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EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PUPIL MOTIVATION IN READING, WRITING AND MATHEMATICS IN ROMANIAN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Explorarea legăturii dintre implicarea părinților și motivația elevilor la citire, scriere și matematică în învățământul primar din România

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EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PUPIL MOTIVATION IN READING, WRITING AND MATHEMATICS IN ROMANIAN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Family-school partnerships play a significant role in shaping pupils' school motivation, particularly in primary education. In the present non-experimental, correlational, cross-sectional study, associations between parental involvement and students' motivation to learn in different subjects were investigated. The study presents a dyad sample of 79 primary school students and one parent for each child, during the school year 2022–2023. Student motivation was assessed in reading, writing, and mathematics, distinguishing among three dimensions of motivation according to the self-determination theory. The parents also responded to a questionnaire measuring their involvement in school activities, communication with teachers, and involvement at home. Significant associations were identified only between parental involvement in school activities and student motivation for reading ($r = .25$, $p < .02$, $r^2 = .063$) and writing ($r = .21$, $p < .05$, $r^2 = .043$). These results suggest that parental involvement in school activities is associated with higher literacy-related motivation, although the cross-sectional nature of the data does not allow causal conclusions. The study has potential implications for identifying school-based parental involvement as a promising correlate of students' motivation for reading and writing. Future research should evaluate these relationships using longitudinal designs and more diverse samples to clarify directionality and generalizability.

Keywords: family-school partnership, parental involvement, primary education, pupil motivation.

Rezumat

Parteneriatele dintre familie și școală joacă un rol semnificativ în formarea motivației școlare a elevilor, în special în învățământul primar. Acest studiu nonexperimental, corelațional și transversal investighează asocierile dintre implicarea părinților și motivația elevilor de a învăța, în relație cu trei dintre disciplinele sau domeniile alfabetizării. Studiul a fost realizat în anul școlar 2022–2023 pe un eșantion de 79 de elevi din învățământul primar și câte un părinte pentru fiecare elev. Motivația acestora a fost evaluată în ceea ce privește cititul, scrisul și matematica, distingând trei dimensiuni ale motivației în conformitate cu teoria autodeterminării. De asemenea, părinții au răspuns la un chestionar care măsoară implicarea lor în activitatea școlară, comunicarea cu profesorii și implicarea în activitățile de acasă. Au fost evidențiate asocieri semnificative între implicarea părinților în activitățile școlare și motivația elevilor pentru citit ($r = .25$, $p < .02$, $r^2 = .063$), respectiv între implicarea părinților și motivația elevilor pentru scris ($r = .21$, $p < .05$, $r^2 = .043$). Aceste rezultate sugerează că implicarea părinților în activitățile școlare este asociată cu o motivație mai puternică legată de alfabetizarea pentru lectură și scris, fără a putea stabili relații de cauzalitate. Cercetări viitoare ar trebui să investigheze

aceste relații folosind modele longitudinale și eșantioane mai diverse pentru a clarifica direcționalitatea și gradul de generalizare a rezultatelor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *implicare parentală, învățământ primar, motivația elevilor, parteneriat familie-școală.*

1. Introduction

How can the importance of motivating a student for their intellectual, social, and emotional development or the importance of the role that parents play in all aspects of their child's life be highlighted from as early as primary school onwards, especially during this defining period in their development? Could the lack of motivation to learn have consequences for a child's long-term development? What is the role of parents in preventing this?

The lack of motivation for learning is a common issue, widely observed in children and students of all ages. Factors impacting motivation, such as anxiety and stress, can lead to a decrease in overall engagement and can have a negative impact on learning (Abdolrezapour et al., 2023). The consequences of this could lead firstly to low grades and even progress to academic failure, or absenteeism. A strong support system is required in order to prevent issues of this sort. Part of such a system first and foremost are the parents, present in the child's life from birth. When a child starts school, the teacher becomes part of this system, also being the person with whom the child spends most of the day with.

In primary school, students are in the midst of their development, when a lot of changes that will influence the child's life occur. At a young age, children admire their parents and imitate their behavior. Therefore, a parent who shows enthusiasm and interest in what their child is learning provides them with a support system that reinforces the importance of schooling and supports the child's academic learning, as also supported by the study conducted by Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2005). Thus, parent-teacher partnerships are vital in ensuring the student is in an environment favorable to their development, both at school and at home.

Why is it important for a student to be motivated? What role does motivation play in a student's life, and what could motivate a parent to become actively involved in their child's education, given that the child attends school? The study conducted by Gottfried (1990) tells us that intellectual performance and academic success tend to be higher for children who have higher intrinsic academic motivation, while also having a more favorable perception of their own academic skills. These students are also perceived as being more motivated by their teachers. At the same time, as Gottfried (1990) pointed out in his study, investigating and understanding these issues in greater depth could also be useful in bringing to light potential development problems in students.

