upon a time…" and "and they lived happily ever after…" appear in every story. It is worth recalling their importance:

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> These tales have stood the test of time in part because they are fascinating to young children. Nothing in recent years, on television or anywhere else, has improved on a good story that begins with "Once upon a time…". But I believe they have stood the test of time for another reason: they appeal not only to children's imaginations, but to their moral sense as well. They have the power to impress themselves upon young minds and remain as lifelong guides (Bennet, 2001, p. 6).

To illustrate the pedagogical influence that fairy tales can have, we refer to a study of our own (Galiano Moyano, 2024, pp. 113–134), carried out a couple of years ago. It was based on a case study examining the impact of these tales on the lives of a group of adolescents. Methodologically, we conducted a brief qualitative analysis of data obtained through a survey administered to a random sample of 60 young people between 17 and 25 years of age from the city of Valladolid (Spain), representing different genders and levels of education.

While the overall research findings were highly interesting, we will address only those relevant to the topic of this paper. To analyze the data, we used a pre-established system of categories synthesized from the reviewed literature and connected to this presentation: experiences of reading or listening to stories, words associated with reading stories, and the influence these stories have on people's lives. Regarding the experiences of reading and listening to stories, the following information was gathered:

- Who reads the stories? I (49%), mother (32%), father (13%), others (5%).
- Where do you read the stories? home (66%), school (26%), library (5%), others (3%).

As we can see, most participants recognized the importance of these reading experiences in their homes, mainly before bedtime. They recalled these moments as stimulating imagination, offering escape, and providing experiences of joy and happiness.

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> When mom reads aloud, I feel like doing great things, doing good and correcting what is wrong, because it seems easy to show my face and easy to show courage. Oh, endless images before my eyes happen when mom reads aloud (Bennett, 2001, p. 110).

When asked to rate their experiences of reading and listening to fairy tales using a Likert scale (where 1 is the lowest value and 7 the highest), the mean score was 6.30, which indicates that these experiences were highly valued. The results reflecting the value of the words associated with reading and listening to stories are as follows: according to participants, the terms associated with reading and listening to fairy tales were fantasy (80%), wonder (77.78%), joy (75.56%), magic (71.11%), learning about life (51.11%), courage (48.89%), sadness (11.11%), fear (11.11%), other (6.66%), and disappointment (2.22%). In this regard, it is noteworthy that the highest-scoring terms associated with reading wonderful stories were those with positive connotations (wonder, joy, courage), rather than those with negative connotations (fear, sadness, disappointment).

Finally, when participants were asked about the influence exerted by fairy tales, the results were as follows: imagination (95.56%), creativity (82.22%), hope (48.89%), problem-solving (31.11%), self-esteem (28.89%), communication (24.44%), joy (22.22%), confidence (17.78%), other (13.33%), hopelessness (2.22%), resentment (2.22%), not at all (2.22%). As with the previous results, it is worth noting the difference between terms with positive connotations and those with negative connotations. This relationship between the experiences of reading and listening to stories, the high value that participants attribute to these experiences, the words rich in positive connotation, and the influence that they generate shows that these stories not only teach but also educate.

On this point, countless studies demonstrate how literature enhances the development of creativity, imagination, and oral and written expression (Bettelheim, 1980; Colomer, 2002; López Quintás, 2010; Pérez-Rioja, 1997; Rubio Torres & Fernández Arias, 2019; Selfa Sastre & Balca, 2020); how it promotes the development of skills and the acquisition of virtues through moral growth (Carreira Zafra, 2020; Kazmierczak, 2018;

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Kristjánsson, 2020); and how it contributes didactically to teaching (Bozkirli, 2018; Martínez-Ezquerro, 2022, 2020; Tejerina Lobo, 2006). This influence—an influence that has stood the test of time because of its richness, depth, and meaning—reveals fairy tales as carriers of content and form that teach and, at the same time, educate.

Fairy tales, a path of good, truth, and beauty

In fairy tales, isn't every hero's journey a pedagogical journey? "Man," says Plato, "has lost the perfection, conceived for him, of the origin. Now he is perennially in search of the primordial form that can heal him again" (Ratzinger, 2006, p. 15). In that search, the characters embark on a path, impelled by forces that challenge and encourage them, encountering diverse difficulties until—often with the help of someone or something, and with great effort—they achieve the goal they set at the beginning. "The journey is also a figure of man's life: *homo viator*, as medieval people used to say. We find ourselves *in via*, that is, on the way, on pilgrimage, on a journey" (Ferro, 2018, p. 156). It becomes clear, then, that the path of *homo viator* is animated by a higher meaning, one that leads him out of himself—and educates him. And how does this education take place in fairy tales? Through beauty that is always intertwined with truth and goodness. In the Western tradition, we understand that goodness, truth, and beauty shape the human soul, and therefore, contact with them educates. We agree with Thibon in affirming that:

> Beyond a certain height the universals are unified: a very high virtue always appears radiant with beauty and a masterpiece of art elevates not only spirits, but souls. The noblest characters have an aesthetic conception of morality: the good is for them an object of contemplation as well as of action: it is an action that can be contemplated. As for evil, they avoid it not so much because of the harm it can cause them but because they find its ugliness intolerable (Thibon, 1973, pp. 113–114).

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Accordingly, "educational words are then those that, from the truth about what is good for man, promote virtue" (Martínez, 2002, p. 11). In this sense, truth, good, and beauty are integrated, since for words to be truly pedagogical, they must communicate truth, move toward the good, and manifest the splendor of beauty. "In what does this splendor consist? It is not so much that words are expressed with the beauty of oratory, but that the splendor of truth—*veritatis splendor*—shines in them" (Martínez, 2002, p. 11). And education, precisely, is the aid that can allow the splendor of the human person to reveal itself.

Conclusion

In the Walker Art Gallery (Liverpool, England), there is a work of art by James Sant (1820–1916), an oil on canvas from 1870, that can be summarized as an everyday scene of a mother telling a story to her child. The woman and the child, seated on a sofa next to a window, hold a book in their hands. There are—at least for me—two very significant details: the woman's finger pointing toward the window, and the child's expression of attentive, astonished listening. The work is titled *The Fairy Tale*. Without a doubt, it illustrates the captivating power of beauty as a bearer of truth and goodness, in this case conveyed through contact with fairy tales. In this work, we have sought to show that when words—a representative symbol of human nature—are used well, they can both teach and educate. In this case, fairy tales served as the medium through which these words are expressed.

The educational power of words, as conveyed through fairy tales, was analyzed by considering their influence, which arises from several factors. Among them, we identified the defining characteristics of these stories (guiding motifs, narrative functions, identification with characters, the hero's journey, and happy endings), all of which reflect human nature. Another important factor concerns the experience of reading and listening to stories, which in most cases is positive, and recalling these experiences reawakens those moments. Finally, a high percentage of the words

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associated with stories are linked to concepts with positive connotations (excitement, joy, and courage), rather than negative ones (fear, sadness, and disappointment).

"Whoever has perceived this beauty knows that truth is the last word on the world" (Benedict XVI, 2002). The enduring influence of literature is due to the richness, depth, and meaning it conveys. It presents stories as bearers of beauty, truth, and goodness—and the word that emerges from them as a necessary sign in education, capable of guiding people toward their fulfillment.

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Inclusive language in academic environments: Theory and practice

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Abstract

Research objectives: This case study aims to describe different modalities of inclusive language, i.e., gender-balanced, gender-sensitive, or gender-neutral language, which are used in the official communication of Comenius University Bratislava. We link these modalities with the results of an online survey carried out in August 2024, which showed how native Slovak speakers perceive inclusive alternatives for generic masculine nouns.

Research method: A critical text analysis was performed on online statements of the faculty members of Comenius University Bratislava and the online survey on inclusive language.

Process of argumentation: In the past decade, gender-sensitive or inclusive language has permeated the communication of many actors in civil society, be it the media, public institutions, or various associations. It reflects the post-structuralist idea that language is a tool of power and makes women invisible, especially in professional life and various other roles. In Romance and Slavic languages, the "invisibilization" is caused by generic masculine nouns. The implementation of forms other than the generic masculine is based on psycholinguistic research (mainly in the German language). According to these researchers, this leads to women becoming invisible in the language. Comenius University Bratislava adopted a gender equality plan, financed by EU-funded programs. The use of inclusive or gender-sensitive language is a part of this action plan.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The critical analysis of online statements of Comenius

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University Bratislava and its faculty members shows that only in the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Pedagogy is gender-sensitive language systematically used (doublets or neuter nouns). The main information channel of the University and the profile of the Faculty of Law almost never apply inclusive language. The online survey which was carried out in August 2024 shows that the majority of Slovak native speakers consider the variants of gender-sensitive language (both lexical and graphical) to be strange and redundant.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: According to the survey, the generic masculine form is perceived by the majority of Slovak native speakers as a neutral form which denotes both genders. These findings could be correlated with the use of inclusive language (especially split forms) in statements on the social networks of different faculties of Comenius University Bratislava. The reasons for this situation could be the fact that the administrators who author the content are not informed about the action plan adopted at the university level (about the use of inclusive or gender-balanced language) and continue to use the classical generic masculine forms of nouns because the split form bears the characteristics of non-conventionality. A major shift in the use of gender-sensitive language could be enacted by a top-down approach in academia, but this will not solve the practical questions related to its functionality in the stylistics of the Slovak language.

Introduction

Defining the concept of *inclusive language* is not easy, as it is a relatively new concept in the study of language. Inclusivity in language has at least three meanings. The first is a mode of expression and communication that is comprehensible to all participants of a communication; it breaks down the distinction between "laymen" and "insiders" through the intelligibility of discourse. This kind of expression is based on the principles of simplicity, transparency, appropriate length, and dynamism. In the sense articulated by Erasmus of Rotterdam, it corresponds to *erudita perspicuitas*, that is, simplification in order to involve or include (*includere*) everyone in communication (Orgoňová, 2023, p. 216–225). The second meaning of the term, especially in the Anglophone cultural context, refers to a written or spoken text that tries not to offend anyone; inclusive or sensitive language semantically flattens or eliminates expressions that are considered expressive and that certain groups of people may

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find offensive.[1] Among the general public, such euphemized language is known as "politically correct" language. Finally, inclusive language refers to a way of expression that takes into account both men and women (*linguaggio del genere* in Italian, *écriture inclusive* in French, or *lenguaje inclusivo* in Spanish). Inclusive language in the sense of "politically correct," gender-balanced, or gender-neutral expression is rooted in the feminist philosophy currents that flowed into Europe from American universities in the 1970s (Moyšová, 2020, pp. 261–263).

Inclusive language as a gender-balanced form of expression

The third meaning of inclusive language is a cultural concept[2] which is implemented in European languages in different ways—on the lexical as well as the graphic level. It reflects the effort to make women visible in discourse since, according to some cognitive psychology studies (especially in German: see Braun et al., 2005; Stahlberg et al., 2007), they have been made "invisible" by the use of the generic masculine forms. According to these studies, language users imagine a greater representation of men than women in the designation of a profession or function thanks

[1] For example, the guide on inclusive language prepared for the employees of London City Hall instructs them to avoid the term "illegal migrant" and replace it with "person of precarious immigration status" or "person without documents." Also, so that texts from City Hall do not exclude non-binary people, officials are to avoid referring to "women" and "men," and to favor "people" or "Londoners." Similarly, it is not appropriate to refer to "non-English speakers," as this is "defective and degrading," but to "Londoners with English language needs" (https://europeanconservative.com/articles/news/londons-inclusivity-guide-drop-men-women-and-illegal-migrants). Another example would be versions of literary texts modified by "inclusive readers," who are changing the vocabulary of some novels of Roald Dahl in the spirit of politically correct language.

[2] This claim is supported by the fact that while forms of inclusive language can be found in different communicative situations and discourses in European French, Spanish, or Portuguese, inclusive or gender-balanced language is unknown in the varieties of French used in African countries, in Latin American Spanish, or in the Portuguese used in Brazil or Africa.

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to generic masculine nouns (hereafter referred to as "genM"). These language-oriented efforts have been promoted in Western Europe thanks to feminist thinking since the 1990s, reflecting its concepts at the time (equality between men and women should be reflected in language through gender-balanced expression; the use of generic masculine forms has an impact on women's place and status in society; language is ideologically influenced by patriarchal society and the struggle for power and control also takes place in linguistics) (Slender, 1990).

In practice, this type of inclusivity (especially in the Romance languages of Spanish or Italian and in the Slavic languages) seeks to eliminate generic masculine nouns (*študenti* in Slovak) and replace them with a double masculine and feminine form (*študentky a študenti*) or a neutral form (*študentstvo)*.

In the Slovak academic environment, attempts to make language gender-sensitive in the name of women's inclusion have only recently begun to emerge. The trend of inclusive language, which individuals, various public institutions, some media, and activists are trying to promote in European society, is reaching Slovakia after some delay. As mentioned above, the introduction of gender equality rules into the language—which, in line with classic feminism, is manifested by doubling (using both feminine and masculine nouns) instead of the genM—is the main tool for achieving equality in the language. According to some feminist currents of thought, the binary roles on the masculinity–femininity axis are understood as a limitation of an individual's authenticity, as gender stereotypes punish and restrict people's authenticity (Butler, 1993; Jeffreys, 2014). For this reason, the most recent versions of inclusive language have also begun to take into account so-called non-binary or genderfluid people. Thus, some communicants use nouns with neuter grammatical gender to denote a person.

