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DOCTORAL THESIS

- SUMMARY -

Absenteeism and dropping out of school

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DOCTORAL THESIS STRUCTURE

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Keywords: school absenteeism, school dropout, school failure, school success, educational policies, sociology of education.

Summary

1. The importance of the topic

In 2010, the European Union undertook, through the Europe 2020 Strategy, to reduce the early school leaving rate to less than 10% by 2020. In 2011, one year after the adoption of the normative act, the Council of the European Union formulated a set of recommendations on policies to reduce early school leaving, focusing on prevention, intervention and compensation. The recommendation complemented the Europe 2020 strategy by outlining the social and educational policy measures to be implemented by Member States to achieve the 2020 target. The document proposes a guide for Member States to reduce early school leaving, in line with the objectives of the Strategy. In this regard, the first recommendation was to identify the factors leading to early school leaving, as well as to monitor the manifestations of the phenomenon at national, regional, county and local level, to accumulate a sufficient volume of data on conditionalities and determinants of each community separately. Therefore, the first step would be to monitor the phenomenon and the empirical analysis of the determinants, in order to facilitate the implementation of "evidence-based" policies.

The second phase, which was to be completed by the end of 2012, aimed at adopting a state-wide strategy to reduce early school leaving in line with the 2020 target of the National Strategy. to be developed in accordance with the national realities of each state, based on research conducted in the period 2010-2011, and should, according to the recommendations, have included specific measures and specific indicators for the prevention and improvement of the phenomenon, but also compensatory measures, in the meaning of social reintegration, respectively the professional insertion (as the case may be) of young people who have already left school. In Romania, such a strategy was adopted only in 2014 and targeted the period 2015-2020. Its aim was to reduce the early school leaving rate to 11.3% nationally by 2020.

The moment of elaboration of this paper is a good opportunity to re-evaluate and verify the objectives stated above, assumed by the European Union and Romania 10 and 5 years ago, respectively. Thus, at the level of Romania, the rate of early school leaving reached in 2020 the value of 15.6%, with 4.3 percentage points over the desideratum of 11.3%. Therefore, the question legitimately arises : what went wrong? Strategic planning or implementation? At the level of the European Union, the early school leaving rate reached the value of 9.9%, the desideratum being less than 10%. The difference between the real value and the ideal one is so close (0.1%) that we decide emotionally whether the goal has been achieved or not.

A first argument for approaching the topic of this research - absenteeism and school dropout in Dolj County - considers the failure or, in a euphemistic register, the partial success of strategies to prevent and reduce these phenomena, as they were assumed at the level national and European. In fact, while some European countries have had remarkable successes, in the case of Romania the downward pace of indicators related to school failure, although existing, shows a particularly slow evolution, with many fluctuations from year to year, a finding that leads us to the idea that a new way of approaching these phenomena is needed. In this paper, we start from **the general hypothesis** , of high rank, that the failure to achieve the objective assumed *by the Strategy on early school leaving in Romania (2015-2020)* is based on two causes : 1) lack of complete data on resources and forms of manifestation of the phenomena of abandonment and absenteeism at community level (understanding the particular forms of manifestation of phenomena) and 2) lack of clear directions of intervention, in relation to the data and findings from empirical studies (intervention at micro level, in relation to the specific each case of abandonment and the social profile of each family and community).

A second argument regarding the need for the investigative approach starts from the shortage of data on the phenomena of absenteeism and abandonment in Dolj County. Of course, starting with 2006, successive, longitudinal researches of these phenomena were carried out at county level within the Dolj County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance. These studies, the results of which will be analyzed comparatively in the paper, provide satisfactory information on the dynamics of the number of cases of absenteeism and dropout in the county, the distribution by area of residence, levels of education, gender, etc. Although it provides a valid and accurate x-ray of the situation, the purpose of this research was rather to inventory the proportion of phenomena (descriptive purpose),

without providing a detailed picture of the factors that favor, determine and issues related to the phenomenology of school failure (explanatory, comprehensive purpose). In addition to the mentioned studies, another doctoral thesis that dealt with the issue of absenteeism and school dropout at the county level was elaborated by Dr. Liviu Țiculescu in 2010. Useful at that time, the actuality of the data presented in the mentioned paper in the last decade in terms of the educational phenomenon. We will keep some of the conclusions of the paper cited as plausible expectations for the study we will undertake. Also, in the mentioned doctoral research, the sociological questionnaire was administered to a relatively small number of subjects (150) from grades IX-XII of the “Matei Basarab” School Group. Therefore, it was not possible to extrapolate, even biased, the results of the investigation undertaken at that time, much less to extrapolate them to current realities.

