# PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

#### Ramona Iulia HERMAN, Ph.D.,

"1 December 1918" University in Alba-Iulia <u>iulia.herman@uab.ro</u>

### Ramona Stefana PETROVAN, Ph.D.,

"1 December 1918" University in Alba-Iulia ramona.petrovan@uab.ro

**Abstract:** This study investigates parental attitudes, perceptions of the parenting role, difficulties encountered, and needs expressed by parents. The research is based on a questionnaire applied to a sample of 44 parents, who are also undergraduate or master's students in the field of Educational Sciences. The descriptive analysis highlighted that parents attach importance to emotional health, empathetic relationships with children and development of skills related to adolescence. The data suggests the need for educational programs focused on emotional support, stress management and development of parenting skills for critical stages of child development. The questionnaire analyzed brings to the forefront the need for parents to support in all dimensions of family life. The analysis confirms that self-care strategies and the way of self-definition as a parent correlate significantly with both expressed needs and the style of relating to the child. Parents' self-care (emotional, physical, spiritual, etc.) correlates with their perception of the parental role, the dimension that parents cultivate for self-care is associated with expressed needs, recognition, love, validation, autonomy, and parents' self-perception ("good enough", "democratic", "authoritarian", "perfect") is associated with the reported relational style ("understanding", "supportive", "critical", "controlling"). Therefore, providing educational programs, psychological support and access to updated information can contribute to better adaptation of parents to current challenges.

**Keywords:** parental self-care; parental needs; parental challenges; parenting.

#### Introduction

Parenting style and parent-child relationship play an essential role in child development (Baumrind, 1991; Siegel & Bryson, 2011). The present study explores parental attitudes, emotional needs and difficulties encountered by parents, providing a descriptive perspective on the perception of parents in the current social context characterized by challenges such as professional stress and the influence of technology.

## Theoretical framework of the paper

Contemporary parenting is a complex challenge, influenced by sociocultural, technological and economic factors. Studies show that today's parents must manage not only the needs of their children, but also their own emotions and resources to maintain a balance between personal and professional life (Haidt, 2024). In this context, academic research supports the importance of developing parenting skills through educational programs, counseling and community support (Hermans, 2023).

Diana Baumrind identified four major parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, neglectful, and authoritative. The authoritarian style involves strict rules, lack of negotiation, and often a lack of expression of affection, which can lead to obedient children but with low self-esteem and difficulty expressing their emotions. The permissive style is characterized by a high level of emotional warmth and freedom, but with minimal rules, which can lead to difficulties in self-control and responsibility. The neglectful style refers to a lack of parental involvement in children's lives, frequently associated with behavioral problems. The most recommended is the authoritative style, which combines clear boundaries with emotional support and autonomy, stimulating resilience and optimal socio-emotional development in children (Baumrind, 1991).

Daniel J. Siegel argues that parents should pay attention not only to their children's behaviors, but also to their inner emotional state, promoting the concept of 'mindsight', that is, the ability to understand their own and others' mental processes. In the book 'The Whole-Brains' Child', Siegel describes 12 strategies based on brain integration, emphasizing the importance of connecting between cerebral hemispheres and different brain regions. In this way, parents can help children develop better emotional control, empathy, and the ability to make decisions. The concept of 'Connect before you correct' suggests that emotional connection and relationship are a priority over discipline, and by validating the child's emotions, parents can build a

trusting relationship that facilitates healthy psychological development (Siegel & Bryson, 2011).

John Gottman made major contributions to the field of parenting by introducing the concept of 'Emotion Coaching'. He believes that developing children's emotional intelligence is essential for their academic and social success. Gottman identified five main steps to becoming an emotionally coaching parent: (1) recognizing your child's emotions, (2) treating emotions as opportunities to connect, (3) listening empathetically, (4) helping them label emotions, and (5) setting boundaries and guiding behavior. This approach is based on the idea that negative emotions, such as anger or frustration, are natural and can be managed constructively. Children raised by emotionally coaching parents exhibit higher levels of resilience, harmonious social relationships, and better emotional regulation (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997).