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Implementing inclusive language: Plans, guides, and awareness-raising

In 2021, Comenius University Bratislava adopted a plan for gender equality (Univerzita Komenského, 2025) financed by the European Commission. The plan was elaborated by the Gender Studies Centre, which is one of the departments of the Faculty of Arts. Milestone 3.4— "Raising awareness and information about the importance of gender equality in the academic environment" includes measure 3.4.1—"Use of gender-balanced language in official university communication channels. Training of male and female staff adding content within the University's official communication channels on the use of gender-balanced language." The plan also contains a guide which explains, among other things, how to eliminate genM nouns (*učitelia*) from a text: by replacing them with split masculine and feminine forms (*učitelia a učiteľky*; hereafter referred to as "doublets") or with a neutral noun (*pedagogický personál*).

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of online statements published in official information channels of the university

For the purposes of assessing the use of gender-balanced language (doublets and/or neutral nouns), we created a corpus of texts published online form November 1 to December 27, 2024 on the Facebook profiles of Comenius University Bratislava and its faculties.[3] From the comparative and quantitative analysis, it appears that the main profile of the university very rarely applies gender-balanced inclusive language (43 statuses published, 17 with genM, 1 with doublets, and 4 with neutral nouns). The Faculty of Law applies the practice similarly (27 statuses published, 9 with genM and 1 with doublets); even when addressing its target audience,

[3] Only official sites and active profiles were taken into consideration. Therefore, we do not present data from the Faculties of Catholic Theology (inactive profile), of Natural Sciences (unofficial profile), of Sport and Physical Education (no profile), or Jessenius Medecine (unofficial profile).

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students of the faculty, genM is used); the same applies for the Faculty of Medicine (17 statuses published, 8 with genM and 0 with doublets). The Faculties of Protestant Theology (12 statuses, 2 with genM and 0 with any form of inclusive language) and of Management (12 statuses, 4 with genM and 2 with doublets) prioritize genM in their Facebook communications. The Faculty of Pharmacy applies both genM (especially in the names of associations, e.g., *Spolok mladých farmakológov*) and doublets. On the other hand, the Faculty of Arts—of which the Gender Studies Centre (who produced the guide on inclusive language) is a part—gives priority to gender-balanced or gender-neutral forms (16 statuses published, 1 with genM, 3 with doublets and 4 with neutral forms) and systematically avoids genM. Very similarly, the Faculty of Pedagogy opted for gender-balanced language, but it applies strictly to split forms or doublets (*zástupcovia a zástupkyne*, *stredoškoláci a stredoškoláčky*, *nadšenci a nadšenkyne*, *etablovaní výtvarní umelci a etablované výtvarné umelkyne*; 25 statuses, 14 with doublets, including the splitting of adjectives and pronouns *ktorí/ktoré*, with graphic signs). The Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences also uses inclusive language (24 statuses, 8 with doublets and 4 with genM).

Table1.

Profile	Published statuses	Statuses with genM	Statuses with doublets	Statuses with neuter nouns
Comenius University Bratislava	43	17	1	4
Faculty of Law	27	9	1	0
Faculty of Medicine	17	8	0	0
Faculty of Protestant Theology	12	2	0	0
Faculty of Management	12	4	2	0
Faculty of Pharmacy	10	3	3	0
Faculty of Arts	16	1	3	4
Faculty of Pedagogy	25	2	14	0
Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences	24	4	8	0

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Inclusive language and its perception by Slovak native speakers

As follows from the qualitative and quantitative analysis above, in the official communications of different university entities, there is a quite large range of modalities for the use of inclusive language, with the exception of the official communication channels of the Faculty of Law and the university itself. The reasons for this finding could be multiple, for example, the idea that doublets interfere with the fluency of reading and one's reception of a text (Moyšová, 2024b, p. 239). The online survey, which was carried out in August 2024 (with 432 participants, mostly from academia and public service) showed that doublets or neuter forms instead of genM forms do not facilitate communication. The survey was not representative (76% of the respondents had a university degree, more than half [54%] of which were in the humanities), yet it provided some useful indications about Slovak speakers' linguistic patterns: 19% of them declared that the Slovak language should make women more visible, while 60% thought that Slovak is fair enough regarding women. When assessing a phrase with repeated doublets (*vedúci a vedúce* or *reprezentanti a reprezentantky*), 24% of them thought that doublets express gender sensitivity and it is necessary to apply them systematically. On the other hand, 76% declared that the doublets which replace the genM form are not necessary, they are redundant, and the phrase is too long. When assessing a phrase with genM nouns, 20% of the respondents declared that the phrase is incorrect because the genM does not take women into consideration.

From these results, we can conclude that doublets constitute an expression whose reasons for use are not clear to the majority of Slovak speakers, but we can presume that they have no problems understanding the meaning of the phrase. On the other hand, the survey suggests that users had problems understanding neuter nouns with the suffix *–stvo* when they replaced the genM form. Only 20% of the respondents considered a phrase featuring several neuter nouns with the suffix *-stvo* instead of a genM noun to be completely comprehensible. Generally, these nouns denote countable entities (e.g., *študentstvo*), so they can be used to denote persons of both genders, but in other cases they denote

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a quality (*poslanectvo* or *autorstvo*), so they cannot be used for persons in texts with a prevailing informative function, according to the rules of Slovak syntax (an artistic or literary text could represent an exception). However, in a Facebook status from the Faculty of Arts (12 November 2024), such nouns are used to denote persons (*autorstvo kvír filmov* and *medzinárodné odborníctvo*). The author of this status, attempting to replace the generic masculine form (*odborníci* [specialists]), chose a neuter noun, which has a pejorative meaning according to the Dictionary of Slovak Language published by the Slovak Academy of Sciences (KSSJ, 2003). In this case, the amalgamation of grammatical gender with social gender could lead to additional confusion in comprehension (Pekarovičová, 2016, p. 38).

Conclusions

Inclusive language in Slovak reflects various postulates about gender that have been taking shape in feminist discourse for four decades at European universities. Although the communication universe is changing radically in the contemporary world as a result of digitalization and the fourth wave of the information revolution (Horváth, 2023, p. 5; Plašienková et al., 2021, p. 40), the main function of online profiles of university faculties is to inform, which is linked to the clarity, transparency, and economy of a text. In the case of some forms of inclusive language, it appears that these aims are not always fulfilled (for example, the majority of respondents in the survey considered doublets to be redundant). The survey shows that amongst the majority of Slovak speakers, the generic masculine is perceived as an unmarked noun that represents both sexes. Thus, the (excessive) use of doublets or neuter nouns instead of genM nouns could be perceived as hindering communication. This fact could explain the certain reluctance to use it exhibited by some faculties. The principles of pragmatic linguistics (Popovičová Sedláčková & Piatková, 2021, pp. 7–8) could be helpful when preparing manuals or guides of inclusive language if the author of the text wants to inclusively address the public at large, and not only an informed subgroup.

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Rhetorical skills and inclusion in the context of contemporary social challenges

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post-typographic culture,
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functional rhetoric

Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): The aim of this study is to present the potential threats posed by modern communication technologies. The communication environment surrounding an individual influences the structure of their neural network. Intensive immersion in content offered by today's cyberspace tends to detach users of digital media from the limits of the body, physical space, and temporal constraints. Prolonged exposure to virtual worlds may result in the loss of the ability to attain awareness of one's authentic "self." The proliferation of non-verbal interactions risks undermining the ability to actively use language; as a result, the critical function of human consciousness may be weakened. In this context, what challenges does contemporary education face?

Research methods: The author draws on selected critical commentaries on education by renowned scholars in the humanities (Ortega y Gasset, Adorno, Liessmann, Wikforss) and, in a contemporary context, scrutinizes the impact of technological change on the development of rhetorical (speech) skills among university students. This analysis is conducted against the backdrop of constructivist reforms in education. The article was prepared as part of the research project VEGA 1/0142/24 *Jazyková inkluzívnosť: medzi integratívnou a reštriktívnou komunikáciou* [Linguistic Inclusiveness: Between Integrative and Restrictive Communication].

Process of argumentation: The article begins with an introduction that characterizes modern society as a "post-typographic culture" (Ong, 1982). It then identifies potential pitfalls associated with cyberspace and highlights the weakening of language skills resulting from the excessive

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passive consumption of virtual content. The decline in active language use poses a threat to the development of the individual's critical consciousness.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: For the full integration of individuals into society, that society must be composed of autonomous subjects. Therefore, within the educational process in today's post-typographic culture, it is necessary to strengthen the development of active speech practices and the autonomous consciousness of learners.

Conclusions and recommendations: As a safeguard against the potential decline of linguistic abilities in future generations, this article proposes the inclusion of rhetoric at all levels of education. Historically, rhetoric emerged in the public sphere of ancient democratic societies; however, over the past century, it has often been reduced to an instrument of propaganda serving totalitarian power structures. In the contemporary context, rhetoric must be adapted to new communication needs and media channels. In this regard, the German school of rhetoric associated with Saarbrücken proposes the concept of so-called *functional rhetoric* (Geissner, 1974).

Introduction

The society, or culture, in which we live in the first quarter of the twenty-first century is often described using terms such as *information*, *post-industrial*, *postmodern*, *post-digital*, or *transhuman*. Perhaps its most distinctive feature is the accelerated progress in communication technologies, as a result of which we now live in what has been termed a "post-typographic culture" (Ong, 1982 [2006]). In this context, one can speak of true globalization—or *planetization*, to use the term coined by the French philosopher Teilhard de Chardin. Indeed, events occurring in one part of the planet can now be shared almost instantaneously, both visually and audibly, with people in other regions of the world. Owing to advances in communication technologies and the growing number of orbiting satellites, people from different cultures and geographical areas are able to communicate with one another through a simple connection to the global communication network. As a result, communication technologies contribute to the realization of a form of global inclusion, integrating virtually every inhabitant of the planet—via cyberspace—into what is often described as a "global village" (McLuhan, 1962).

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Alongside the rapid technological development observed since the twentieth century, a number of philosophers (Ortega y Gasset, Adorno, Liessmann, Wikforss) have argued that technological progress does not automatically translate into spiritual or intellectual advancement. In addition to the risks that modern technologies pose for individual development, scholars have also drawn attention to their social impact on education, especially in the context of school reforms inspired by constructivist pedagogy.

Drawing on empirical research in pedagogy and education, Swedish philosopher and member of the Swedish Academy Åsa Wikforss has demonstrated how constructivist ideas have contributed to the decline of school systems in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and France. Referring to studies by researchers such as Schleicher, Linderoth, Hirsch, Christodoulou, and Gustafsson, Wikforss argues that, in the process of democratizing education, constructivist principles—combined with the weakening of the teacher's role as a mediator of knowledge—have had a negative impact on educational outcomes. In particular, they have undermined key goals of education, including the development of critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills.[1]

This article focuses specifically on the level of speech and communication abilities in the context of efforts toward linguistic inclusion.

The traps of cyberspace

Owing to the many possibilities offered by communication technologies, people today are becoming increasingly immersed in virtual worlds. It is not only that we are able to communicate with people at a distance; we also spend ever more time surfing the internet. In other words, cyberspace is gradually absorbing us. This is hardly surprising: *homo sapiens* is also *homo ludens*—human beings enjoy play, entertainment, and

[1] The expert review of Wikforss's work in Slovakia was written by analytical philosopher T. Sedová (2022).

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diversion. It can be said that today's cyberspace provides what was once the domain of *belles-lettres* and later of radio, television, and cinema—and much more besides. Cyberspace enables the global circulation of an endless amount of fiction and is not limited to verbal production; as it also offers a combination of auditory, visual, and spatial stimuli.

With regard to their impact on people—and on the human mind—these new possibilities represent a truly formidable challenge. As noted by the Italian philosopher Cristiana Senigaglia, the multiplication and intensification of the consumption of such fictive projections leads to a separation of individuals from the boundaries of their own bodies, physical space, and time rules. Individuals stay immersed in virtual worlds for extended periods, where they are unable to develop a stable sense of self. As a result, they are not only exposed to the risk of manipulation but also lose the opportunity to achieve awareness of their authentic "self." A preoccupation with purely fictive worlds prevents them from developing a sense of concrete action and responsibility. Consequently, they also lose their orientation toward others, to the detriment of the notion of the "you." An absent or insufficient relationship with other beings—combined with the dissolution of the boundaries of one's own body—leads to complications in the formation of individual subjectivity. In other words, the subject ("me") becomes an object ("it") (Senigaglia, 2011).

Language and the subject

In the process of self-awareness and the formation of the individual as an autonomous subject, interaction with others plays a crucial role, with language functioning as the dominant medium of communication. The acquisition of language requires sufficient time and specific conditions for each individual and, although it is genetically conditioned, it must take place in early childhood. It is worth noting that the period of linguistic intellectualization also begins relatively early, around the age of four.