We must not lose sight of the fact that, due to its multiple consequences, school failure is an ever-present research topic. The well-being of a company depends on the quality of the human resource, on the long-term investment in the human capital of that company. The maximum state will never be able to ensure well-being where human resources are not performing, and the history of recent decades and the results of recent research are consistent with the above statement (see the share of factors related to education in calculating the human development index - HDI). The high level of education of a population correlates positively with social welfare, quality of life and economic prosperity.

We can never say that all facets of school failure have been investigated, that we have reached a terminus of this object of research. All subsystems of the social system, including the education system, are defined by their fluctuating nature, by the fragile balance between change and stability, and scientific knowledge will never be able to fully capture this dynamic. For example, this paper is certainly one of the first doctoral theses published in Romania that analyzes the issue of absenteeism and school dropout in relation to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the implementation of online schooling. A year and a half ago, the research plan I had drawn up underwent major changes, given the huge, unprecedented transformations that the very object of the research itself knew. It was thus necessary to reconsider the theoretical basis of the thesis, by documenting and quickly radiographing the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the educational phenomenon, but also reconfiguring the research tools, which had to measure variables related to the new reality. Therefore, the topic of absenteeism and school dropout, as well as most of the topics

addressed by PhD students of the Doctoral School of Sociology in Craiova (external and internal migration, quality of life of vulnerable groups, depopulation of rural areas, topics related to social development, etc.) are research areas. dynamic, unpredictable, about which we can never say that everything has been said.

2. The purpose and objectives of the thesis

The purpose of the doctoral thesis is to replace the functions of sociology as a science :

1. *Cognitive function* : based on relevant data and information, provided by the literature and statistical institutes, but also through those obtained through our own field research, we will contribute to the scientific knowledge of the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout.
2. *Synthesizing function* : will be highlighted in the first part of the paper, by performing theoretical syntheses that reflect the current state of knowledge of the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout.
3. *Predictive function* : the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout will be analyzed in dynamics, through the prism of the longitudinal method, so that the identified regularities allow the scientific basis of some predictions.
4. *Methodological function* : the data will be collected, filtered, processed and interpreted in accordance with the methodological norms imposed by the sociological investigation. We will give priority attention to methodological issues both in the secondary analysis of the data with which we will operate in the first three chapters and in the methodological apparatus used in our own field research (see chapter 4.2. *Methodological guidelines*)
5. *Therapeutic function* : the data collected and the findings from the field research will help us to identify priority points for intervention to reduce the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout.
6. *The function of social control* : the identification of priorities will serve to formulate effective educational policies, developed in accordance with the realities on the ground.

Therefore, **the purpose of this paper is both theoretical** (first 4 functions) **and practical-applied** (last two functions), fully meeting the requirements of the sociological approach.

The general objective of the doctoral thesis is to understand the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout in Dolj, by secondary analysis of data available so far and by enriching the scientific knowledge of these phenomena through their own field research.

The specific objectives of the paper can be summarized as follows:

1. Delimitation of the semantic perimeter related to school failure, in order to individualize the object of study and to filter the relevant theoretical models and statistical data in relation to the purpose of the research.
2. Identifying the determinants - individual and environmental - of absenteeism and school dropout by presenting the conclusions of studies conducted at international and national level.
3. Analysis of school failure prevention policies designed and developed at European and national level, with emphasis on the measures implemented during the online school period.
4. Highlighting, based on statistical data, the size and trends of absenteeism and school dropout at European and national level and in Dolj County.
5. Carrying out a field research in order to analyze the phenomena of absenteeism and dropout at the level of school units in Dolj County, both in urban and rural areas.

Regarding the **dominant sociological paradigm**, we resorted to writing the paper in accordance with the principles of the neopositivist approach, the only one that allows the elimination of arbitrary speculation and the formulation of conclusions that result from data or are at least supported by them. As neopositivism is based on the quantitative approach, we will use statistical data and results of field research whenever they are available. Also, in investigating the current state of knowledge of the topic, we focused on quantitative, correlational studies, consistent with the specifics of neo-positivist knowledge. We specified the “ dominant paradigm of the paper ” because the object of study will be approached from multiple perspectives. In fact, in the first two chapters we will review the ways in which the representatives of all the great schools of sociological thinking reflected on school failure : functionalists, interactionists, constructivists, etc. they have left a strong mark on the investigation of school failure, and these concerns cannot be ignored, despite the neopositivist position we have taken. At the same time, we considered it necessary for the field research to include a qualitative part, in accordance with the interpretive approaches, namely the realization of sociological interviews with the managers of school units in the county. Therefore, the convergence of sociological

paradigms goes hand in hand with the convergence of methods and techniques, in accordance with the complexity of the object of study, in order to obtain a correct, integralist image of it.