Mindfulness and self-care practices have become central to recent research on healthy parenting. Bögels and Restifo (2014), argue that mindful parenting supports parents in maintaining conscious attention to their own emotional states and the needs of their child, reducing automatic reactivity and facilitating more balanced responses. This approach contributes to reducing parental stress and cultivating a relationship based on authentic connection. In a similar vein, Coyne and Murrell (2009) emphasize the importance of parent self-care as a strategy to prevent emotional exhaustion and parental burnout. When parents take time for their own mental and physical health, they develop a more stable sense of parental efficacy, which has direct positive effects on the family climate and child development.

Emotional regulation is recognized as an essential foundation of effective parenting. Sanders and Mazzucchelli (2018) show that parents who manage their negative emotions provide a model of healthy self-regulation, which directly influences the development of the child's self-regulation skills. Parental interventions focused on promoting self-regulation contribute not only to reducing problematic behaviors, but also to creating a stable family climate. In the same vein, Spinrad and Gal (2018) highlight the importance of cultivating empathy in the parent-child relationship. Parents who demonstrate emotional sensitivity and empathic capacity facilitate the development of prosocial behaviors in children and reduce the risk of behavioral problems. Parental empathy, combined with good emotional self-regulation, creates the premises of an educational relationship based on acceptance, support and cooperation.

**Self-perception in the role of parent.** Self-perception plays a central role in the way parents assume their responsibilities. Studies indicate that parents with a positive perception of their own competence have more harmonious relationships with their children and a higher level of parental satisfaction (Milford, 2025). This perception is influenced by personal experiences, social support and access to educational resources. Parental self-care is essential, as it reduces the risk of burnout and promotes mental health (Hermans, 2023).

Parent-child relationship. The quality of the parent-child relationship is a major predictor of children's emotional and social well-being. Sensitive and responsive parenting models contribute to the development of children's confidence, self-esteem and social skills (Haidt, 2024). Literature suggests that relationships based on open communication and emotional support are fundamental for children's development, especially in the context of early exposure to technology (Milford, 2025).

Parenting needs and difficulties. Recent studies show that parents face increased stress due to the precarious balance between work and family, and the lack of community support exacerbates this situation (Dominus, 2025). In addition, parents report difficulties in managing children's behavior and adapting to their emotional needs. Research suggests that support groups and psycho-pedagogical interventions can significantly reduce these difficulties (Hermans, 2023).

**Parenting beliefs**. Parents' beliefs about their role directly influence the educational strategies they use. Studies show that parents who view parenting as a shared responsibility between family and community tend to have more balanced involvement and adopt positive parenting styles (Lee, 2025). Cultural values also shape perceptions of discipline, autonomy, and emotional support.

**Personal development and parenting training.** The literature confirms that these resources improve parenting skills, contributing to healthy family relationships (Dennehy, 2025). In addition, access to educational resources is associated with higher levels of parental self-efficacy (Milford, 2025).

# Research objectives

 Analysis of parental attitudes and perception of the role of parent.

- Identification of difficulties and challenges encountered by parents in raising children.
- Exploration of the emotional and training needs of parents and children.
- Identification of statistically significant correlations between parental attitudes studied through the questionnaire.

### Research subject group

This study was attended by 44 parents from urban (72.7%) and rural (27.3%) environments, of which 93.2% were women and only 6.8% were men, with varying levels of education, with college 56.8%, with master's degree 34.1% with high school 6.8% and with doctorate 2.3%. The research subjects are undergraduate and master's students in the field of Educational Sciences at the "1 December 1918" University in Alba-Iulia, and some of them are students of the subject *Parenting*. *Theoretical-applicative perspectives in approaching partnerships with parents*.

### Research methods and instruments

To study the perception of the parenting role they fulfill, the 44 research subjects, we applied a structured questionnaire with 13 items (4 socio-demographic and 9 about parental attitudes and difficulties). The questionnaire was distributed online in Google Forms formats and completed anonymously. The analyzed questionnaire explores central themes such as parents' demographic data, self-perception in the parental role, the parent-child relationship, the difficulties encountered, beliefs about parenting and personal development needs. These dimensions allow a deeper understanding of family dynamics and provide benchmarks for educational policies and support services dedicated to parents. Frequencies, percentages for each item, as well as statistically significant associations between categorical variables were calculated.