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned advances in communication technologies are increasingly intruding upon the traditional role of language

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in shaping individuals from an early age. They lead to an ever more aggressive reduction of natural language use during the developmental period in which an individual's critical consciousness should be formed through language itself. The growing and often unreflective introduction of such technologies into educational processes is gradually contributing to a decline in the active use of language. For example, typing on computer keyboards is replacing the practice of manual text transcription, during which memory centers in the brain are activated. Oral assessment, which requires students to retell and verbally process learned material, has also nearly disappeared from many classrooms. Instead, it is frequently replaced by written tests or other tasks that rely on computer input. The result is a steadily widening gap between the passive and active use of the mother tongue—a phenomenon I can attest to not only from personal experience, but also from the experiences of other university lecturers.[2]

Passive language use means that an individual understands words but does not actively use a large portion of their vocabulary. Such people are able to read, but often cannot fully convey or share the meaning of what they have read. If the gap between active and passive vocabulary becomes too wide, individuals are unable to express abstract feelings or thoughts—or, put differently, their own view of the world. As a consequence, the critical function of the consciousness is weakened. People may understand instructions, but they are unable to discuss them or defend their position. Their situation resembles that of migrants who are insufficiently familiar with the local language and therefore remain in a passive communicative mode. Their inability to articulate their thoughts excludes them from full participation in discussion. Unlike a person who experiences themselves as a subject and is able to express

[2] The Swedish professor Åsa Maria Wikforss reports a similar experience in Chapter 5 ("Knowledge and School") of her book *Alternativa fakta – Om kunskapen och dess fiender* (2017). Reflecting on her reading of university students' final papers, she notes that she must spend increasing amounts of time on basic language corrections. It is not merely a matter of improving style—she often has to finish sentences for the students because their writing is so poor that the meaning is difficult to understand. According to Wikforss, this problem concerns not only language but also the students' thinking itself (Wikforss, 2021, pp. 143-177).

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that subjectivity, the linguistically restricted individual tends to leave decisions about their fate in the hands of someone—or something—else.

It is evident that an active vocabulary can develop only through active language use. The suppression of active vocabulary development in one's primary language (mother tongue) leads to the suppression of intellectual development—and thus also hinders the development of an autonomous personality. There can be no future for a nation made up of individuals who command their mother tongue more passively than actively, as such individuals struggle with abstract thinking and with formulating visions of the future. If, in addition—as is the case in many countries today—there is strong pressure to learn foreign languages at an early stage of intellectual development, this may accelerate the decline of the linguistic community in question.

Mind formatting

However, even for people who do not have difficulties with the active use of language, certain linguistic influences may still render them vulnerable to manipulation—often without their realizing it. In a televised interview, one of the most frequently cited scholars in the social sciences, Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells Oliván, stated that if politicians openly admitted that their power exists only in our minds, they would lose this power. If people are forced to think in ways that serve particular interests—or are compelled to resign themselves to their situation —power is exerted over them regardless of whether they like it or not. Power operates in people's minds.

Our minds are organized on the basis of communication networks; more precisely, the neural networks of the brain are shaped through the influence of the communication networks present in the surrounding environment. Those who control external communication also control people's brains (Castells Oliván, 2012).

If communication is understood as the exchange of information, then in the phase of communication control, it becomes the management of input information on the basis of which opinions are formed—and thus

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also the control of the exchange of views, experiences, and interpretations among people. This amounts to control over the way people perceive the world. Most people perceive events around them mainly through the mediation of language—through texts composed of sentences and words. Through verbal messages, therefore, it is possible to introduce into people's minds whatever those in power deem necessary to place at the center of public discourse; conversely, it is also possible to suppress issues that they do not wish to become subjects of public debate.

However, in considering the influence of language on people, it is not only the content but also the form of verbal interaction that matters. According to the findings of several scholars (Ong, 1958; McLuhan, 1962; Parry, 1971), patterns of thinking are determined by the form in which linguistic codes are used. For a very long period in human history, language existed exclusively in oral form. As the Chilean philosopher Rafael Echeverría explains, before the invention of the alphabet, people lived within a language of action, as language and action were so closely intertwined that speech itself had the power to bring certain things into being—either in reality or in the mind. In other words, these events would not have occurred had they not first been spoken aloud.

With the advent of writing, the language of action was transformed into a language of being (Echeverría, 2005, p. 15). Among other consequences, this shift contributed to the widespread belief that being is primary and that language merely provides a secondary description of it. This transformation led to a flourishing of systematic observation and description of the surrounding world and, consequently, to the development of abstract thinking and a vocabulary that had not been necessary in oral cultures. The gradual spread of writing across the world led to the emergence of an entirely new cultural formation: oral culture evolved into chirographic culture based on manual inscription through written texts. After several millennia, the invention of printing reinforced this historical turning point by enabling the wide dissemination of written texts and the stable preservation of knowledge in written form. In this way, humanity contributed to the development of general education, i.e., literacy. Over time, chirographic culture was gradually replaced by typographic culture.

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Today, we live in a linguistic culture that can be described as post-typographic. Over the past several decades, mass media have fostered the simultaneous proliferation of writing, images, and sound. The continuously growing volume of such production persists, circulates, and is preserved largely—sometimes exclusively—in electronic form. These contemporary communication possibilities significantly contribute to the creation of fictitious realities, or to their manipulation and reorientation toward desired angles.

Conditions for authentic social inclusion

In relation to Western discourse on the need for inclusion—a topic that is often dealt with in overly narrow contexts of linguistic behavior—an additional point must be made. If inclusion is to be achieved through language, it should first and foremost be understood as a search for "the optimization of social relations in the interest of promoting social equality, supported by acceptable and comprehensible language (not necessarily literary language)" (Orgoňová et al., 2023, p. 19). Inclusion, therefore, must be interpreted as a social phenomenon in the broadest sense—that is, as the negation of exclusion and marginalization.

It must be recognized that an indispensable condition of any form of inclusion is the autonomous subjectivity of the individual. If, due to inadequate influences from external communication networks, an individual's sense of self fails to develop—or if individuals do not attain a sufficient level of abstract language competence to activate their critical consciousness in interaction with others—there is little basis for regarding them as autonomous subjects. Such individuals are unable to participate fully in dialogue, that is, they are unable to formulate their own view of the world. As a result, they become particularly vulnerable to manipulation, demagoguery, suggestion, and similar influences exerted by their social environment.

Just as it is difficult to form a true community without its components being autonomous individuals—since, without them, one can at best

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create a group, a crowd, or a flock—so too is it impossible to achieve true inclusion if collective participation does not involve autonomous subjects. Without subjectivity, there can be no real inclusion, only the accumulation of objects that comply with the will or commands of others, without the capacity for constructive dialogue. In the absence of such dialogue among stakeholders, there can be no constructive human interaction aimed at improving collective life, in line with Aristotelian thought, which conceives of human beings as *homo politicus* by nature. If this reflection is extended to the philosophical and political level, one may conclude that without such interaction, there can be no oversight of public interests; consequently, democracy itself becomes inoperative.

How can such a potential development be countered? It is evident that new communication technologies are becoming an increasingly conventional element of everyday life. Therefore, their negative influence on human development must be balanced by strengthening individual autonomy—beginning in early childhood. An indispensable basis for this process is the reinforcement of mastery of the mother tongue, through which individuals develop their own capacity for reflection on the surrounding world—that is, their cognitive abilities. On the basis of these fundamental linguistic skills, dialectical and rhetorical competences must then be built, including, among other elements, the study of manipulation techniques (for defensive purposes against unwanted external "formatting" of our minds).

In practical terms, within pedagogical structures at various educational levels, this means a return to emphasizing oral expression and oral interaction through activities such as debating, rhetorical contests, declamation, and similar practices.

Renewal of teaching in the ancient tradition

To some extent, we can build on the experience of ancient rhetoric, whose decline is traditionally traced to the eighteenth century (Kraus, 1981). The gradual process of democratization—at least in Europe—

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holds some promise for a return to this tradition. Nevertheless, contemporary political discourse is no longer based primarily on the linguistic and logical foundations of social communication that characterized classical rhetoric.

In the context of fifth-century BCE Athenian democracy, rhetoric emerged in the public sphere and initially served predominantly political and legal purposes. In the twentieth century, however, it was reduced to an instrument of propaganda by totalitarian power structures. It was precisely in Germany—devastated by Nazi propaganda—that linguists, in the mid-twentieth century, laid the foundations for a new academic field focused on the analysis and cultivation of real, living spoken language: *Sprechwissenschaft und Sprecherziehung*, that is, speech science and speech training. After the traumas of the Second World War had subsided, Germany felt a need not only to revive public discourse, but also to promote education in rhetoric for civic and political purposes.

Nevertheless, according to one of the founders of this new academic discipline, Professor Helmut Geissner of Saarland University, under the conditions of contemporary language use, it is no longer possible to develop a form of rhetoric fully modeled on ancient norms and ideals. Only a partial system of classical rhetoric has survived in the history of European education, as the gradual elimination of its political function has reduced it largely to a literary concern. The so-called *new rhetoric*, as conceptualized by the German school, is described as *functional*. According to Geissner, as a university subject, it should comprise rhetorical systematics (the typology of talks and speeches), rhetorical analytics (the analysis of speeches), criticism, the methodology of language pedagogy, and the history of rhetoric—including theories of language, language pedagogy, speaker education, discourse, and responses to the discourse of other speakers. In this sense, Geissner defines functional rhetoric as a theory of situationally managed oral communication that leads to the development of mental or real action (Geissner, 1974).

Rhetoric, as a discipline concerned with the use of language in communication and developed in the context of pursuing specific personal

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goals, has provided a detailed account of methods for achieving the intended effects of a speech act. In contrast to more recent theories of argumentation, rhetoric is oriented not only denotatively—toward the content of the utterance—but also connotatively, toward its broader context, including extralinguistic factors. As such, it constitutes a set of principles that can serve equally well in the construction of effective discourse and in defending against potential verbal manipulation.

Conclusion

In this reflection, we have sought to highlight the potential dangers posed by modern communication technologies, particularly with regard to the formation of critical subjective awareness and the troubling developments observed in education within Western societies. In light of the declining communicative abilities of the younger generation, we argue for strengthening oral competencies at all levels of education through the reintroduction of rhetoric as a compulsory component of the curriculum. As an illustrative example, we refer to the Saarbrücken School of Speech Science (*Sprechwissenschaft*) in Germany, which represents an effort to restore rhetoric to university education. A functioning democracy presupposes not only dialogue, but dialogue that is rational, meaningful, and grounded in argumentation—dialogue that requires a high level of inferential and productive rhetorical skill from every individual.

These developed linguistic abilities are, of course, only a necessary instrument for achieving universal education, which is as vital for contemporary individuals as it was for the Renaissance *homo universalis*. This, however, requires an educational approach that does not deny the importance of theoretical knowledge or set it in opposition to practical skills; that does not pit factual knowledge against understanding, critical thinking, creativity, or the capacity for meaning-making; and, finally, that does not undermine the role of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge. These represent only some of the negative consequences that constructivism has had for the educational process in the modern era.

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Level of moral development and school success of elementary school students

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Abstract

Research objectives and problems: The aim of this study was to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between elementary school students' level of moral development and their academic achievement. The research examined the connection between students' moral development and their overall grade point average (GPA), as well as their achievement in art-related subjects (painting and music) and science subjects (mathematics and physics).

Research methods: The study employed a survey technique to collect data on students' academic performance and a scaling technique to measure moral development. The moral development scale consists of 65 items assessing moral knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

Process of argumentation: The paper is structured around a theoretical and methodological framework. The theoretical section analyzes major theories of moral development and relevant empirical findings, while the methodological section presents the research aims, questions, hypotheses, sample description, instruments, and research procedure.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The analysis shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between overall academic success and moral development, nor between achievement in science subjects and moral development. It is also important to note that students who earned higher grades in painting achieved a higher level of moral development than other students. Students with high grades in art

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demonstrated statistically significantly higher results on the moral development scale. Given that this relationship was not confirmed for music, the hypothesis concerning art subjects is only partially supported.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: Regardless of the results obtained, future research should be directed toward examining children's morality in a larger sample of students. Although the level of moral development does not statistically significantly differ depending on students' overall academic success, the difference observed in art-related subjects provides a basis for more detailed investigation. Further studies with larger and more diverse samples are needed to validate these results and explore potential mediating factors influencing moral development.

Introduction

In this paper, the connection between the level of moral development and school success is presented through several key subheadings. The goal is not only to provide factual information but also to raise readers' awareness of the importance of this topic. The first part of the paper contains a theoretical analysis of the problem and a description of the most common approaches to researching morality, as well as general school achievement. The importance of moral upbringing for overall development is a very significant area of pedagogical research.

