

PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS THAT ENCOURAGE POSITIVE PARENTING IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: *This article investigates the professional attitudes and behaviors of teachers who support the development of positive parenting in the school environment. Starting from the premise that teachers are essential partners in the educational process of children, this study explores how relationships based on empathy, mutual respect and effective communication contribute to strengthening the collaboration between school and family. The research was carried out in several schools in urban and rural areas, using qualitative and quantitative methods. The results highlight the importance of continuous professional training and socio-emotional competences of teachers in promoting an educational climate favorable to positive parenting. The conclusions of the study emphasize the need for coherent educational policies, including support programs for the development of constructive relationships between school and family.*

Keywords: *positive parenting; professional behavior; school-family relationship; teacher attitudes; educational climate.*

Introduction

The relationship between school and family is an essential pillar in building an effective and balanced education for the child. In recent decades, the literature has increasingly emphasized the importance of positive collaboration between teachers and parents, highlighting the significant impact of this partnership on students' socio-emotional and cognitive development (Epstein, 2018; Bocoş & Jucan, 2019). In this context, positive parenting has become a central concept in education,

being defined as a parenting style based on mutual respect, effective communication, empathy and unconditional support (Sanders & Turner, 2018).

The social, cultural and technological transformations of recent years, amplified by the challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have brought to the fore the need to rethink the relationship between school and family. Especially in the post-pandemic period, parents and teachers have had to cooperate more closely to ensure the continuity of the educational process and the emotional well-being of children (Oliva-Arocas et al., 2023). This period has accentuated the existing vulnerabilities in communication between parents and teachers, but has also created opportunities for the development of new forms of educational partnership.

Although the responsibility for raising and educating the child is shared between parents and the school, teachers' attitudes and behaviours can significantly influence the way parents assume their educational role. Teachers who promote a climate based on trust, openness and mutual respect contribute to strengthening parental involvement and reducing conflicts or communication barriers (Rad, 2020; Muşata Bocoş, 2021). Moreover, recent studies have shown that an empathetic, emotionally balanced and well-prepared teacher in the field of interpersonal relationships has a positive impact on collaboration with the family and on the general climate in the school (Delia Muşet, 2022; Puccioni, 2015).

In the Romanian context, cooperation between the family and the school is often carried out formally, through meetings with parents or administrative communication. However, the need to overcome the formal limits of the teacher-parent relationship is increasingly recognized in recent research (Cristea, 2022). A teacher who supports positive parenting is more than a transmitter of knowledge; He becomes a facilitator of the balanced development of the child and an educational partner of the family.

This research aims to investigate how teachers' attitudes and behaviors can contribute to encouraging positive parenting, with a focus on the role of professional training, effective communication and building an authentic partnership with parents. The study focuses on the primary school environment, with observations from both urban and rural areas, where family dynamics and educational resources can differ significantly.

Theoretical foundation

The concept of positive parenting has been developed in the literature to describe a parenting style centered on the child's needs, based on

respect, affection, setting boundaries through empathy and constant emotional support. According to Sanders and Turner (2018), positive parenting does not mean the absence of discipline, but the use of educational methods that support the development of the child's autonomy and strengthen the affective bond between parent and child.

A central element of positive parenting is the educational partnership between parents and school. Epstein (2018) proposes a model of family involvement in education, based on six types of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, home learning, decision-making, and community collaboration. This model emphasizes the active role of the teacher in initiating and maintaining a functional collaboration with the family. In Bronfenbrenner's (2005) view, child development is the result of the continuous interaction between the different ecological environments in which he lives – and the family and school constitute interdependent micro-systems.

In terms of Romanian didactics, Mușata Bocoș (2021) emphasizes the need for teacher training in the development of relational skills and emotional intelligence, as premises for effective communication with the family. Similarly, Rad (2020) emphasizes that teachers should not be perceived only as transmitters of information, but as active agents in promoting a holistic education, in which the learning climate is strongly influenced by the relationship with parents.

Professional behaviors that encourage positive parenting include: active listening, empathic attitude, providing constructive feedback, avoiding judgment, and involving parents in relevant school activities (Delia Mușet, 2022; Al-Hassan & Takash, 2019). Teachers can also become role models for parents in terms of communication style with children, especially when the community lacks resources for formal parental counseling (Puccioni, 2015).