3. Research methodology

In order to achieve the assumed objectives, many methods and techniques specific to sociological knowledge have been used. The chapters related to the theoretical part were based on the analysis of social documents, through " social documents " including specialized books, scientific articles, national and international strategies and recommendations, primary and secondary legislation, previous studies on the phenomena studied, etc. We have used international databases as sources of sociological information whenever necessary, via Google Scholar, which provides instant access to the latest research in the field. The originality of the theoretical part results from the own way of filtering and ordering the collected information, but also from their correlation and comparative analysis. Moreover, the comparative method, the typological method and the comprehensive method, as fundamental tools of sociological knowledge and analysis, represent a constant presence in all chapters of the doctoral thesis. The theoretical syntheses performed, which take into account the latest studies in the field, are in themselves one of the original contributions of this paper. In addition, starting from the methodological principle of the unity between theoretical and empirical, the research of the specialized literature through the prism of the mentioned methods and techniques represents an absolutely necessary approach from at least two points of view. First of all, such an approach is essential in capturing the current state of knowledge regarding the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout. Starting a sociological research project, without thoroughly studying the results of previous research, inevitably leads to the identification of inferences that are already known or that prove to be invalid from an epistemic point of view, by not taking into account all the variables involved in the phenomenon. or the social process studied.

Another method of investigation constantly used in all chapters of the paper is systemic statistical analysis. The statistical data were presented and analyzed in relation to the perspective of sociological integralism, starting from the most general framework of analysis (international level), gradually descending to the particular framework relevant for research (Dolj County). All available statistical data sources were used, the most frequently cited data sources being Eurostat, the National Institute of Statistics (INSSE, especially the

periodic reports, press releases and the INSS Tempo Online platform). In all cases, the most recent statistics available at the time of writing were used. We also used the secondary analysis, performed both in relation to the statistical data collected and the results of previous field research on absenteeism and school dropout in Romania and Dolj County.

Regarding the practical-applicative part of the paper, we resorted to the complementary use of several research methods and techniques, given the complexity of the object of study. **The general objective of the field research** It is the understanding and explanation of the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout in Dolj County and the identification of triggers, favorable factors and the consequences of these phenomena, as well as the opinions, expectations and needs of those affected by the problem. By the phrase "those targeted by the problem", we refer to stakeholders, namely students, parents, teachers and managers of schools in Dolj County.

The general objective corresponds to the following **specific objectives of the field research** :

1. Knowledge of the psycho-individual mechanisms that determine and maintain the student's decision not to attend or leave school (school refusal).
2. Knowing the influence of the socio-familial environment and the structural mechanisms that determine the occurrence of school failure.
3. Identify the school causes and pedagogical strategies used by teachers in order to prevent and improve the phenomena of absenteeism and dropout.
4. Knowledge of the way in which the issue of accentuated absenteeism is approached and that of school dropout at the level of management of school institutions in Dolj County
5. Carrying out comparative analyzes and statistical correlations to highlight the psycho-social mechanisms of school failure.
6. Formulation of scientifically justified recommendations for the correction of the mentioned phenomena.

Starting from the mentioned objectives, we formulated three working hypotheses, which express correlational relations between variables. I did not resort to descriptive hypotheses, the number of which could be inexhaustible, but I preferred to carry out an exploratory approach, without prior statement of some provisional statements. However, in accordance with the stages of the research methodology, we formulated the following

correlational hypotheses: "If the emotional connection between the child and the child is strong, then the student will record school performance."; "The higher the degree of parental involvement in the preparation of the student, the better his school results."; "If teachers have high levels of job satisfaction, then they will be actively involved in preventing early school leaving." The first two hypotheses consider the influence of parental attachment and the parent's involvement in preparing the student for his / her school performance, and the third presupposes the existence of a significant positive correlation between the level of satisfaction that teachers feel in relation to work and their involvement in school dropout prevention activities. In order to achieve the objectives and to test the hypotheses, the following **methods of sociological research** were used :