#### Research Results and Discussion

Through this questionnaire, parents were invited to reflect on how they perceive themselves as parents and on the self-care strategies adopted. The analysis of the questionnaire reveals a complex picture of the parenting experience. Demographic data provides context for interpreting responses, and self-perception influences the quality of parent-child relationships. Beliefs about parenting determine educational styles, and reported difficulties emphasize the need for social and educational support. Interest in personal development demonstrates an openness to change and improvement of parental

skills. Recent literature confirms these conclusions, highlighting the importance of balanced parenting, based on empathy, communication and self-efficacy (Haidt, 2024; Dominus, 2025). Educational policies and community programs can support parents by offering resources adapted to socio-cultural diversity.

The first question addressed to parents who students in the field of Educational Sciences are also aimed at identifying the main areas of their lives related to self-care in the role of parent.

Answer	N	Frequency	Percentage %
Emotional	44	17.0	38.64
Mental	44	17.0	38.64
I don't know	44	4.0	9.09
Spiritual	44	3.0	6.82
Physical	44	3.0	6.82

Table no. 1. Distribution of responses for aspects regarding self-care in the role of parent

The most frequent answer to this question regarding self-care in parental role is the emotional aspect, with (38.64%) of respondents, followed by the same percentage of the mental aspect. It is interesting to note that (9.09%) of the parent respondents indicated that they do not know, which denotes from our point of view, a need for development of some of the parents. Then, with the same percentage, (6.82%) of parents mention the spiritual and physical aspects of parental self-care. Parents recognize the importance of self-care, and the priority dimension reflects their style of relating to the parental role and the resources they need to fulfill it. The next question of the questionnaire aimed to identify the perception of the parents who constituted the group of research subjects, on parental identity.

Answer	N	Frequency	Percentage %
good enough	44	26.0	59.01
democratic	44	9.0	20.50
authoritarian	44	6.0	13.60
permissive	44	3.0	6.82
perfect	44	1.0	2.30
negligent	44	0.0	0.00
abusive	44	0.0	0.00

Table no. 2. Distribution of answers for self-perceived parental identity

From Table no. 2. the most frequent answer to this question is good enough parent, mentioned by (59.01%) of the respondents. Then in proportion of (20.50%) of the parents responding, they consider themselves to be democratic parents, followed by (13.60%) of those parents who perceive themselves as authoritarian. Only (6.82%) of the research subjects consider themselves to be permissive as parents, and (2.30%) indicate that they are perfect parents. The self-perception as "good enough" indicates a balanced, realistic and compatible model with the specialized literature (Winnicott - the "good enough" parent). The self-definition as "perfect" or "authoritarian" suggests a rigid orientation, with high standards, and the "permissive" option indicates a more relaxed attitude, but also potential difficulties in structuring. Most parents build a positive, yet realistic self-image, but there are also tendencies towards idealization or control.

The next question of the questionnaire aimed at the perception of the relationship with the child, of parents, students in the field of Educational Sciences. The answers are presented in Table no. 3.

Answer	N	Frequency	Percentage %
understanding	44	25.0	56.82
supportive	44	9.0	20.45
gentle	44	3.0	6.82
critical	44	2.0	4.55
controlling	44	2.0	4.55
perfectionist	44	2.0	4.55
compassionate	44	1.0	2.27

Table no. 3. Predominant manifestation in the parent's relationship with their child

The most frequent answer to this question, which targeted the predominant manifestation in the parent-child relationship, is understanding, indicated by (56.82%) of the respondents. Also, (20.45%) of the responding parents perceive the relationship with their child as supportive, and no (6.82%) consider this relationship to be characterized by gentleness. Most parents build their relationship with their child based on support and understanding, but more rigid relational styles (critical, controlling, perfectionist) also coexist, even if they are much less indicated in this study (4.55%), they can still influence the family dynamics.

The next question of the questionnaire aimed at identifying the needs of the parents. The answers are presented in Table no. 4.