In contemporary literature, the importance of support programs for parents carried out in collaboration with the school is also noted. Parent training programs contribute to the development of healthy parenting behaviors and reduce the risk of authoritarian practices or non-involvement (Sanders, 2020; Martínez-González et al., 2021). In Romania, such initiatives are still in their infancy, but they can be supported by training teachers as facilitators of collaboration with the family.

Therefore, the theoretical framework of this study is based on the idea that teachers' attitudes and behaviors can act as protective factors and facilitators of positive parenting, with direct effects on the child's development and on the general school climate.

The theoretical reference model adopted in this research is that of the ecology of human development proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner

(2005), who describes child development as a result of the interaction between several levels of influence: microsystem (family, school), mesosystem (relations between these environments), exosystem (educational policies, socio-economic conditions) and macrosystem (cultural values, social norms). In this model, the school-family relationship is part of the mesosystem and becomes essential in influencing the child's experiences.

At the same time, in order to understand the forms of parental involvement in education, the research refers to the parental involvement model formulated by Joyce Epstein (2018), which identifies six types of relationship between family and school: parenting support, two-way communication, involvement in school activities, support for learning at home, participation in decision-making and collaboration with the community. This model will be used as an analytical benchmark for interpreting the professional behaviors of the teachers in the investigated sample.

Research methodology

The present study aimed to investigate the professional attitudes and behaviors of teachers that contribute to supporting positive parenting in the school environment. The research was built on a mixed, predominantly qualitative approach, aiming at an in-depth understanding of the way in which primary school teachers relate to the relationship with parents and their role in strengthening the family-school collaboration.

The design of the research was exploratory-descriptive, appropriate for studies centered on social phenomena analyzed in their natural context. The methodology combined qualitative and quantitative elements, with the aim of ensuring the triangulation of the data and increasing the validity of the results. The collection and interpretation of the information were carried out in parallel, with a focus on identifying recurring themes and contextual particularities.

The sample was composed of 78 teachers who teach at the level of primary education in Arad County. In order to capture the diversity of educational contexts, educational units from urban (five schools) and rural (seven schools) were included. The participants were selected voluntarily, depending on their availability and interest in the proposed theme. Most of the teachers have more than ten years of professional experience, and over 60% of them have previously participated in continuous training courses on the relationship with parents or the development of communication skills.

Two complementary tools were used for data collection. The first was a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of 18 items, designed to highlight teachers' perceptions of the concept of positive parenting, the behaviors adopted in interacting with parents and the difficulties frequently encountered in this collaboration. The items were formulated on a five-step Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The second tool consisted of individual interviews with 12 teachers selected from the initial sample, with the aim of deepening the issues identified in the questionnaire. The interviews, conducted online, had an average duration of 30 minutes and were recorded with the consent of the participants.

The data collection process took place between February and April 2025, in physical format for the application of questionnaires and online for interviews. All participants were informed about the purpose and methodology of the research and signed an informed consent agreement. The confidentiality of the answers was guaranteed, in accordance with the ethical principles of educational research.

The quantitative data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistical methods, following the frequencies, averages and percentage scores for each item. The answers obtained from the interviews were analyzed by the thematic analysis method, using an inductive coding according to the model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The emerging themes were interpreted in relation to the specialized literature, in order to highlight both the convergences and the particular aspects of the Romanian educational context.

Results

The analysis of the collected data highlighted a number of significant trends regarding teachers' attitudes and behaviors in relation to supporting positive parenting in the school environment. As for the answers to the questionnaire, most teachers (82%) said they totally agreed with the idea that "the positive relationship with the student's family is an essential condition for the child's academic success". This percentage indicates a high level of awareness of the importance of collaboration with parents in the educational act.

Another relevant result was related to the communication style used in the relationship with parents. About 74% of respondents said they try to adopt an empathetic and open attitude, and 68% said they constantly provide constructive feedback to parents regarding the child's behavior and progress. However, only 39% of teachers said that they regularly organize individual meetings with parents, apart from the mandatory

ones, which suggests a practice that is insufficiently exploited for the development of an authentic school-family relationship.

In terms of perceived difficulties, 58% of respondents mentioned the lack of interest or availability from parents as the main obstacle in strengthening collaboration. Other frequently reported difficulties were the lack of time to organize joint activities (45%) and the lack of training of teachers in the field of parental counseling (41%).