1. Sociological survey based on a questionnaire for parents in Dolj County (quantitative research - 300 subjects)
2. Sociological survey based on a questionnaire for teachers in Dolj County (quantitative research - 300 subjects)
3. Interview-based sociological survey for school principals in Dolj County. (qualitative research - 10 subjects)

4. The structure of the doctoral thesis

From a structural point of view, the paper consists of two parts and four chapters. The first part, the theoretical one, subsumes chapters I, II and III and brings to the fore the fundamental concepts, explanatory models and statistical trends that will serve as a starting point for the practical-applied part of the paper. The latter corresponds to the last chapter, the most consistent in volume and more valuable from the perspective of the contribution brought to the knowledge of the studied phenomena.

In the first chapter we will analyze, for the beginning, the sociological relationship between socialization and education, we will analyze the concept of "educational ideal" and we will illustrate the relationship between the education system and the subsystems of the social system, with direct application to contemporary Romanian realities. Later we will delimit the semantic perimeter and the main theoretical currents of school deviance, models that will be developed and used in the subsequent subchapters to understand the phenomena of absenteeism and dropout. We will also define from multiple perspectives and classify the mentioned phenomena according to several criteria. Regarding the explanatory models, we will review the paradigms related to sociology and psychology.

We will analyze absenteeism and school dropout as anomic phenomena, from the perspective of the social fact paradigm. We will also use the structural-functional paradigm to identify those latent or manifest variables which, by the way they influence the functional regime of the social system, allow the multiplication of deviant phenomena and make possible the appearance and perpetuation of educational failure. From the perspective of microsociological, interpretive approaches, we will analyze the Goffmanian paradigm of labeling, in order to highlight the phenomena of school deviance as a form of stigmatization and individual withdrawal from the school space.

Next, we aim to analyze the determining factors of the phenomena of absenteeism and school dropout. At the beginning of the second we will review the main stages of ways of thinking about the etiology of school failure, presenting a series of studies outdated by current realities, but which, historically at least, have been valuable theoretical landmarks in explaining these phenomena. Later, we will analyze the actual factors, dividing them into two categories: individual factors and environmental factors. In the first category we included sex, biological factors and psychological factors. Among the environmental factors, we will analyze in detail the family factors, the school factors and the socio-economic factors.

In the third chapter we will outline the normative, legal, functional framework at the moment in the European Union and in Romania, as well as the magnitude of these phenomena at the mentioned levels of analysis. In the first subchapter, we will discuss issues related to the evolution of legislation in the field, but also to good national and international practices in preventing and combating school failure. We do not propose an itinerary specific to the legal sciences, an inventory of legislative acts and related provisions, but a strictly sociological approach, focused on the social effects of the implemented measures. We will pay special attention to the measures of prevention of school failure during the Covid-19 pandemic, presenting both the way in which Romania has adapted to the online school transition, and models of good practices in European countries. We will undertake small case studies to see what solutions have been found (if any) to improve the situation of two categories of students at risk just before the pandemic : students with SEN and students in rural areas. Subsequently, we will radiograph, based on statistical data, the situation of early school leaving at European, national and county level, using systemic statistical analysis as the main working method.

The last chapter corresponds to the practical-applicative part of the paper and is structured in accordance with the stages of the sociological investigation. As in the case of any empirical research, we started from the identification and presentation of the results of previous research on the causes and forms of manifestation of absenteeism and school dropout in Dolj County. Subsequently, we set out in detail the methodology used, including the purpose and objectives, working hypotheses, research variables, methods and techniques used, population and sample, data collection and processing procedure, research limits. Subsequently, we presented in detail the results of each sociological survey conducted. In the case of quantitative surveys, the descriptive elements are combined with the inferential analysis of the data, which is why we did not consider necessary a separate subchapter for statistical-sociological correlations.

5. Conclusions and reflections

School absenteeism is both an individual and a social problem. Although it may have its roots in the socio-cultural environment in which the child was socialized, absenteeism reflects the attitude of lack of interest, motivation and confidence in school education, an attitude which, in turn, has an individual and a social component. Failure to attend the course may express an emotional problem (a form of physical and psychological escape from the perceived threatening situation). In the first chapter of the paper, we presented the theoretical model of absenteeism developed by Heyne and which distinguishes between absenteeism as a social withdrawal from school and absenteeism as an individual withdrawal from school. The first form has the following characteristics : the school situation is known to the parents; parents make an effort to encourage the student to stay home; cultural models cultivated in the family are contrary to the culture promoted in the school space; there is no form of parental effort to encourage the student to attend classes. Absenteeism as an individual withdrawal from school has two characteristics : emotional withdrawal is associated with school withdrawal; parents have made or intend to make efforts to encourage school attendance.