The second part of the paper presents the empirical study, including the research aims, questions, hypotheses, sample characteristics, instruments, and procedure. The results are analyzed in relation to previous findings in pedagogy and related disciplines, with the goal of identifying practical implications for educational practice. A detailed description of participant selection and methodological steps is included to enhance transparency. This study is motivated by the need to better understand how moral development interacts with school-related outcomes, particularly in subjects that differ significantly in their cognitive and affective demands.

The importance of morality is examined not only through the lens of contemporary society but also with reference to the historical significance of moral education for children's growth and development. Because

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morality is an important part of young people's lives, it is understandable that such circumstances increase the need for scientific analysis of the relationship between morality and other areas of human functioning. Regardless of the results presented at the end of this paper, it is necessary to encourage the moral development of children and young people.

The purpose of this work is not to overstate the importance of moral education. All claims are grounded in scientific evidence and the results of empirical research. Recent research has refined the conceptualization of moral development, showing that it encompasses six key dimensions: equality, empathy, morality, tolerance, self-control, and kindness (Wongwanich, 2024).

School success and moral development

This research is based on the hypothesis that there is a relationship between students' level of moral development and their academic performance. Previous studies provide mixed results regarding this connection, highlighting the need for further investigation. Academic success is not limited to overall grade point averages; it also includes performance in specific areas such as the arts and sciences.

Although hundreds of definitions of morality exist in various social sciences, most authors agree that morality consists of unwritten rules and customs that shape interpersonal relationships (Kalin, 1998). Moral considerations commonly involve judgments of right and wrong and decision-making in moral dilemmas. Morality is closely connected to conscience, reflected in feelings of pride, guilt, or remorse. It is important to emphasize that morality is formed in a specific environment, which attests to its changeability. Morality is shaped by environmental and social influences, which illustrates its dynamic nature. Historical examples, such as gladiatorial training in the Roman Empire, demonstrate practices that would be considered morally unacceptable today (Zelenak, 2015). Such examples underscore the importance of evaluating morality in contemporary educational contexts. From today's moral standpoint, such

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practices are entirely unacceptable—not only do they fall outside the framework of moral principles, but they would also violate legal regulations, which represent the minimal level of moral norms.

How, then, can we foster moral development in young people in a society oriented toward pragmatism and utilitarian values? What content should be offered in education, and how can moral competences be developed to their fullest extent? In contrast to moral education, the issue of grades occupies a highly visible place in the educational system. For all participants in the educational process, academic performance often receives far more attention than the level of a child's moral development.

Current research on children's moral development generally falls into two categories:

1. Research on moral behavior, which focuses on explaining observable actions.
2. Research on moral reasoning, which examines how children think about their own and others' actions (Vasta et al., 1998).

Considering that students who are focused on art often possess specific personality traits, we might expect them to demonstrate a higher level of moral development. Empathy, understanding of others, equality, and openness to people are characteristic of those with artistic orientations; therefore, it can be anticipated that they would score higher on measures of morality. In order to understand how to improve students' moral development in the future, it is important to identify the factors associated with this ability. Given that people are not born as moral beings, the influence of the environment and social context is undeniable.

Children's level of moral development is also reflected in different forms of moral behavior. Težak and Čudina-Obradović (2005) state that there are several forms of moral behavior. The most basic form is manifested in children's decency, that is, their acceptance of certain rules most often established by parents. These rules usually concern maintaining order, personal hygiene, putting toys away, and similar expectations. This form of behavior is learned in everyday life and through the personal example

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of parents and teachers. As is well known, children do not simply listen to what adults say; they observe what adults do. Thus, personal example is the most effective means of teaching such behavior.

This type of behavior is often accompanied by emotional reactions. When a rule is broken or appropriate behavior is absent, children may experience feelings of guilt and shame (Težak & Čudina-Obradović, 2005). The family, with support from the preschool , should continuously work to prevent selfishness, arrogance, lack of self-control, and other unacceptable behaviors (Zubak, 2017). These qualities form the foundation of morality.

Theories of moral development

One of the most influential theories of moral development was proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg, a professor at Harvard University. Kohlberg based his concept of morality on Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Using moral dilemmas, he identified three levels of moral development, each consisting of two stages (Zhang & Zhao, 2017). Piaget developed his own theory of moral development by observing children between the ages of three and thirteen during play. For Piaget, it was particularly interesting to analyze the rules that children established during games, as well as the situations in which these rules were violated. His observations included both naturalistic and experimental approaches (Vasta et al., 1998). The naturalistic approach involved observing children in their everyday play, whereas the experimental approach involved presenting moral dilemmas to assess developmental stages.

As part of the experimental approach, Piaget presented children with different types of moral dilemmas to determine their stage of moral development. According to Piaget, children's experiences with others play an important role in determining their transition from one stage to the next (Petrović, 2011). The first stage, occurring approximately between the ages of two and four, is considered the pre-moral stage, during which the child does not follow any rules (Singer & Revenson, 1997). In the second stage,

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from ages four to seven, children develop an absolutist orientation to rules. At this stage, known as the heteronomous or conventional phase, children follow certain rules but are not yet able to fully understand or critically evaluate them. The final stage is characterized by an understanding of rules as well as the ability to create new ones. Piaget noted that this stage usually occurs around the ages of eleven or twelve. Broadly speaking, these stages can be described as moral heteronomy and moral autonomy.

Turiel's model of interpreting moral actions concerns how individuals judge whether something is right or wrong depending on the context. Within this theory, there are two domains: the personal domain and the conventional domain (Hren, 2008). In the personal domain, judgments are based on psychological states and personal preferences, whereas the conventional domain refers to social agreements. In contrast to Kohlberg's three levels of morality, Turiel's model emphasizes the parallel influence of these two domains. These earlier theories of morality provide an important foundation for applied moral research.

Although the theories of Kohlberg, Piaget, and Turiel dominate research in this field, it is also necessary to mention Gilligan's (1982) influential theory of the morality of justice and care. According to Gilligan, there are two categories of morality: the morality of justice and the morality of care. Her research supports the finding that women tend to use the morality of care more often, whereas men tend to rely more on the morality of justice. Applied to Kohlberg's moral dilemmas, these categories correspond to two types of behavior: one based on justice, and the other on providing assistance. The morality of care involves taking a protective stance toward the victim in moral dilemmas, regardless of the circumstances.

All of these theories contribute to our understanding of morality. However, for this phenomenon to be more clearly understood, it is necessary to confirm certain patterns through empirical research. Research findings not only support existing theoretical frameworks

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Overview of the results of similar research

A review of the professional literature reveals several relevant studies on moral development and education. Previous research has focused on moral education, moral reasoning, and moral failures among young people. Numerous studies have examined moral education as well as the moral shortcomings exhibited by youth. The crisis of education and moral values in Croatia is also evidenced by unpublished findings from the project *Poverty in Croatia*. The study conducted by Marina Vlahović and Ivan Rimac examined the values most important to the citizens of Croatia According to the respondents, the values of self-education, empathy, and altruism ranked lowest on the acceptance scale, while wealth, success, and health occupied the top three positions. Perceptions of what is considered good or bad also changed depending on respondents' age. Research conducted in Osijek found that 9% of students would not like to have members of a national minority in their surroundings. Furthermore, as many as 54% of respondents believed that more content about other cultures should be included in the curriculum (Kragulj & Jukić, 2010).

Another important study in the field of moral education is the research conducted by Havighurst and Taba (1949). The basic premise of their work was that moral behavior is shaped by character traits, not just situational factors. Their results showed that family, peers, and religion have a significant influence on character formation, which led them to identify five character types: amoral, selfish, conforming, irrationally conscientious, and rationally altruistic. This research takes the psychological characteristics of the individual as its starting point and uses them as the foundation for examining moral behavior. The present study also relies on psychological concepts as theoretical assumptions for the development of its research framework.

Although numerous studies on morality already exist, it is necessary to monitor social change and shifts in individuals' moral development. Given that we live in a society marked by moral inconsistency, research in the field of morality is imperative for the future development of pedagogical science. The erosion of value systems, lack of tolerance, peer

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violence, extreme hedonism, selfishness, and the diminishing presence of empathy and altruism all indicate an urgent need for changes in value orientations. Pedagogy, as a discipline concerned with children, parents, and schools, has the potential to influence individual development and contribute to shaping a new kind of society. Moral education is not only the responsibility of schools or parents but of the broader social community and the social environment in which children grow up. Although it is expected that moral values evolve over time, it is necessary to adapt educational strategies and values accordingly to meet children's developmental needs. What was once considered morally unacceptable may now form the basis of everyday human behavior.

One of the more interesting studies related to the examination of morality was conducted in 38 countries among members of the Islamic world. The results show that most respondents associate morality with faith in God. For example, 76% of respondents from Kosovo and 65% from Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that faith in God is a necessary condition for morality. The same study also reported attitudes regarding divorce, gambling, alcohol consumption, and similar issues as prerequisites for moral behavior (Campbell & Marshall, 2007). As we can see from the above, all the parameters used to assess morality are based on postulates that are prohibited by Sharia law; therefore, this research cannot be accepted as a comprehensive assessment of morality across all nations. A positive correlation has been found between moral development, emotional intelligence, and academic achievement in secondary school students (Reyal, 2025).

Research methodology

The aim and significance of the research

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between students' academic success and their level of moral development across different subject groups. Understanding these relationships is essential for improving pedagogical practice and fostering holistic development

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in children. Modern technology and social changes have influenced moral reasoning among young people, making it increasingly important to examine these aspects at different developmental stages. In order to support the advancement of moral development, it is necessary to determine its links with other aspects of personality. Because the future of each individual—and therefore the future of society—depends on moral education, dedicated research in this pedagogical field is necessary.

In recent years, modern technology has contributed to moral challenges among young people. It is particularly important to examine the moral aspects of personality at different ages. The concept and understanding of good and bad change depending on the age of the respondent. Especially relevant for practical research is how children and adults interpret and justify moral actions. Differences in responses to moral dilemmas demonstrate that children perceive the concept of good differently than adults do. Through workshops and forums, it is essential first to raise educators' awareness of the importance of moral development and then to work with parents as key contributors to the child's upbringing. The results are important not only for the present but also for future improvements in education. In which direction should we guide students? How can we address the shortcomings related to the moral dimension of personality?

The study was conducted in two elementary schools in Banjaluka with a sample of 120 students from the 8th and 9th grades.

Research hypotheses

Based on the aim of the research, we formulated a general hypothesis: we assume that there is a relationship between school success and students' level of moral development.

- **hypothesis I:** We assume that there is a relationship between students' GPA and their level of moral development.
- **hypothesis II:** We assume that there is a relationship between students' success in art subjects (painting and music) and their level of moral development.

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- **hypothesis III:** We assume that there is a relationship between students' success in science subjects (mathematics and physics) and their level of moral development.

Research methods and techniques

In accordance with the research problem and topic, theoretical analysis and synthesis were used. Through these methods, literature related to morality and academic achievement was examined in detail. The main empirical techniques used in this study were surveying and scaling, which collected data on students' academic success and level of moral development. The study combined theoretical analysis with empirical research. The survey method was used to gather information about students' academic performance, while the scaling technique measured their moral development.

- The moral development scale consists of 65 items assessing moral knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.
- Academic performance was measured using general grades, as well as grades in art subjects (painting and music) and science subjects (mathematics and physics).

Research results

Data were analyzed using the Mann–Whitney and Kruskal–Wallis tests to assess differences between groups. The research, conducted in two elementary schools in the city of Banjaluka on a sample of 120 respondents (8th- and 9th-grade students), had as its primary goal the identification of the relationship between students' moral development and their overall academic success, achievement in art subjects (painting and music), and achievement in science subjects (mathematics and physics). The study examined the relationship between students' moral development and:

1. Overall academic success
2. Achievement in art subjects (painting and music)
3. Achievement in science subjects (mathematics and physics)

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Statistical analysis showed that 62 boys and 58 girls participated in the study.

Table 1. Students' gender distribution

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	62	51.7	51.7	51.7
	Female	58	48.3	48.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Regarding overall academic success, most students are rated as excellent or very good, while only 24 received a rating of good.

Connection between level of moral development and overall academic success

We assumed that students with excellent overall academic success would achieve higher scores on the moral development scale compared to students with lower academic success. However, the results of the Mann–Whitney test (see table below) showed that there is no statistically significant difference in this regard.

Table 2. Connection between overall academic success and the level of moral development

Test Statistics[a,b]

	General success
Kruskal-Wallis H	59.453
df	56
Asymp. Sig.	.351

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Scale of moral develompent

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Connection between level of moral development and academic success in art

We assumed that students who achieve higher grades in the artistic subjects (painting and music) would score higher on the moral development scale compared to students with lower grades. The results of the Mann–Whitney test (see table below) showed that there is a statistically significant difference in this regard. Students with higher achievement in painting scored better on the moral development scale. However, the same cannot be said for achievement in music; therefore, this hypothesis is only partially confirmed.

Table 3. Connection between the level of moral development and students' success in art

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Grades in painting	Grades in music
Kruskal-Wallis H	56.579	60.169
df	56	56
Asymp. Sig.	.053	.327

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Scale of moral development

Connection between level of moral development and academic success in science

We assumed that students who achieve higher results in the science subjects (mathematics and physics) would score lower on the moral development scale. However, the results of the Mann–Whitney test (see table below) showed that there is no statistically significant difference in this regard.