The interviews provided a more nuanced perspective on these aspects. Many teachers reported that personal experience plays an important role in how they manage their relationship with their family. Some teachers in rural areas pointed out that parents tend to avoid involvement in school activities, either because of a lack of confidence in their own abilities or because of previous negative educational experiences. It was also noted that in schools where there is an open organizational culture and support from management, teachers are more inclined to initiate collaborative activities with parents.

A key aspect highlighted in the interviews was the importance of empathic communication skills. Teachers who have taken training courses in the field of emotional intelligence or in counseling parents said that they feel more prepared to manage difficult situations and support parents in adopting positive parenting practices.

In conclusion, the results of the research suggest that, although there is a generally favorable attitude towards positive parenting among teachers, concrete practices are significantly influenced by the educational context, the level of professional training and institutional support. Empathetic communication, constructive feedback and availability for authentic dialogue with parents are professional behaviors that favor the consolidation of a sustainable educational partnership.

Discussions

The results obtained from the research confirm the conclusions formulated by numerous authors in the literature regarding the crucial role of the teacher in stimulating positive parenting. The open attitude, empathy and effective communication not only facilitate a relationship of trust between school and family, but also contribute to creating an educational climate in which the child feels valued and supported. These findings are in line with the theoretical perspectives formulated by Epstein (2018), who emphasize the need for the active involvement of parents in children's education and the role of the teacher as a mediator between the family and the school.

A significant aspect identified in this study is the discrepancy between the positive attitudes declared by teachers and the concrete practices

implemented in the relationship with parents. Although the majority of respondents recognize the importance of collaboration with their family, a considerable percentage say that they do not frequently organize individual meetings or joint activities. This phenomenon can be explained by the lack of time, resources or adequate training in this regard, as Cristea (2022) points out in the analysis of the Romanian educational context.

The interviews highlighted the fact that teachers who participated in training courses in the field of communication, counseling or emotional intelligence show greater confidence in interacting with parents. This result underlines the importance of the continuous development of teachers' relational skills and the need to integrate these dimensions into initial and continuous training programs, as Bocoş and Jucan (2019) also argue.

The differences between urban and rural areas, observed in practices and perceptions, draw attention to the community context as an influential factor in the school-family relationship. In rural areas, where parents' level of education is often lower and resources are limited, collaboration can be affected by cultural barriers and the lack of a previous positive model of relating to educational institutions. This observation is also supported by the study conducted by Al-Hassan and Takash (2019), which emphasizes the importance of adapting educational interventions to the specificity of the community.

Also, the results of the research validate the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (2005), demonstrating that the child's development is influenced not only by the direct interaction with parents and teachers, but also by the quality of the relationship between these two environments. An authentic educational partnership between family and school works as a protective factor for the child, especially in vulnerable or unstable contexts.

Therefore, in order to transform teachers' positive attitudes into consistent educational behaviours, it is essential that schools provide teachers with systematic support, resources and continuous training. Creating an institutional framework conducive to positive parenting requires not only the individual involvement of teachers, but also a coherent institutional vision, supported by educational leadership and clear policies.

Conclusions

The results of the research highlighted the fact that primary school teachers mostly show a favorable attitude towards positive parenting and recognize the importance of the collaborative relationship with the family in supporting the child's development. However, this positive

attitude is not always reflected in coherent and constant educational behaviors, there are differences between intentions and practices, influenced by contextual factors such as lack of time, specialized training or institutional support.

The study confirmed the essential role of empathetic communication, willingness to dialogue and constructive feedback as key elements of professional behavior in the relationship with parents. It was also highlighted that continuous training in the field of emotional intelligence and parental counseling contributes significantly to strengthening teachers' confidence in their own relational skills.

The differences found between urban and rural areas, as well as between teachers with different experience in working with families, suggest the need for interventions adapted to the specificity of the community and the school. It is necessary to develop coherent educational policies that promote an open organizational culture, based on real partnership between school and family, as well as the implementation of training programs focused on the development of teachers' socio-emotional skills.

The contribution of this study is to provide an integrated perspective on how teachers can act as supportive factors for positive parenting, as well as to highlight the real needs in current educational practice. The limitations of the research concern the relatively small size of the sample and the geographical concentration on Arad County, aspects that can be overcome in future research by expanding the area of investigation and by including parents in the comparative analysis of perceptions.

In conclusion, the promotion of positive parenting in the school environment cannot be achieved in the absence of a teaching profession aware of its own formative impact, capable of building authentic relationships with parents and supported by an educational vision that puts the child at the center of all initiatives.

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