The individual / social dichotomy is also preserved when we discuss the determinants of absenteeism and abandonment. We have outlined two possible approaches when it comes to understanding the determinants of absenteeism and school dropout: an individualistic, traditional approach, and a more recent, collectivist approach that focuses on structural, institutional, and environmental (environmental) factors. The individualistic

approach sees in the social, psychological and demographic characteristics of the student the primary cause of his deviant behavior in the school space, respectively the primary explanation for the refusal or early leaving of school. Family factors and peer groups play a major role in the causal mechanism, but not directly, but mediated by individual consciousness: personal and group experience structures certain cognitions and systems of representations and values-attitudes that may later justify the student's decision to withdraws from the school environment. Therefore, even if it admits the influence of external factors in substantiating this decision, the traditional individualistic approach considers the student primarily responsible for the situation in which he finds himself. Predominant behaviors, such as high absenteeism and disciplinary misconduct, cause the student to be labeled a “deviant,” with all the consequences that result from the act of labeling. Thomas's theorem is well known in sociology, which states that a situation defined as real becomes real through the consequences it generates. Therefore, an excessive responsibility of the student for the situation in which he finds himself only reinforces that behavior. Critics of the traditional (individualistic) perspective cannot dispute the statistical correlations, the mathematical realities, which demonstrate the connection - sometimes direct, sometimes mediated - between individual factors and the predisposition towards absenteeism, respectively school dropout. As the traditional approach was dominant until two decades ago, the data on the influence of individual factors in generating school deviance are also the most numerous and best documented, being the most important predictors of the phenomenon.

The systemic statistical analysis showed that the dropout rate has been steadily declining at European level, from 13.2% in 2013 to 9.9% in 2020. The dropout rate in the European Union has fallen by 3.3 points percentages from 2011 to 2020. In 2020, the proportion of early school leavers ranged from 2.2% in Croatia to 16.7% in Malta. The reference target set by the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training for 2020 was to reduce the early school leaving rate to below 10%, a target reached in 2020. For 2030 it is intended to reduce the rate to less than 9%.

In Romania, school dropout registered significant fluctuations, major variations on education cycles, but which corresponded to a downward trend, but far from the ideals of the *Strategy on early school leaving in Romania 2015-2020*. At the level of Dolj County, the systematic study of the phenomena of absenteeism and dropout began long before these concerns were boosted by the measures adopted at national level to achieve the objectives

of the Europe 2020 Strategy.) systematic studies have been undertaken since 2006. These studies, which we analyzed in the paper, addressed issues such as determinants, forms of manifestation, the magnitude of phenomena in each school, gender distribution, by area of residence and so on We found that, in general, the dropout rate followed at the county level, the trends registered at the national level. Thus, until the 2014-2015 school year, the lowest dropout rate was recorded in the 2012-2013 school year. The peak was reached in 2014-2015, after which the dropout rate experienced a constant downward trend. In the 2018-2019 school year, the dropout rate reached 1.46%, the lowest in the period under analysis.

Next, we will present the most important conclusions of the sociological investigation that we carried out and which is, at the same time, the contribution brought by the present doctoral thesis to the development of the field. Dropout or absenteeism must be analyzed, understood and explained through the prism of numerous filters. One of them is represented by the students themselves, because, through them, through their own experiences and feelings, we can identify, diagnose and treat the possible causes of erosions of the educational process. The questionnaire applied to the students managed to collect a series of essential data. In the first part of it, we wanted to assess the degree of difficulty of some possible problems, which impede their school preparation. Thus, the numerous topics (however, 76% of the subjects state that they do their homework), the short breaks and the busy schedule prove to be the main enemies of the survey subjects (high percentages attributed to these statements confirm that they constitute difficulties encountered by students in the educational process they go through). Other issues encountered in school life, such as overly demanding teachers, frequent assessments, difficult lessons, tense relationships between colleagues, generally recorded quite low percentages in terms of difficulty.