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Table 4. Connection between the level of moral development and success in science

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Grades in maths	Grades in physics
Kruskal-Wallis H	54.798	57.361
df	56	56
Asymp. Sig.	.520	.424

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Scale of moral development

Summary of findings

- No significant relationship was found between overall academic success and moral development.
- A partial relationship exists between painting grades and moral development.
- No significant relationship was found for music or science subjects.

Conclusion

Based on the conducted research, several important observations can be made. Although the study did not yield the expected results, it opened space for new questions and further investigation. Given that only one hypothesis was partially confirmed—specifically, the connection between success in painting and moral development—future studies should delve into the causes of this phenomenon in greater detail.

The main hypothesis was not supported; nevertheless, more extensive and detailed research on this topic should be conducted in the future. If the number of respondents were substantially larger and the research conditions more controlled, it is reasonable to assume that the results might differ. One reason why the auxiliary hypothesis regarding the

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connection between moral development and success in artistic and scientific subjects was not confirmed may be the limited ability to analyze lower-achieving students, of whom there were very few. Students almost uniformly receive excellent grades in subjects such as music and painting, so it is difficult to establish significant relationships with moral development.

The findings of this study may be useful to educators and professionals in various social science fields and encourage them to act within their capacities to promote children's moral development. Although the main hypothesis regarding the overall relationship between academic success and moral development was not confirmed, the partial confirmation related to painting suggests promising directions for future research.

Recommendations for future research

- Conduct studies with larger and more diverse samples to validate these findings.
- Include students with a wider range of academic achievement to better understand correlations across performance levels.
- Explore potential mediating variables, such as empathy, personality traits, and social environment, that may influence moral development.
- Consider longitudinal designs to examine changes in moral development over time.

Despite limitations in sample size and scope, the results underscore the importance of continued research into the relationship between moral development and academic performance. By addressing these areas, future studies may contribute to the design of educational interventions that promote both academic success and moral growth in students.

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Supporting religious and pro-social education in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd within the cognitive-developmental framework of integral religious development

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Sofia Cavalletti, Maria Montessori, religious education of the child, religious development, pro-social development

Abstract

Research objectives and problem(s): This article aims to identify practical approaches to religious and pro-social (moral) education within the pedagogical framework developed in Rome during the 1950s by Sofia Cavalletti, known as the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). The central research question guiding this study is: How does the CGS program support the religious education and pro-social development of preschool children in the context of the cognitive-developmental concept of integral religious development?

Research methods: To address these questions, we employed a method of document content analysis. The religious education content and its delivery methods were examined through an analysis of the CGS curriculum and methodological guides for children aged three to six years.

Process of argumentation: The article consists of an introduction and justification for the choice of topic, a presentation of methodological assumptions, an analysis of the literature to present the research context, research results in accordance with the research problem, conclusions and discussion.

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Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: A psychological and pedagogical analysis of the CGS program, viewed through the lens of holistic child development, suggests that it effectively integrates (a) the individual characteristics of the child, including age, psychological traits, religious socialization, and prior knowledge based on physical and psychological experiences; (b) the characteristics and role of the adults introducing the child to the faith, particularly the nature and quality of the relationship with the child; and (c) the content and delivery of religious knowledge.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: Formal catechesis is important in supporting the religious development of preschool children as it complements the foundational experiences gained within the family. It considers the development of the child's religious awareness according to their unique religious disposition and their ways of understanding and perceiving reality. Cavalletti's content arrangement is kerygmatic, and fosters a relationship with a personal God, which forms the basis for pro-social (moral) development in subsequent stages of religious education.

Introduction

Teaching children to be responsible individuals is a key task for parents, ranking as the highest priority among twelve options in a survey, with 92 percent of respondents acknowledging its importance, regardless of their religious beliefs or lack thereof. This finding suggests that the vast majority of parents aspire for their children to grow into kind, pro-social individuals (Pew Research Center 2014, 2015). Moreover, many parents worldwide consider religion an essential part of their lives (Bornstein et al. 2017) and often associate their children's prosocial development with their religious and spiritual development (R/S).[1]

While the development of religiosity and spirituality has long been a focus in the psychology of religion, research on this topic, particularly concerning children, remains limited. Less than 0.5 percent of studies to date have been devoted to R/S development in children of different ages,

[1] We use the abbreviation "R/S" in line with the convention commonly adopted in social science research on Religion (R) and Spirituality (S). These are recognized as complex, multidimensional social phenomena that, despite their differences, share theoretical and empirical commonalities (cf. Mahoney, 2021).

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with the majority concentrating on adolescents (ages 13–20) rather than younger children aged 3–12 (Richert, Boyatzis, & King 2017). Scholars have identified the need for in-depth research and reflection on the R/S development of children and adolescents, especially in light of the rapid transformations in religion and the public sphere, which are rapidly altering traditional modes of religious socialization in Western countries (see Mahoney 2021). Broadly speaking, religious education (RE) plays a crucial role in the continuity of any religious tradition (Markeng and Berglund 2023), and its quality carries robust social implications (Mahoney, 2021).

The literature on the religious development of children and adolescents presents various models, yet there remains a notable lack of longitudinal studies that track this development over time, particularly in a way that would offer a holistic perspective incorporating cultural variations (see Mahoney, 2021). The goal of this article is to explore practical approaches to religious and pro-social (moral) education within Sofia Cavalletti's concept known as Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (or CGS), which originated in Rome in the mid-20th century (Cavalletti, 2015). The methodological principles of CGS are entrenched in Montessori's pedagogy and her early efforts to promote the religious development of preschool children (Montessori, 1922, 1931, 1949).

This article will examine religious education based on the Montessori method within the framework of the cognitive-developmental concept of integral religious development throughout the life course, as articulated by Czesław Walesa, polish psychologist (2005, 2023). This concept is grounded in research conducted among children and adults from families that prioritize religious education rooted in the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Methodology

Our research, grounded in psychological and pedagogical analysis, is dedicated to the content and methods of religious education proposed in the CGS program for children aged three to six years. The main objective

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is to identify practical solutions that support a child's development within a holistic view of human religiosity.

The main research problem was formulated as the following question: How do the content and methods of the CGS program support the religious education and prosocial development of preschool children under the cognitive-developmental framework of integral religious development?

To address this question, we employed a method of document content analysis, following a problem-driven approach as proposed by Krippendorff (2022). The religious education content and its delivery methods were examined through an analysis of the CGS curriculum and methodological guides for children aged three to six years (Cavalletti & Gobbi, 1965–1971), as well as unpublished training materials, Cavalletti's lectures recorded by the author between 1997 and 1999, and both published and unpublished articles[2] and interviews with Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi, the co-author of CGS.

Three categories derived from Walesa's model of human religious development constituted the analytical framework for the CGS program and the documents indicated above. These were: (1) knowledge of God, (2) knowledge of Jesus, and (3) knowledge of human communication with God, which correlate with both Walesa's research and Cavalletti's pedagogical thought.

Walesa's research was conducted among 120 preschool children to examine the deeper layers of religious consciousness—the knowledge that "regulates action and activates, organizes, and directs this action" (2005, p. 186). The goal was to understand how the child interprets religious situations, understands religious concepts and content, and what knowledge and skills they possess (Walesa, 2005) in three categories: knowledge of God, knowledge of Jesus, and knowledge of human communication with God. Walesa's findings and conclusions form the basis for the analysis of the CGS program.

[2] Unpublished source materials available in the private archive of the co-author of the text

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Contextualizing the research problem

The starting point for the psychological and pedagogical analysis of RE within the context of religious development (R/S) is Cavalletti's and Walesa's perspectives on religiosity. They understand it as a positive and personal relationship with God, which emerges and develops under favorable external and internal conditions and evolves according to different stages of child development. Establishing this relationship is also viewed as a source of pro-social development, a point articulated with force by Cavalletti. Their discussion centers on how children form an image of God that reflects their individual internal working models and emotional experiences of God as an object (figure) of attachment, and how they conceptualize God, prayer, and the afterlife. These concepts are assimilated through religious socialization and derived from the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Although the image and concept of God overlap, they are distinct constructs (Davis, Moriarty & Mauch 2013), each of which can be explored independently (Mahoney, 2021).

Walesa's research demonstrates how a child's religiosity develops and identifies external factors (including educational influences) that can either foster or hinder the child's relationship with God. The findings also indicate that a child's religious morality is shaped by their image of God, and that even in the preschool years, the complex issues of conscience and responsibility for oneself and others begin to emerge in embryonic form. This personal and positive relationship with God is expressed through human experiences, processes, and mental states.

In educational practice, it is vital for a child to accumulate a wide range of experiences, which involve the conscious process of acquiring information about objects and the resulting cognitive outcomes, such as concepts, judgments, or theories. Supporting the development of religiosity in preschool children should consider the specific characteristics of this developmental stage. This is the period when children begin to understand and use symbols and to grasp the symbolic meaning of objects and activities. The internalization of external behaviors and the intellectualization of all activities also begin during this time. By the end

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of the preschool years, behaviors that are accepted by adults become more consolidated, and social, moral, aesthetic, and religious feelings, along with a sense of self, begin to emerge and develop. Given the child's infantile ways of apprehending reality during this period, it is essential to skillfully cultivate those forms of religious thinking that are characterized by a participatory relationship namely, the inclination to perceive things and phenomena from within through communication with other believers (horizontal participation) and with God (vertical participation) (Walesa, 2005).

Findings

CGS is founded on a kerygmatic covenant theology, which is reflected in both the theoretical and practical principles of religious and pro-social (moral) education. These principles were formulated and refined over many years of observation with three age groups—ages three to five, six to eight, and nine to twelve—within an environment specifically prepared according to Montessori pedagogical principles (De Giorgi, 2013). Cavalletti emphasized the importance of extending formal catechesis to children as early as age three, as religious experiences at this stage serve as the foundation for later religious development and moral formation.

In contemporary research on the development of children's religious consciousness, it is widely accepted that children's cognitive processes related to religious development operate according to the same principles of theory of mind, causation, and mental-physical causation that apply to other cognitive domains (Mahoney, 2021). The focus here will be on how children socialized in Catholicism understand and form a relationship with God, and how this understanding relates to the development of prosocial attitudes. The parameter under examination is religious awareness, which encompasses knowledge, concepts, understanding, skills, and views (including worldview) that manifest in a child's questions, prayers, and play. These activities are intended to sensitize the child to the discovery of mystery, the learning of religious signs and symbols, and the formation of an image of God. Initially, this awareness stems from

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the child's observation of and participation in the religious life of people close to them. Parents and immediate family members, both unconsciously and consciously, introduce children to transcendent realities. The RE of young children within the family should be supported by catechesis tailored to their needs.

Content and methods used in shaping children's knowledge of God

An analysis of the assumptions underlying Cavalletti's concept of religious education reveals that the content selection for preschool-aged children is predominantly Christocentric-Trinitarian rather than theocentric. This approach corresponds to the cognitive characteristics typical of children in this age group, such as anthropomorphism, egocentrism, and a primitive realism in their understanding of God and the Transcendent. As children reach the age of six, coinciding with significant cognitive development, the emphasis of the content shifts towards a more theocentric perspective. Younger children are introduced to biblical texts that facilitate their understanding of Jesus, who is presented as a gift from God the Father to humanity. The content is organized in accordance with the liturgical year, thereby ensuring that the teaching resonates with the children's religious experiences, which are further reinforced through catechesis. Cavalletti (1979) believes that to effectively support children's development in these areas, it is essential to tailor the content to their cognitive abilities and religious needs.

The analysis of the CGS program demonstrates that concepts such as God's immortality, omniscience, omnipresence, invisibility, and omnipotence are implicitly conveyed at the preschool education stage through a carefully selected range of liturgical content, including the Mass and Holy Baptism, as well as biblical content, mainly passages from the New Testament. Given the cognitive development of children at this age, the curriculum centers on the Person of Jesus Christ, the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and His Eucharistic presence.

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The CGS curriculum is structured into three cycles, each spanning three years, and as children grow and gain experience, the content is gradually enriched to develop their understanding of these theological concepts. The CGS approach recognizes that young children perceive the world in ways characterized by a naiver grasp of reality and a form of magical religiosity. Therefore, the content and methods of instruction rely heavily on signs and the symbolic discovery of transcendent reality. For example, the concept of God the Father as Giver is introduced to children over the age of six, as research shows that younger children are not yet capable of grasping such complex concepts. In the CGS, there is a gradual transition from learning about Jesus and His Father—through parables and narratives from the life of Jesus—to discovering the presence and activity of the Trinity in liturgical texts.

This content is communicated through a method that combines parables, character studies, and narrative with a timeline presentation developed by Montessori. Children engage with this content in a multi-sensory and holistic manner, and thus experience the idea that everything in the world was created by God and that the entire history of the Kingdom of God unfolds according to His plan. This narrative begins with the creation of the world and its gift to humanity, continues with the coming of Jesus, who died and rose again, and culminates in the Parousia, the second coming of the Messiah.