Answer	N	Frequency	Percentage %
Love	44	22	50.00
Connection	44	19	43.20
Understanding	44	16	36.40
Appreciation	44	11	25.00
Acceptance	44	8	18.20
Validation	44	5	11.40
Recognition	44	5	11.40

Table no. 4. My needs as a parent

The most frequently indicated answer regarding parental needs is the need for love, mentioned by (50%) of the respondents. The following parental needs indicated are connection mentioned by (43.20%), understanding with (36.40%), appreciation with (25%) and acceptance with (18.20%). The most frequently mentioned needs are love, connection and understanding. Many parents also emphasize the need for affection and acceptance, which shows an orientation towards emotional support.

Regarding the question that aimed at indicating the needs of their child/children by the responding parents, we find from Table no. 5, the following answers:

Answer	N	Frequency	Percentage %
Love	44	27	61.40
Understanding	44	25	56.80
Autonomy	44	18	40.90
Appreciation	44	17	38.60
Connection	44	17	38.60
Acceptance	44	15	34.10
Validation	44	13	29.50
Recognition	44	8	18.20

Table no. 5. My child/children's needs

The most frequently mentioned needs are love (61.40%) and understanding (56.80%). These are present in over half of the respondents, indicating that people consider love and being understood by others to be fundamental to their well-being. This is followed by autonomy (40.90%), then appreciation and connection (38.60% each). These values show that, in addition to emotional support, people also

need personal freedom and the feeling of being appreciated and connected to others.

Acceptance (34.10%) and validation (29.50%) are mentioned by about a third of the participants — fewer than love or understanding, but still significant, suggesting the importance of being accepted and confirmed by others. Recognition (18.20%) has the lowest weight, with just under a fifth of respondents indicating this need, which may suggest that obtaining explicit recognition (praise, status) is less of a priority than emotional support and understanding. We believe that there is coherence between the needs of parents and those attributed to children – both oriented towards the emotional and relational dimension.

Another question in the questionnaire aimed at identifying obstacles/difficulties encountered in the role of parent. The answers are presented in Table no. 6.

N	Frequency	Percentage
		%
44	170	38.60
44	11.0	25.00
44	10.0	22.70
44	8.0	18.20
44	7.0	15.90
44	5.0	11.40
44	5.0	11.40
44	4.0	9.10
44	3.0	6.89
44	1.0	2.30
44	1.0	2.30
44	0.0	0.00
44	0.0	0.00
	44 44 44 44 44 44 44 44 44 44	44 170   44 11.0   44 10.0   44 8.0   44 7.0   44 5.0   44 5.0   44 4.0   44 3.0   44 1.0   44 1.0   44 0.0

Table no. 6. Obstacles/difficulties encountered in the role of parent

Most of the respondent's state that they do not encounter difficulties — 17 people (38.60%). This suggests a relatively high level of perceived balance or a lower willingness to declare personal problems. Professional stress (25.00%) and parental stress (22.70%) are the main difficulties mentioned by those who recognized challenges, showing that work-related pressures and parental responsibilities are the most frequent sources of discomfort. Addiction to screens or substances (18.20%) and school demotivation (15.90%) also appear in notable proportions, signaling concerns related to mental health and

educational performance. Problems such as being a single parent and child undiscipline are reported by 11.40% of participants.

Other difficult situations are divorce (9.10%), conflicting relationships with the partner (6.89%), disability and diseases/conditions (each 2.30%) have a low frequency but may indicate significant difficulties for the affected individuals. Unemployment and death in the family were not reported by any respondent in this sample. We note that the surveyed group seems more oriented towards daily challenges and social roles, rather than towards major critical events.

We were also interested in parental beliefs. Thus, the answers chosen by the group of research subjects are presented in Table no. 7.