We also wanted to find out the most common problems directly related to unexcused absences (68% of respondents stated that they had never experienced such an event, while 32% of them said the opposite, which is why highlights a positive situation, a stable, balanced picture, for the vast majority of respondents, but a worrying situation for more than a quarter). In this sense, we found out that a consistent source of unmotivated absences is represented by the insistence of other colleagues at the club, so the negative influence of the peer group, the entourage is sometimes an inevitable danger. Reprimand from teachers and parents is the most common consequence of absenteeism, thus emphasizing the need for strong sanctions that must come from several sources, in our case the school and the family of origin.

Based on the questionnaire, we can say that, in general, students are very satisfied and satisfied with their school results, their relationship with their parents, the grades obtained, the collegial, family and school connections. They also consider that they have a rich vocabulary, they understand things quickly, they see reading as a relaxing and attractive activity.

What is very interesting is the attitude of the students towards the statement “School is my path to success”, because 84% of them agree very much, to a large extent and somewhat with the statement. This situation highlights the fact that students are aware that the formal education received in school, the information and experiences assimilated here create the success of tomorrow's adult, consolidates a bright future. Another intriguing aspect extracted from the answers received is the very low weight of all possible factors that could lead to school dropout (verbal / physical abuse by colleagues, marginalization, parental divorce, long distance between home and school, stress generated by homework , non-involvement of the family, precarious financial situation).

Also, the students from the investigated group state that they have good or very good relations with their parents, they are financially supported by them, and they also enjoy their moral support. In addition, they are successful in school, as evidenced by the averages and high grades received (between 9.50 and 10 (72%), between 9 and 9.50 (13%), between 8 and 9 (10%), between 6 and 7 (4%) and between 5 and 6 (1%)).

The key to a student's educational success is to discover, encourage and maximize his abilities, qualities, skills. Therefore, it needs continuous support, help and ongoing support from the family of origin, first and foremost (parents need to be aware of the importance of education in their child's life and act appropriately if they notice certain erosions), and secondly, from the teachers or the community (they must be very well trained in passing on the best teachings to the student, in listening to him and supporting him in his problems, just to create a friendly atmosphere in which the phenomena of abandonment or absenteeism school should be just educational / informative topics).

Another filter through which the phenomena of dropout or school absenteeism must be viewed, explained and analyzed is represented by parents. They play a key role in the lives of their children, being the main rulers of some destinies in construction, and their intervention continues in this unique experience, namely school, is essential, vital and absolutely necessary.

A questionnaire consisting of many key questions was also applied to this category of subjects. A first aspect that we wanted to analyze is the consistency of the parent-child

relationship, as the main indicator of a healthy and solid communication. I found that when the child is not on vacation, parents ask him what happened at school every day (79% of elected officials said so), which highlights the serious involvement of the family in life. the student. In addition, 76% of the children of the surveyed subjects did not have problems related to unmotivated absences, while 24% of them had (the main causes of these unmotivated absences, from the perspective of parents, are students' disinterest in school and the negative influence of the group. When the student has a problem, the student chooses to talk to the mother (37%), both parents (32%) or the teacher (12%). chosen that the analysis by gender, place of residence and education cycle does not show significant differences.

The recommendations of parents involved in research on reducing school dropout are as follows: the school should communicate more often with parents, psychological counseling, interactive lessons, full reimbursement of commuting costs. Thus, the family believes that only a constant interaction with the school, but also with other people, psychologists, educational counselors could reduce or even eliminate the danger posed by the two phenomena mentioned above.

A third filter through which the phenomena of dropout or school absenteeism must be viewed, explained and analyzed is represented by teachers. These are the main leaders in formal education that any child goes through or should go through. Sometimes, their help is essential, especially in the case of divided, disorganized families in which the student does not find emotional, moral or financial support. Therefore, the role of the teacher is vital.

From the perspective of teachers, the phenomenon of early school leaving is a serious current problem, which requires immediate solutions (82%). Also, some teachers consider that school dropout is a current problem, but it is kept under control (18%). In addition, the attitude of teachers towards truancy is presented. Thus, it seems that in their view this is a serious current problem, which requires immediate solutions (76%). We also find a considerable weight in terms of the answer "It is a current problem, but it is kept under control". The remaining 2% is attributed to the option "It is not a real problem of Romanian education". What is noteworthy is the fact that 51% (abandonment) / 65% (general absenteeism) of the respondents, so more than half, stated that they often and very often faced such cases, highlighting thus the image of dysfunctional educational paths.