According to Cavalletti (1996), understanding the history of salvation, to which humanity is invited, represents a critical stage in pro-social development. History, with its inherent temporality, leads to ethical reflection. Participating in this history and cooperating with God requires an understanding of the moral order that governs it, which in turn reflects a cosmic order. Understanding and implementing these principles is facilitated by the tools of parenesis, which include the moral teachings recorded in the Gospels, such as parables, the Beatitudes, and other instructions (Surma, 2017).

The foundation for building the moral life of an older child is the satisfaction of their need to be loved in early childhood. Religious experience based on the child's enjoyment of God's presence in their life plays a fun-

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damental role in satisfying the need for love. All religious experiences in early childhood contribute to the harmonious formation of the child at this stage, and at the same time constitute indirect moral preparation in the subsequent stages (Cavalletti, 1993). Proclaiming God's love, helping the child to experience it and enjoy it through reflection and prayer should precede moral formation, understood as transmitting a set of principles. Morality in the Christian vision is a response to God's love. Without knowing and establishing a relationship with God, who is love, moral life is without foundation.

Content and methods shaping children's knowledge of Jesus

Walesa's research indicates that young children often use the terms "God" and "Jesus" interchangeably, and their understanding of Jesus tends to be syncretic. Partial information about Jesus (e.g., "the Lamb of God") becomes part of the child's overall statement. His study found that children's knowledge of Jesus often came from liturgical texts as well as from carols that they were familiar with. At this developmental stage, the mystery of the Incarnation was particularly challenging for them to grasp. For example, six-year-olds made statements like "God is a good man and God" (Walesa, 2005, p. 189). While most children struggled to explain the purpose of Jesus' coming to earth, some accurate responses were noted, even among younger children. For instance, a four-year-old said, "The Lord Jesus wants to come to people because He loves them," or a six-year-old explained, "Jesus came so that people would rise from the dead" (Walesa, 2005, p. 190).

To help children understand the meaning of the terms "God" and "Jesus" in the CGS, it is important to clarify whether we are referring to God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. It is also crucial to connect these terms to biblical and liturgical texts, which reveal how these three divine persons manifest themselves to humanity. For example, certain aspects of the liturgy, such as specific texts from the Mass, are designed to help children grasp the mystery of the Holy Trinity. These texts, combined with

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visible signs and gestures, assist children in developing an understanding of key concepts. Examples of such gestures include the epiclesis and the offering. Through the presentation of these gestures, children gradually come to understand the covenant as a gift (with bread and wine serving as visible signs) prepared by God the Father, who invites us to accept these gifts. The gestures of epiclesis and offering, along with the prayers spoken by the priest, demonstrate that everything originates from God the Father and returns to Him through His Son, Jesus, sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit (e.g., the gesture of the priest extending his hands over the gifts during the epiclesis, or raising the gifts during the offering). The image of God the Father as Giver is further affirmed through catechesis on Baptism, where the gift of the light of the Risen Christ is received through the Word of God and water. The overarching goal of liturgical education in the CGS is to prepare children for conscious participation in the Mass, using the method of signs and symbols.

In addition to the liturgy, the Bible serves as a main source for introducing children to Jesus within the CGS program. During Advent, selected Messianic prophecies are presented to the children (Isa. 9:1; Isa. 9:5; Isa. 7:14, Mic. 5:1, Num. 24:17). These passages are intended to prepare the children for the experience of Christmas and to teach them about Jesus as the Light announced by God the Father. The biblical texts read during Christmas also guide children toward the mystery of the Incarnation, and help them better understand that Jesus is not only a good person but is both God and man (Cavalletti, 1979). This understanding is deepened by encouraging children to seek answers to questions such as, "Who is this Child born in Bethlehem?" and "Why do the Wise Men from the East offer Him gold, myrrh, and frankincense?" These reflections also invite children to respond to God's call, marking the beginning of their first personal religious decisions. This is one example of cultivating a child's knowledge and understanding of the concepts that form their religious awareness.

An analysis of the CGS program content for children aged three to six shows that they also become familiar with the teachings of Jesus. Observations of how children engage with selected biblical texts have

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led to the inclusion of several parables that cater to the religious needs and perceptual abilities of the youngest children. The parable method, which is central to teaching Jesus' message, takes into account the developmental stage of each child, though it requires skillful presentation by the adult. Appropriately chosen parables enable children to gradually uncover the mystery of the Kingdom of God. After the age of six, as children become more interested in rules and principles of behavior, catechetical content expands to include more parables with moral teachings. In the CGS program, children are gradually introduced to the moral teachings of Jesus through selected parables about the kingdom of God. The purpose of these parables is to help them understand the mystery of the kingdom—what it is and where it is located. After the age of six, the parables of the merchant and the treasure begin to take on moral significance. Having learned that the kingdom is of immense value, children begin to contemplate what they must do to attain it. Other parables presented to older children include those about the feast (the invited guests and the wise and foolish virgins), which are connected to their preparation for communion, as well as moral parables concerning prayer (the Pharisee and the tax collector, the persistent friend), and love of neighbor (the Good Samaritan), including love for enemies. Guidance to help children make religious decisions and understand norms and rules is also provided through short passages from the Gospels, such as those on forgiveness (e.g., Matthew 18:22). In CGS, children who prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation experience that confession is a prayer, that is, responding to God's initiative in the process of conversion (Kielian, 2024). This sacrament is a direction for man towards the fullness of life with God.

Walesa's research found that younger children, when asked about the presence of Jesus, commonly responded that He was on the cross—an iconic representation—but also noted that He was alive, in heaven, or omnipresent. Children's descriptions of God, including His appearance, concept and nature, often displayed primitive anthropomorphism (e.g., "God looks like a man," "God is more like Daddy because Daddy is smarter than Mommy" [6 years old]), reflecting their early developmental stage (Walesa, 2005, p. 189).

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These findings raise important considerations about the development of children's image and concept of God and His presence, which catechesis can effectively support without surpassing their cognitive abilities. An example from the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is the parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:3-5, 11-16), which acknowledges the anthropomorphic thinking of preschoolers but also addresses their fundamental need for love and security. It allows children to discover Jesus' presence and establish a personal relationship with Him, which is essential for moral formation at this stage of their development. In exploring the parable, children independently discern who the sheep are that the Good Shepherd knows by name. In their drawings of this parable, children often depict the person closest to them (frequently a female figure), thus expressing their understanding and experience of love. This moment of personal discovery marks the beginning of the child's relationship with Jesus.

The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and His relationship with the sheep, is later complemented by the metaphor of the true vine, which helps older children preparing for their First Communion better understand the significance of unity with Jesus and God the Father. Shaping the image of God through parables simultaneously involves self-discovery (e.g., "I am the sheep of the Good Shepherd,""I am a branch of the true vine"). Both texts reveal the mystery of a person living and abiding in a relationship with God, who extends a personal invitation to each individual. This awareness of one's identity in relation to God the Father and His Son naturally leads to moral reflection, prompting questions such as: What can I do to remain in this relationship?

Content and methods shaping the knowledge of human communication with God

Walesa (2005) asserts that "the establishment of a conscious and voluntary relationship with God represents a profound upheaval, marking the most significant turning point in a person's life: the emergence of the

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Other" (p. 170). He notes that this awareness can emerge as early as two or three years of age in some individuals. During this early stage, a child's religiosity is primarily shaped through participation in the religious activities of those closest to them, which they are often encouraged to join. The more frequent and shared these religious activities are, the more likely it is that the child will engage in independent and spontaneous religious behavior.

The formation of religious feelings during this period cannot be overlooked either, as they trigger the need for social interactions, interpersonal bonds, and stimulate other developmental needs, including psychomotor and speech development (Tatala, 2000). Walesa suggests that "the affective and cognitive reflection of certain social situations, especially religious ones, leads to the first value judgements" (2005, p. 170).

A child's capacity for social learning also enables the formation of specific "rituals" within the religious domain, which contribute to the development of religious intentionality. According to Walesa (2005), "the most important manifestation of a young child's religiosity seems to be their prayer" (171), which is one of the means of maintaining a relationship with God and communicating with Him. The children studied primarily associated prayer with petition, as well as specific times or places (rituals) for its recitation. Older children sometimes described prayer as an expression of love for God.

Walesa's research also offers insight into the motives behind prayer among young children. The most common motive (65.5%) was satisfying their own needs, which aligns with the prayer of petition mentioned by the respondents. A disinterested motive, reflecting altruistic intentions, was observed in only 14.5% of the children. Another notable motive was "necessity and parental order" (34.7%). However, despite adult guidance, children rarely engaged in spontaneous prayers of apology, thanksgiving, or praise (Walesa, 2005, p. 200).

Based on the analysis of survey results, it can be concluded that the form and content of children's petitionary prayers reflect those of the adults (primarily parents) who initiate, encourage, and model prayer for them. Children's attendance at Mass, particularly when they are given the

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opportunity to actively participate in the Prayer of the Faithful—a form of petitionary prayer—further reinforces this practice (e.g., prayers for the deceased). It is important that children express faith in the efficacy of prayer. Those able to articulate their beliefs affirm that "God is all-powerful, holy, good, and loves humanity, especially good people" (Walesa, 2005, p. 199). Interviews with the parents of the surveyed children revealed that the most common forms of prayer were those recited from memory, such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Angelus. Parents noted that children often felt bored and needed encouragement to pray

In contrast, Cavalletti offers a markedly different perspective on young children's prayer. Observing children, she noted that "children have an extraordinary capacity for prayer in terms of duration, spontaneity, and the sublimity of expression. Their prayers are filled with praise and thanksgiving, and express both the closeness and transcendence of God" (1979, p. 52). She attributed this to the "metaphysical" capacities of the child, who "feels perfectly at home in the transcendent world, and with contentment and serenity, rejoices in communion with God" (1972, p. 52).

The child's inherent tendency toward transcendence was also discussed by Walesa who noted that "through participation in the life of adults, particularly their religious life, the child gradually becomes capable of transcending the phenomenal sphere and mentally transforming it into a vehicle for religious meanings" (2005, p. 184). He argues that this capacity for transcendence "coincides with the functioning of self-directed activity and is especially evident in children whose religiously committed parents provide only minimal guidance" (2005, p. 184). These observations are vital for understanding how to support young children's religious development and may explain differences in the preferred and observed forms of children's prayer.

In the CGS, the adequate preparation of the adult is essential, along with the recognition that a child's religious life is intrinsically different from that of an adult. It should not be judged by the standards of adult religiosity (Cavalletti, 1979, p. 55). In CGS, "non-intrusive assistance" takes the form of observing the child's behavior and providing support that considers their developmental and religious needs. This introduction

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to religious reality involves transmitting truths and values through the adult's life and words. Initially, this takes the form of proclaiming and evangelizing, through which the child comes to know God, who reveals His love through Christ.

This proclamation bears the characteristics of a kerygma, grounded in selected biblical texts that describe events where God reveals His presence. The first and most significant moment of prayer is the child's contact with the Word of God, listening to the message together, which serves as an invitation to respond—a conversation with the One who speaks. Prayer, therefore, must be rooted in the kerygma. In this way, the child will not merely associate prayer with a routine obligation imposed by parents, where morning and evening prayers are recited out of habit, often as memorized phrases lacking meaningful context or understanding.

In the catechetical practice at the CGS, prayer follows the reading of biblical texts. Through a brief narrative in their own words, the catechist directs the children's attention to the central theological themes, prompting their reflection with questions such as, "What do you think this means?" or "What is Jesus trying to tell us?" This invites children to contemplate on the message, which they can continue during their independent work, drawing, or personal prayer.

The prayer formulas suggested for memorization, often drawn from the Psalms, are carefully selected to align with the kerygma of the Word of God proclaimed during catechesis. Before being encouraged to offer prayers of petition, children are allowed to express the joy of being with God and experiencing His love. At this early age, children often do not experience a sense of lack, so their prayers of petition usually arise from imitating adults. Introducing prayers of petition too early can reinforce magical thinking and contribute to a distorted image of God as a wizard or magician. Additionally, prayer should not be used as a disciplinary tool, which is a common practice among adults struggling with a child's behavior.

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Conclusions

Walesa's research is consistent with other studies suggesting that children generally hold anthropomorphic conceptions of God and that their ability to grasp more abstract notions of God depends on their cognitive development, particularly on moving beyond the stage of concrete thinking. Although research by Walesa and religious education at CGS confirm a progressive development of individual religiosity, where the understanding of truths about the nature of God becomes more abstract, symbolic, internalized, and individualized, rather than concrete, literal, absolutist, and externally adopted as cognitive development progresses—they also challenge the common perception that children's religious thinking is purely irrational. Instead, the study suggests that the magical thinking children display in matters of faith is not merely a cognitive limitation but a potent heuristic tool for environmental learning and creativity.