44 44	25.0	56.82 22.73
		22.73
44	0.0	
	8.U	18.20
44	1.0	2.30
2 44	0.0	0.00
, 44	0.0	0.00
, 44	0.0	0.00
44	0.0	0.00
2 44	0.0	0.00
, 44	0.0	0.00
	44 2 44 3 44 4 44 2 44	44 1.0 2 44 0.0 3 44 0.0 44 0.0 44 0.0 44 0.0 44 0.0

Table no. 7. Beliefs about parental roles

The dominant option is "I choose to do everything for the good of my child/children", checked by 25 people (56.82%). This indicates a majority orientation towards sacrifice and priority given to the child's needs, reflecting a parenting style centered on the child's well-being. "My child is my friend" is mentioned by 22.73% of respondents. This choice shows the desire of some parents to have a close relationship, based on trust and open communication. The "other" category (18.20%) suggests that some parents have personal perspectives, different from the pre-established options. The belief "I have a perfect child" appears very rarely (2.30%), indicating that only a very small

number of parents express this idealized perception. The other beliefs — such as "Children are the exclusive responsibility of the mother", "The school is responsible for my child's education" or "My opinion as a parent is the only correct one" — were not chosen by any respondent. The results outline a predominantly responsible, involved and affectionate parental profile, with an emphasis on the child's well-being and emotional closeness. At the same time, parents do not seem to adopt extreme perspectives (authoritarianism, total idealization, non-involvement, exclusive maternal responsibility or delegation to the school).

The final sections of the questionnaire highlight parents' interest in personal development and training. Participants mentioned parenting courses, support groups and specialized readings as their main sources of learning. In Table no. 8. The results for the main sources of learning and personal development are presented.

Answer	N	Frequency	Percentage %
Parenting books	44	13.0	29.50
Discussions with life partner	44	11.0	25.0
Other	44	7.0	15.90
Informal discussions with other	44	5.0	11.40
parents			
Parenting courses	44	4.0	9.10
Parent support groups	44	2.0	4.50
Parental counseling	44	2.0	4.50
I don't talk to anyone I know	44	0.0	0.00
better what to do			
I'm not interested in this topic	44	0.0	0.00

Table no. 8. Personal development as a parent

To improve their parenting skills, the most common option indicated by the study subjects is "parenting books" — 13 people (29.50%). This result indicates that almost a third of the respondents prefer information through individual reading, which is probably considered easily accessible and flexible. This is followed by "discussions with the life partner" (25.00%), which shows that a quarter of the parents value the support and exchange of ideas as a couple, for coherence in the child's education. "Other" (15.90%) indicates the existence of individual resources or strategies (possibly the internet, podcasts, online groups, extended family, etc.) that the parents consider useful. Then "Informal discussions with other parents" mentioned by (11.40%) fewer are based on the experiences of peers, followed by "Parenting

courses" mentioned by (9.10%), and "parent support groups" and "parental counseling" indicated as sources of personal development, only by (4.50%) each, showing a low participation in professional training or organized support. No one chose "I don't talk to anyone, I know better what to do" and "I'm not interested in this topic", which shows that all participating parents show a certain interest in improving their role, even if the forms of involvement differ. The last aspect studied through the administered questionnaire aimed at identifying the training needs that parents have, the results can be found in Table no. 9.

Answer	N	Frequency	Percentage %
Managing the challenges specific to adolescence: self-esteem, self-image, self-identity, personal and professional aspirations, peer relationships	44	13.0	29.55
Managing one's own emotions and thoughts	44	9.0	20.45
Establishing behavioral boundaries in the parent-child relationship	44	4.0	9.09
I have no training needs	44	4.0	9.09
Others	44	3.0	6.82
Managing my child's undisciplined behavior	44	3.0	6.82
Managing my child's negative emotions	44	3.0	6.82
Managing my child's school activities	44	2.0	4.55
Motivating my child for school, sports, artistic activities, etc.	44	2.0	4.55
Managing my child's conflictive relationships at school	44	1.0	2.27

Table no. 9. Training needs as parents

The dominant need is managing the challenges specific to adolescence, 13 people (29.55%). This includes complex aspects such as self-esteem, personal and professional identity, aspirations, as well as relationships with peers. The result indicates that many parents feel the need for support in navigating their children's transition to adulthood. Next is the need for managing their own emotions and thoughts (20.45%), indicating that some parents want to develop their emotional and cognitive self-regulation to be more effective in their relationship

with their child. Setting behavioral limits in the parent-child relationship and "I have no training needs" are at the same level (9.09%), showing that for some parents the problem is maintaining authority and healthy rules, but there is also a small group that believes that they do not need additional support. Other needs are indicated with low frequency: managing the child's unruly behavior (6.82%), managing the child's negative emotions (6.82%) and other concerns (6.82%). Specific needs such as managing school activities (4.55%), motivating the child for various activities (4.55%) and managing conflicting relationships at school (2.27%) are reported by very few parents. We believe that parents are probably aware of the need for training in the field of emotional self-regulation and understanding the child's developmental stages.