Another aspect that we wanted to follow was the verification of the presupposition according to which the teachers would have contributed to the process of "school

rehabilitation”, of bringing back on the right path the students in extreme situations. Thus, to our surprise, we found that 77% of the surveyed teachers stated that they managed to achieve this fact, which highlights, this time, a positive phenomenon born of a negative one. Most teachers who brought a student on the right track resorted to frequent discussions with the family (69%), a finding that emphasizes once again the importance of the real family-school partnership. Teachers surveyed believe that greater communication with parents (38%), psychological counseling (30%) and increased school scholarships (15%) should be ways to avoid dropping out of school.

Because teachers interact with students during class, it is essential that they observe those behaviors, dysfunctional attitudes, and try to restructure them with the help of the family. Therefore, the student-parent-teacher triad is essential in the fight against abandonment or unmotivated absenteeism. Also, non-reimbursable funded programs, various governmental or non-governmental projects implemented by central and local public authorities or NGOs, associations aimed at students in precarious economic and social situations are meant to intervene in the educational path of students sometimes deprived of any horizon. Providing food appropriate to the beneficial development of the body according to age, training abilities and skills, stimulating imagination, creativity, critical sense, stimulating self-confidence by increasing self-esteem, responsibility, material, moral, emotional support, provision of a specialist (school psychologist, for example or educational counselors), encouraging confession and emotional discharge, increased frequency of extracurricular activities, recreational, relaxing are real examples, with measurable results that can reduce dropouts or absenteeism.

The above-mentioned school phenomena must be identified, analyzed and combated in time in order to obtain the desired results. Strategic objectives such as “reducing the early school leaving rate to the value of x by year y” prove to be risky if they are not accompanied by appropriate social and educational policies, with a real impact at the school, family and local community level. In this struggle, which has been grinding the life of Romanian education for three decades, it is necessary to consolidate the student-parent-teacher relationship; this relationship becomes functional only when the three work together, interact and maximize their strengths by virtue of education and the benefits it brings. Moreover, according to the results of this research, this is the priority point of intervention towards which pedagogical practices and policies in the field should be oriented. The phenomena of school dropout or absenteeism are a sensitive, delicate subject, known and very well grounded in the collective consciousness and in the public debate, a subject that

must be treated with great responsibility and involvement. As we have shown by systemic statistical analysis, these cases are not uncommon, with multiple causes: indifference of the family of origin, lack of interest from parents in the child's school life, non-intervention of the local community, marginalization from colleagues, bullying, economic situation precarious, lack of a pioneer in the life of the student, etc.

The inferential analysis of the data collected highlighted the following findings:

- 24% of students surveyed say they generally do not do their homework. When asked why, they most often mentioned the lack of interest in this activity (32%), respectively the lack of necessary knowledge (28%) and the support from parents. Secondary reasons are involvement in household chores, lack of access to relevant information and professional status. Most students who do not do their homework due to household chores come from rural areas (72%). Also from the rural area are the majority (64%) of those who mentioned the lack of access to information sources as the main cause. As for the other causes, we did not identify any major variations depending on the environment of residence.
- We identified a positive correlation between the ability to adapt to the requirements of the school environment and problems related to unmotivated absences. In other words, the predisposition to be absent for no reason is higher in the case of students who do not have the necessary intellectual capital to meet the demands of the school environment. The phenomenon was theorized by P. Bourdieu through the theory of symbolic capital, presented in the second chapter of the paper.
- There is a significant correlation between gender and the ability to adapt to the requirements of the school environment, to which boys tend to adapt more difficultly than girls. chapter of the paper.
- The intensity of the emotional connection with the parents correlates positively with the school results, operationalized in our case by the general average obtained by the student during the last semester. In other words, the students who got good grades are the ones who have a strong emotional connection with their parents. On the other hand, the attitude towards school correlates negatively with parental attachment. The students who stated that they like little and very little at school are, to a large extent, those who did not develop a strong attachment relationship with their parents. It is also worth noting the value of the Pearson coefficient that resulted from the correlation of the scores obtained to the two summative scales used. It indicates a significant positive link between the student's ability to adapt to the

demands of the school environment and his emotional connection with his parents. In conclusion, the first hypothesis is confronted: the stronger the parent-child emotional connection, the better the student's school results.