This model of religiosity also acknowledges that feelings "are not inherently religious but become so through their reference to God" (Tatala, 2000, p. 47). These feelings are shaped by religious consciousness and the attribution of meanings and significance to lived experiences, which, in the CGS program, are supported by the teaching content and the use of symbols and parables. Other significant components of religiosity include religious decision-making, community bonds among believers, religious practices, morality, experiences, and forms of creed. Decision-making in a religious context involves evaluating situations, acquiring necessary knowledge, and making choices within the intellectual, emotional, and volitional realms. This process entails not only the individual's relationship with God but also concerns their interaction with the world in light of transcendent reality. Thus, religious decision-making is tied to religious morality, which governs relationships with people, objects, and phenomena by distinguishing between criteria of good and evil that provide the basis for making choices and motivate actions. The psycho-social dimension of religiosity is characterized by a sense of connection to a community of believers, which is initially fostered within the family

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and further developed through participation in the Eucharistic liturgy, parish activities, and religious education, such as religion classes and retreats. This communal bond creates the opportunity for building new religious experiences, facilitates the development of religious awareness and attitudes, the expression of religious feelings, and active participation in religious practices.

Research on the moral development of preschoolers indicates that they understand what it means to experience pain and suffering and recognize actions that cause these as wrong. When explicitly asked to explain why hitting others or taking their possessions is wrong, children often cite the harm and suffering that would be inflicted as the main reasons (Davidson et al., 1983). However, translating these moral intuitions into consistent behavior is complex (Smith et al., 2013). In general, preschoolers' moral reasoning is not a strong predictor of whether they will actually behave in a moral or prosocial manner (Tan et al., 2021). This research suggests that adult authority plays a key role in encouraging children to act in accordance with their moral reasoning. While children may arrive at certain moral conclusions with some adult guidance, they rarely treat these conclusions as binding moral imperatives (Harris, 2023).

Religion does not create morality for children or adults; rather, moral intuitions exist independently of religion, with many moral values being cross-cultural and universal, regardless of religious affiliation or lack thereof. However, religion influences morality in various ways. First, it reinforces universal moral intuitions related to care and justice, directing them toward specific, though not all, ends. Second, religion ties these intuitions to values that are not universally shared, such as social order, self-control, and purity, thereby creating a more restrictive moral framework. Third, religion can promote moral absolutism and strictness by grounding these intuitions in deontological norms of behavior. Finally, religiosity may enhance conformity to religious norms and authorities, which can sometimes undermine moral autonomy and lead to prioritizing religious beliefs over moral ones (Saroglou, 2021).

In the religious education and prosocial development of children, it is necessary to consider the interaction between (a) the child's individual

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characteristics, including age, psychological traits, religious socialization, and prior experiences with physical and psychological realities; (b) the qualities of the adults introducing the child to the faith, particularly the nature and status of their relationship with the child; and (c) the content and quality of the religious knowledge being taught. These factors, which are psychologically significant for the development of mature religiosity, are taken into account— as demonstrated in our comparative analysis—by the CGS model of religious and prosocial education.

Walesa's research findings on the development of religiosity in children, despite civilizational changes and the increasing secularization of society, highlight aspects that should be taken into account in the context of family upbringing. Since they concern development that proceeds through specific stages, they can be considered immutable. CGS, on the other hand, is a program that takes into account the religious needs of young children in all the areas studied by Walesa. Although there is a lack of scientific research on the effects of religious education according to CGS, it should be emphasized that there are numerous notes from catechists observing children's behavior at CGS, as well as statements and drawings which indicate that the content and method of signs/parables used by Cavalletti support religious development, including moral development.

CGS offers many innovative solutions to support the holistic religious development of a child, including moral development, but requires appropriate preparation of adults (parents, catechists) and the environment. It requires further analysis and research.

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Validation of the Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) tool

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Abstract

Research objectives and problem: The article focuses on the theoretical basis for the development and validation of the Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) tool. The aim was to design and evaluate the psychometric properties of a questionnaire for investigating the career planning styles of university graduates entering the labor market. The main research objective was formulated as the following question: *What are the career planning styles of university students?*

Research methods: The study was conducted in the 2023/2024 academic year. The Career Planning Styles questionnaire was distributed to students in two stages. First, a pilot study was carried out with 155 respondents, which enabled an initial psychometric validation of the tool. The main survey was then conducted among 665 university students.

Process of argumentation: The article begins with an introduction to the topic of professional careers in the modern world. Particular attention is paid to the issues of accelerating change and the growing complexity of the world, as well as their consequences for the labor market and career planning. This section also addresses factors that influence career planning decisions. The next part outlines the methodological assumptions of the research, including sample selection, research timeline, and the procedure for creating and validating the SPK-21 tool. The final part presents a summary of the tool's potential applications.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The analyses led to the development of the final version of the Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for its three dimensions: ordered style, flexible style, and dependent style was 0.726, 0.707, and 0.620, respectively.

***Keywords*:**
career planning styles, labor market, students, psychometrics, research tools, SPK-21 questionnaire

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Conclusions and/or recommendations: The evaluation of the validity and reliability of the final version of SPK-21 was positive. The tool can be used to measure three styles of career planning, and the survey may be conducted individually or in groups.

Introduction

Changes in the labor market provide a starting point for reflections on career planning among young people (including university students). A review of the literature shows that young people entering secondary and higher education are likely to follow non-linear career paths. Different non-linear career models have been identified, including protean careers, kaleidoscope careers, portfolio careers, boundaryless careers, and zigzag careers (Jagielska, 2024a, 2024b; Piorunek, 2016). The theoretical basis for these models is rooted in today's social, economic, cultural, and political realities. Their common denominator is volatility, uncertainty, and the complex experiences associated with pursuing careers in a globalized world.

In addition, exposure to crises and unexpected events, both of which significantly affect the labor market, is becoming increasingly frequent. As a result, young people face many challenges: they must plan their careers in the context of change, uncertainty, and crisis. Technological advancements are reshaping the labor market, and the pace of these transformations is accelerating. It is difficult to predict which career path will allow a smooth entry into employment. On the one hand, careers today are often described as competence-based; on the other, specific qualifications remain indispensable (Jagielska, 2023; Kwiatkowski, 2023; Kwiatkowski, 2025). Reports also indicate that young people seek stable employment (Turska, 2020; Deloitte, 2025), while the instability of the labor market forces them to change professions and workplaces. Although many hope for a stable, linear career path, the reality of a complex and non-linear world makes this aspiration difficult to achieve. Young people therefore face challenging decisions regarding education and professional life (Cybal-Michalska, 2016; Jagielska, 2024a).

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The choice of career path is itself a complex process. It is determined not only by external factors—such as labor market conditions—but also by the family's socio-cultural and economic status, as well as internal factors including intellectual abilities, interests, and values (Czerwińska-Jasiewicz, 1997; Firkowska-Mankiewicz, 1999). These determinants form an interconnected whole, which makes it difficult to identify only one or two as decisive in career planning. Each factor matters, particularly in today's complex, non-linear world. Professional decisions and career planning are influenced not only by the socio-economic situation in a given country but also by family engagement in education and support (Jagielska, 2024a), social networks, and many other factors.

It seems impossible to develop a model that captures all these variables. Even if such a model were created, it would describe only an individual's situation at a particular moment in time. The world is changing so rapidly that building a model to represent this reality accurately is extremely difficult. Therefore, career planning models should aim to approximate reality as closely as possible, reflect existing trends, and take into account the fluid and complex circumstances of contemporary life. This study investigates the ways in which young people plan their careers, with the goal of identifying the styles that they adopt when preparing for their professional future. The issue is especially important because, in today's changing, complex, and non-linear world, career planning has become a real challenge that requires strategic thinking and individualized approaches. This article presents the procedure for developing and validating the original Career Planning Styles tool.

Methodological assumptions

The aim of the study was to conduct a psychometric analysis of the original tool called *Career Planning Styles*, intended as the basis for further research into the careers of university students. The main research objective was formulated as the following question: *What are the career planning styles of university students?* The study was carried out in the academic year 2023/2024. The *Career Planning Styles* survey questionnaire was

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administered to students in two stages. First, a pilot study was conducted with 155 students from Polish universities, which allowed for the initial psychometric validation of the tool. The main survey was then conducted with 665 university students aged between 18 and 25. The sampling method used was convenience sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Leiner, 2016).

Development of the Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) tool

The original tool was designed for a qualitative evaluation of approaches to career planning among young people who are about to complete their education and enter the labor market. The tool was developed in stages. The first stage involved a literature review conducted to investigate issues related to the labor market and careers. Based on this analysis, a list of questionnaire items was composed, formulated as statements. The questionnaire items were designed in line with the guidelines described in relevant publications (Foddy, 1993; Nachmias & Nachmias, 2001).

Operationalization of the theoretical construct involved formulating statements that referred to different actions taken by university students to improve their chances of entering the labor market and pursuing their intended career paths. To this end, the literature on professional careers was analyzed to identify factors related to career decision-making. These included both external (systemic) conditions and individual factors (such as family background, immediate environment, and others).

The questionnaire items were therefore constructed to address:

1. external factors (economic conditions, the labor market, social environment, etc.) which shape the context of career planning,
2. selected internal factors (interests, knowledge of specific professions, etc.) (Rożnowski, 2009), and
3. different career models (Bańka, 2016; Paszkowska-Rogacz, 2003; Rożnowski & Fortuna, 2020).

Actions that could be undertaken by individuals planning their professional future were also considered. A total of 57 items were formulated.

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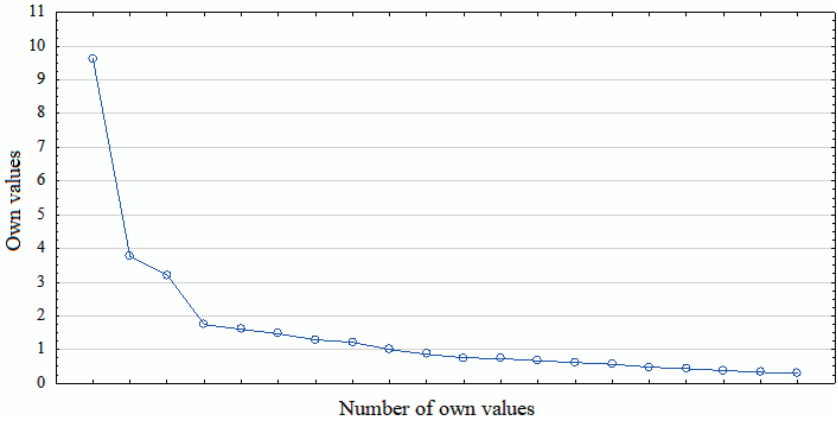
Responses were provided on a five-point scale: 1 – definitely not, 2 – rather not, 3 – hard to say, 4 – rather yes, 5 – definitely yes (Brzeziński, 2001; Brzeziński, 2019; Fronczyk, 2009). Instructions were developed to accompany the questionnaire, including information about the purpose of the study, anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation (Aranowska, 2005).

Once the item list had been completed, it was reviewed by three expert judges (pedagogues), who examined both the questionnaire items and instructions. Their reviews were discussed, and suggested changes were incorporated. Following this, the pilot study was conducted to reduce the number of questions and produce the finalized measurement tool. This article presents the first stage of validation work, along with a more detailed psychometric analysis of the shortened final version.

SPK tool validation procedure

The initial attempts to evaluate reliability produced average results for the 57-item version of the tool. The validity assessment through factor analysis did not yield satisfactory outcomes either. The scree plot for this first version (SPK-57) is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Scree plot for pilot measurement of Career Planning Styles (SPK-57) tool



Source: Authors' own compilation

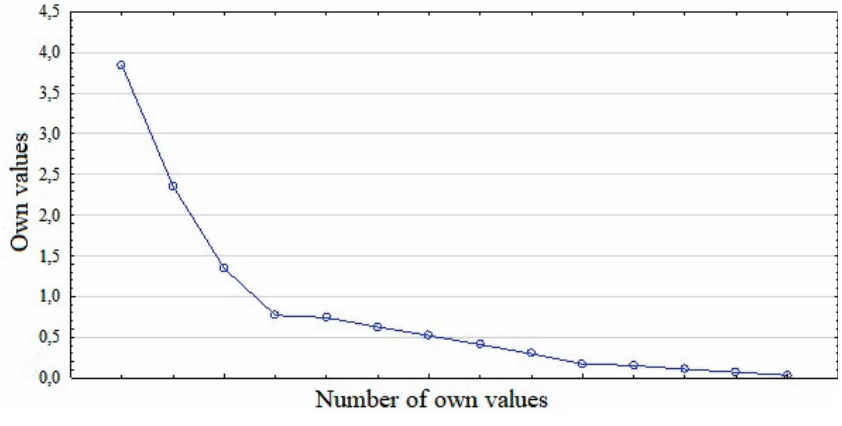
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This analysis indicated the need to identify multiple scales within the tool. As many as nine factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.00. Based on the evaluation of eigenvalues and factor loadings, a decision was made to remove items with the lowest loadings, as well as those that reduced the overall reliability of the tool. This process reduced the number of items from 57 to 21, retaining only those with the strongest factor loadings and the highest reliability.

The shortened 21-item version was then subjected to further validation. Validity was analyzed using exploratory factor analysis. Principal axis factoring revealed that the tool identifies three main factors. The scree plot for the SPK-21 is presented in Figure 2. According to Cattell's criterion, three distinct factors can be identified.