The results show that parents place a strong emphasis on emotional health and build empathetic relationships with their children. The difficulties reported are mainly related to professional and parental stress, as well as the impact of technology on children. The analysis highlights the need for parenting education resources, especially for managing adolescence and emotions.

To analyze the statistical association relationships between the categorical variables of the questionnaire, the Chi-square test of independence ( $\chi^2$ ), appropriate for categorical variables, was used. Statistical significance was set at the p < 0.05 threshold.

Three significant associations were identified. Thus, the self-care mode of parents (emotional, physical, spiritual, etc.) correlates with their perception of the parental role,  $\chi^2(20) = 52.54$ , p = 0.0001

The dimension that parents cultivate for self-care is associated with expressed needs, recognition, love, validation, autonomy,  $\chi^2(76) = 104.78$ , p = 0.016

Parents' self-perception ("good enough", "democratic", "authoritarian", "perfect") is associated with the reported relational style ("understanding", "supportive", "critical", "controlling")  $\chi^2(30) = 69.33$ , p = 0.0001

The results highlight a coherence between the internal dimensions of parenting (self-care, self-perception) and external manifestations (expressed needs, relational style with the child). Parents who cultivate emotional or spiritual balance tend to consider themselves "good enough" and express needs for connection and recognition. This self-definition is congruent with models of constructive parenting (Winnicott, 1965; Baumrind, 1991).

Self-perception as "good enough" or "democratic" is associated with supportive and empathetic relationships with children, confirming the

importance of parental mindset on family climate (Siegel, 2012; Gottman & Declaire, 1997).

In contrast, orientation towards a role perceived as "perfect" or "authoritarian" is more frequently correlated with critical and controlling attitudes, suggesting a risk for rigidity and reduced emotional flexibility.

Correlational analysis confirms that self-care strategies and self-definition as a parent are significantly associated with both expressed needs and the style of relating to the child. The results may constitute a starting point for parenting counseling programs focused on:

- developing emotional self-care,
- cultivating a flexible parenting mindset,
- promoting supportive and empathetic relationships with children.

Overall, these data highlight the importance of parenting support programs that promote emotional balance and self-care, not only as a tool for reducing stress, but also as a foundation for developing a healthy parental identity and clarifying one's own needs.

#### **Conclusions**

This study provides a descriptive perspective on parents' perceptions of their role, their own needs and the difficulties encountered. The data suggests the need for educational programs focused on emotional support, stress management and the development of parenting skills for critical stages of child development. The questionnaire analyzed brings to the fore the need for parents to support in all dimensions of family life. The analysis confirms that self-care strategies and the way of selfdefinition as a parent correlate significantly with both the expressed needs and the style of relating to the child. Parents' self-care mode (emotional, physical, spiritual, etc.) correlates with their perception of the parental role, the dimension that parents cultivate for self-care is associated with expressed needs, recognition, love, validation, autonomy, and parents' self-perception ("good enough", "democratic", "authoritarian", "perfect") is associated with the reported relational "supportive", "critical", ("understanding", "controlling"). Therefore, providing educational programs, psychological support and access to updated information can contribute to a better adaptation of parents to current challenges. The multidimensional approach to parenting is essential to build resilient families and healthy societies. We aim to use these results to optimize the curriculum of the Subject perspectives Theoretical-applied Parenting. approaching partnerships with parents, taught within the Master program in Psychopedagogy of Early Education and Early Childhood Education. We also understand that the limits of this research are given by the relatively small number of research subjects, in this sense we propose to continue this ascertaining study.

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