- 10% of students said that they thought, at least once, that it would be better to drop out of school. I outlined a dominant socio-demographic profile of the student in this category. Thus, probably speaking, the student who considered the option of leaving school is a boy, lives in rural areas, has developed a weak emotional connection (attachment) with parents and has a low level of cognitive skills needed to adapt requirements of the school environment.
- There is a significant positive correlation between the level of parental involvement and the overall average with which the student ended the last semester. Therefore, the second hypothesis is confirmed: The more parents are involved in the preparation of the student, the better his school results will be.
- The statistical analysis did not show a significant correlation between the environment of residence and the degree of involvement in the school preparation of the student. Therefore, at least at the level of the group investigated in the present research, we cannot say that parents in rural areas are less involved in the child's education than those in urban areas. Also, the correlation with sex did not show statistically significant differences.
- 7% of parents say they do not intend to support their child in completing their studies. We have compiled a probabilistic sociodemographic profile of the parent in this category. Thus, the parent who does not support his child in completing his studies meets the following characteristics: he is a man, lives in rural areas, has no high school education, is very little involved in the school preparation of the student.
- There is a strong positive correlation between the level of professional satisfaction felt by students and involvement in dropout prevention programs. Therefore, the third hypothesis is confirmed: If teachers are satisfied with their own job, then they will be actively involved in preventing school dropout.

Qualitative research has facilitated our understanding of the phenomena of absenteeism and dropout through a fourth filter, namely that of school managers. The answers received from the ten managers of the ten educational units selected for study outlined a complex and complete picture in terms of school dropout / absenteeism, by filtering two residential / rural / urban environments (five rural schools , five urban schools).

The first question of the interview was aimed at identifying the most important significant determinants that can cause the occurrence of the above mentioned phenomena. The information received was largely similar, focusing on economic issues (lack of money, lack of consistent material support), social, family, psychological, emotional (rejection from colleagues, dissatisfaction generated by low grades, inattention received from teachers). These factors can have repercussions on the student's psyche, causing him to leave school, so outside help is vital.

The second question contained in the interview guide was subsumed under the objective of knowing the managerial strategy designed and planned at the school unit level to improve the phenomena of school dropout and absenteeism. Thus, each of the ten respondents provided concrete data on the strategy to combat absenteeism and dropout at the school level. Most of the answers received revolve around the essential existence of programs and projects with non-reimbursable funding addressed to students in educational difficulty (either they do not have financial resources, or do not have the support of family from the family, etc.). Support programs include the provision of food, age-appropriate food, supplies, the opportunity to interact with other students, to communicate, to confess and to be counseled by virtue of their school reintegration. Also, other strategies are based on frequent discussions with the families of the students' background, on the involvement of parents in the school process and their education, on the desire of parents to be aware of the seriousness of their child's situation, but also on the appeal to the community. because many sources of external help are needed to eliminate these negative phenomena from students' lives (the convergent action of stakeholders).

The third question focuses on three measures applied at the school level, with measurable results. All the answers received revolve around the idea of relationships. This link involves several main characters / leaders, namely parents, who need to be concerned with their child's school situation (frequent meetings with parents, telephone conversations, close monitoring of the child's family situation), teachers (their involvement in various school dropout projects, training in case management, preparation of interactive, recreational activities to facilitate communication, relaxation, interaction, setting up school dropout prevention commissions), local community (increasing her empathy, her involvement by donating materials needed for the study), the student (frequent discussions with him, serious confessions and conversations about various potentially traumatic events, awareness of the danger to which he is subjected by dropping out of school, material and

moral support of the child , monitoring absences and motivating them, thorough supervision of the site family situation and identification of possible relational dysfunctions).

The fourth question concerns the pros and cons of the importance of extracurricular and extracurricular activities as ways of involvement. As we have seen, the positive implications of these types of activities are numerous (effective, beneficial, relaxing, creative, help students' cognitive, mental and emotional development, mediate interaction, knowledge of the world around them, make friends between students of different ages, offer children food packages beneficial to their health, support broader interaction with teachers who help them with difficult topics, students gain self-confidence by increasing self-esteem, students discover themselves and manage to maximize their abilities, skills and qualities, etc.), while the negative aspects are related to problems such as the precarious economic situation, the indifference of parents, the lack of responsibilities, the disastrous environment produced by the global pandemic , the need to complement extracurricular activities with the school curriculum.

The last question focused on three directions of action with positive goals in the short, medium and long term, implemented or planned at the school level in terms of preventing absenteeism and school dropout. We notice here a greater preponderance of involvement in different specialized programs in urban areas than in rural areas, where only one such program was mentioned, namely the School after school. In addition, the importance of remedial classes, additional support for poor subjects, the strength of example and the promotion of students with a brilliant school career, material, moral and emotional support through specialized counselors ready to help students in difficulty were often mentioned.

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