Figure 2. Scree plot for pilot measurement of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) tool



Source: Authors' own compilation

Cattell's criterion was supported by the Kaiser criterion in determining the number of factors to retain. Of the eigenvalues presented in Table 1, three are greater than 1.00.

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Table 1. Eigenvalues for pilot measurement of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) tool

Factor	Eigenvalue	Percentage of variance explained	
		Total	Cumulative
1	3.84	3.84	18,29
2	2.36	6.20	29.51
3	1.35	7.54	35.91
4	0.77	8.31	39.58
5	0.74	9.05	43.12
6	0.62	9.68	46.09
7	0.52	10.20	48.57
8	0.41	10.61	50.52
9	0.30	10.91	51.93

Source: Authors' own compilation

Due to the above-mentioned aspects, it can be assumed that the tool has a three-factor scale structure. Factor loadings of the specific questionnaire items in relation to the three scales identified in the factor model are presented in Table 2. The results were subjected to Varimax rotation.

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Table 2. Factor loadings for pilot measurement of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) tool

Statements	Factors		
	1	2	3
1. I do not know the exact direction of my professional interests.	0.594		
4. I do not care where I will work.	0.577		
7. My education has been a sequence of accidental choices.	0.607		
10. Studying has never mattered to me, which is why I chose my faculty randomly.	0.615		
13. I do not like to think about the future; I prefer to live in the moment.	0.786		
16. I live in the moment; I do not think about the future.	0.779		
19. I am not concerned about building my network of contacts.	0.535		
2. I could adapt to changes in the labor market in my profession.		0.452	
5. I am ready to relocate to achieve my professional goal.		0.623	
8. I am open to working outside Poland.		0.780	
11. I can adapt to changing labor market conditions.		0.437	
14. I am aware that I will have to change workplaces.		0.396	
17. Achieving my professional goal is so important to me that leaving the country would not be a problem.		0.825	
20. I take part in international internships and programs to prepare for working abroad and in international teams.		0.505	
3. I do not know where to search for information about training required in my profession.			0.767
6. I do not know exactly how long it will take me to achieve my career goal.			0.531
9. I do not know what formal requirements I would have to meet to achieve my career goal.			0.722
12. I cannot search for new information related to my professional interests on my own.			0.592
15. Sudden legal changes connected with my profession would discourage me from changing my career goal.			0.399
18. I do not know what my professional goal is, but I think I am able to manage my career.			0.535
21. I would like to benefit from mobility schemes, but I am afraid I do not know the language well enough.			0.353

Note: Factors analyzed were subject to Varimax rotation.
Source: Authors' own compilation

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The results of the exploratory factor analysis were verified using the confirmatory model. The assignment of individual questionnaire items to the identified scales was based on the model shown in Tables 1 and 2. The confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the three-factor model fit the data well: $\chi^2(186) = 245.006$; $p = 0.002$, RMSEA = 0.044 (0.026–0.059), GFI = 0.848, AGFI = 0.814. Thus, the analyses conducted enabled identification of three final career planning styles: ordered, flexible, and dependent.

Table 3. Reliability analysis of pilot measurement of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21)

Career Planning Style	No. of items	Cronbach's α
Ordered	7	0.793
Flexible	7	0.690
Dependent	7	0.690

Source: Authors' own compilation

The second stage of the psychometric validation of the Career Planning Styles questionnaire included an evaluation of its reliability. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of each scale was analyzed. The summary of the analyses is presented in Table 3. The results show that the reliability of the scales ranged from 0.690 to 0.793, which indicates satisfactory reliability of the measurement. In addition, Cronbach's alpha values after the removal of 36 items from the tool are presented in Table 4. It can be observed that only in a few cases would the removal of items increase the reliability values.

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Table 4. Reliability analysis of pilot measurement of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) after item removal

Statements	Cronbach's α after removal		
	1	2	3
1. I do not know the exact direction of my professional interests.	0.767		
4. I do not care where I will work.	0.784		
7. My education has been a sequence of accidental choices.	0.762		
10. Studying has never mattered to me, which is why I chose my faculty randomly.	0.768		
13. I do not like to think about the future; I prefer to live in the moment.	0.746		
16. I live in the moment; I do not think about the future.	0.753		
19. I am not concerned about building my network of contacts.	0.789		
2. I could adapt to changes in the labor market in my profession.		0.700	
5. I am ready to relocate to achieve my professional goal.		0.660	
8. I am open to working outside Poland.		0.613	
11. I can adapt to changing labor market conditions.		0.701	
14. I am aware that I will have to change workplaces.		0.708	
17. Achieving my professional goal is so important to me that leaving the country would not be a problem.		0.585	
20. I take part in international internships and programs to prepare for working abroad and in international teams.		0.694	
3. I do not know where to search for information about training required in my profession.			0.604
6. I do not know exactly how long it will take me to achieve my career goal.			0.660
9. I do not know what formal requirements I would have to meet to achieve my career goal.			0.616
12. I cannot search for new information related to my professional interests on my own.			0.636
15. Sudden legal changes connected with my profession would discourage me from changing my career goal.			0.669
18. I do not know what my professional goal is, but I think I am able to manage my career.			0.649
21. I would like to benefit from mobility schemes, but I am afraid I do not know the language well enough.			0.700

Source: Authors' own compilation

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The tool in this form—with 21 items formulated as statements evaluating three career planning styles—was used in the main study. The psychometric analysis conducted on a sample of 665 students is presented

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later in this article. This analysis constituted the main part of the psychometric evaluation of the tool.

Psychometric evaluation of the final version of SPK-21

The final version of the tool designed to measure career planning styles was subjected to psychometric analysis. The sample consisted of 665 respondents. The confirmatory analysis corroborated the three-factor structure of the tool: $\chi^2(189) = 653.725$; $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.061 (0.056–0.066), GFI = 0.906, AGFI = 0.885. The model showed a good fit with the data, although it should be noted that it did not reach the optimal fit values. This indicates room for further refinement of the tool. The fit indices for the final version were better than in the pilot study. Reliability analysis was also conducted for the three identified career planning styles. The Cronbach's alpha values for these styles are presented in Table 5 below. The SPK-21 tool can therefore be considered both valid and reliable.

Table 5. Analysis of reliability of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21)

Career Planning Styles	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
Ordered	7	0.726
Flexible	7	0.707
Dependent	7	0.620

Source: Authors' own compilation

The weakest scale was the dependent style, while the highest reliability was obtained for the ordered career planning style. The reliability coefficients for individual questionnaire items are presented in Table 6 below.

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Table 6. Analysis of reliability of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) after removal of items

Statements	Cronbach's α after removal		
	1	2	3
1. I do not know the exact direction of my professional interests.	0.708		
4. I do not care where I will work.	0.693		
7. My education has been a sequence of accidental choices.	0.666		
10. Studying has never mattered to me, which is why I chose my faculty randomly.	0.669		
13. I do not like to think about the future; I prefer to live in the moment.	0.670		
16. I live in the moment; I do not think about the future.	0.677		
19. I am not concerned about building my network of contacts.	0.729		
2. I could adapt to changes in the labor market in my profession.		0.712	
5. I am ready to relocate to fulfill my professional goal.		0.664	
8. I am open to working outside Poland.		0.618	
11. I can adapt to changing labor market conditions.		0.700	
14. I am aware that I will have to change workplaces.		0.745	
17. Fulfilling my professional goal is so important to me that leaving the country would not be a problem.		0.618	
20. I take part in international internships and programs to prepare for working abroad and in international teams.		0.710	
3. I do not know where to search for information about training required in my profession.			0.535
6. I do not know exactly how long it will take me to fulfill my career goal.			0.565
9. I do not know what formal requirements I would have to meet to fulfill my career goal.			0.494
12. I cannot search for new information related to my professional interests on my own.			0.540
15. Sudden legal changes connected with my profession would discourage me from changing my career goal.			0.584
18. I do not know what my professional goal is, but I think I am able to manage my career.			0.587
21. I would like to benefit from mobility schemes, but I am afraid I do not know the language well enough.			0.640

Source: Authors' own compilation

In the final version, within the ordered style scale, item 19 proved to be the weakest. It can also be noted that removing items 14 or 21 would slightly improve the validity of the measurements, although the changes would

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be minimal. Evaluation of the validity and reliability of the final version of SPK-21 leads to the conclusion that the tool is accurate and can be used to measure the three career planning styles: ordered, flexible, and dependent.

Further analysis of the results made it possible to establish interpretation ranges. The raw values and corresponding standardized results (sten scores) are presented in Table 7 below. Sten scores in the range of 1–3 should be considered low, 4–7 moderate, and 8–10 high.

Table 7. Standardized values of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21)

Sten score	Raw Result		
	Ordered	Flexible	Dependent
1	7–16	7–12	7–13
2	17–19	13-14	14-16
3	20–22	15–16	17–18
4	23–25	17–18	19–20
5	26–28	19–21	21–22
6	29–30	22–24	23–24
7	31–32	25–26	25–27
8	33	27–29	28–29
9	34	30–31	30–31
10	35	32–35	32–35

Source: Authors' own compilation

A high score for the ordered style means that individuals pursue their career paths with a specific goal in mind and aim to achieve it through deliberate action. Their actions are purposeful and focused on the chosen goal. Low scores refer to young people who act chaotically when planning their career future and lack a clearly defined career goal.

High scores for the flexible career planning style indicate individuals who can adapt to changing conditions when planning their career paths and are open to different possibilities. Those with low scores are characterized by inflexibility and difficulty adjusting to a changing environment. High scores for the dependent style refer to individuals who are able

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to plan their careers, are development-oriented, and can independently search for information related to personal and professional growth. Low scores for this style describe people who cannot plan their career future independently and do not know what actions to take when choosing their career path.

The results for each career planning style are obtained by summing the responses given to the relevant statements. The SPK-21 statements corresponding to each style are presented in Table 8 below. The responses are assigned numerical values on a 5-point scale: definitely not – 1, rather not – 2, hard to say – 3, rather yes – 4, definitely yes – 5. It is worth noting that responses to some statements need to be re-coded by reversing the values: 1 becomes 5, 2 becomes 4, 4 becomes 2, and 5 becomes 1.

Table 8. Construction of Career Planning Styles (SPK-21)

Career Planning Styles	SPK-21 Statement Number
Ordered	1r, 4r, 7r, 10r, 13r, 16r, 19r
Flexible	2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20
Dependent	3r, 6r, 9r, 12r, 15r, 18r, 21r

r – reversed statements
Source: Authors' own compilation

The final version of the SPK-21 tool used to measure career planning styles is presented in Appendix 1 to this article. The tool can be used for both individual and group assessments. Completing the questionnaire takes up to 10 minutes. It is available in hard copy or as an online survey.

Conclusions and recommendations

The psychometric evaluation of the Career Planning Styles (SPK-21) tool presented here shows that the questionnaire is reliable and can be applied in research on career planning styles. The results obtained are

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satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha for the specific styles is acceptable although some areas should be strengthened. This particularly applies to the dependent style, for which Cronbach's alpha is 0.620. Therefore, further refinement of the SPK-21 questionnaire would be worthwhile. The questionnaire can be used for both individual assessments and group studies. It may be incorporated into academic courses such as career counselling, human resource management, and career management. It can also be used to demonstrate how individuals may be supported in their career planning, and by careers offices to assist students in choosing a career path.

Limitations

The study has certain limitations. These include the method of sample selection. In this study, convenience sampling was used, which means that only those who were available and willing to participate were included.

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***Career Planning Styles (SPK-21)* Questionnaire**

Please indicate to what extent each of the 21 statements refers to you. You will always have 5 response options to choose from (definitely not, rather not, hard to say, rather yes, definitely yes). Read each statement and select to what extent it describes you. For each statement, select one response only. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

1. I do not know the exact direction of my professional interests.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. I could adapt to changes in the labor market in my profession.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. I do not know where to search for information about training required in my profession.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. I do not care where I will work.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. I am ready to relocate to achieve my professional goal.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. I do not know exactly how long it will take me to achieve my career goal.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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7. My education has been a sequence of accidental choices.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. I am open to working outside Poland.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. I do not know what formal requirements I would have to meet to achieve my career goal.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Studying has never mattered to me, which is why I chose my faculty randomly.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. I can adapt to changing labor market conditions.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. I cannot search for new information related to my professional interests on my own.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. I do not like to think about the future; I prefer to live in the moment.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. I am aware that I will have to change workplaces.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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15. Sudden legal changes connected with my profession would discourage me from changing my career goal.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. I live in the moment; I do not think about the future.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Achieving my professional goal is so important to me that leaving the country would not be a problem.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. I do not know what my professional goal is, but I think I am able to manage my career.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

19. I am not concerned about building my network of contacts.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. I take part in international internships and programs to prepare for working abroad and in international teams.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. I would like to benefit from mobility schemes, but I am afraid I do not know the language well enough.

Definitely not	*Rather not*	*Hard to say*	*Rather yes*	*Definitely yes*
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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