The overall objective of this paper is firstly to bring to the attention of both parents and teachers how important it is for them to get involved and secondly for parents to collaborate with the school in order to motivate children to learn and to show them that learning is important and beneficial for them. To this end, the relationship between parental involvement and students' motivation to learn, both in and out of school, will be examined.

1.1. Pupils' motivation to learn

According to Guay et al. (2010), motivation for learning can be viewed either as motivation toward school in general or as specific motivation. There are two approaches to specific motivation: motivation specific to a particular subject, i.e., motivation for reading, writing, and mathematics, and motivation as a multidimensional concept, "which varies not only in intensity but also in quality" (Guay et al., 2010, p. 712). Thus, school motivation will be analyzed both from the perspective of reading, writing, and mathematics and as a multidimensional concept, addressing in this regard the theory of self-determination, which distinguishes between several types of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Broadly speaking, motivation can be divided into two main categories: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 70), intrinsic motivation "refers to engaging in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from participating in it". When it comes to intrinsic academic motivation, it manifests itself through curiosity, persistence in activities, and the pleasure of participating in educational activities

(Gottfried, 1990). Intrinsic motivation is also considered to play an important role in lifelong learning, compared to externally enforced learning and instruction.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves engaging in an activity for instrumental reasons (Guay et al., 2010). This type of motivation refers to behaviors that are not related to the person's inner satisfaction but are performed solely to receive a reward. From the perspective of self-determination theory, it is important to note that instrumental motivation can vary in terms of content and character. Ordered from low self-determination to high self-determination, these are external regulation, regular introjection, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

To be appropriate to the age characteristics of primary school students, external regulation and regulated introjection were combined into a single concept, namely controlled regulation. These types of motivation were first defined in a study by Ryan and Deci (2000), therefore external regulation occurs when a person's behavior is motivated by their desire to obtain a reward or, alternatively, to avoid punishment. Regulated introjection refers to behaviors that occur in response to internal pressures, such as obligation or guilt, so the individual supports the reason for doing something, but in a controlled manner. Identified regulation can be observed when a person identifies with the reason for performing a behavior or when they personally consider it important. This type of extrinsic motivation is self-determined because that behavior comes from within in a non-contingent way. Integrated regulation is described as an autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. It occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated by someone, to their self, meaning these regulations have been evaluated and brought into congruence with their other values and needs.

1.2. Parental involvement

Parental involvement refers to the resources that parents invest in their children's education and is directed toward parent-child interactions in the academic environment, divided into two spheres, namely at home and at school (Kim, 2022). Fishel and Ramirez (2005) state, in their study, that

parental involvement refers to the participation of parents in their children's education, with the aim of promoting their academic and social success. Hornby (2011) reports that for children, parent involvement produces positive results in terms of attitudes, behavior, and school attendance, as well as improvements in their mental health. For teachers, when parental involvement is effective, it leads to improved parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher morale, and contributes to a positive school climate. For parents, involvement in their children's education has been associated with increased parental confidence, greater satisfaction with their role as parents, and increased interest in their own educational activities.

1.3. Literature review

To date, numerous studies have been conducted investigating the relationship between parental involvement and students' motivation to learn, with positive results supporting the fact that parental involvement is beneficial for student motivation, academic achievement, and, implicitly, their overall development (Hornby, 2011; Huat See & Gorard, 2015; Kim, 2022; Özyıldırım, 2024).

According to Hornby (2011), parental involvement in school activities traditionally includes activities such as fundraisings, attending parent-teacher conferences and meetings, and volunteering in classrooms when needed. Another multidimensional definition highlights six categories of parental involvement activities: parenting education, communication, at home learning, volunteering, decision-making, and community connections (Epstein, 1995, as cited in Fan & Williams, 2010). Furthermore, Fan (2001) empirically identified a seven-component framework for parental involvement, which included areas such as establishing rules regarding television viewing, communication, contact with the school, involvement in parent-teacher associations, volunteering, supervision, and educational aspirations.

By breaking down the concept of involvement into three distinct dimensions – school-based involvement, home-school communication, and home-based involvement – this study offers an analysis that goes beyond the traditional view of parental support as a single, unified entity. This distinction is essential because the literature suggests that different types of interactions can

generate varied motivational responses depending on the specific academic context, whether it involves literacy (reading and writing) or math and logic (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). These activities have been welcomed and recognized by schools as forms of parental involvement. However, for parental involvement to be most effective, it is essential to broaden the scope of parental involvement beyond these activities and highlight other essential aspects that contribute to the formation of a genuine partnership between the school and parents. This involves giving due importance to one-on-one parent-teacher meetings and establishing effective two-way communication channels that benefit both parents and teachers. Also, as suggested by Spear et al. (2023), acknowledging that many parents engage in their child's learning in ways that are not always recognized by teachers and schools, could lead to strengthening of the family-school partnership. Teachers should recognize and promote the value of informal learning and help guide parents in the ways in which these activities can add value to the children's education and expand their opportunities for supporting learning.

By choosing to get involved, parents give their children a sense of confidence and show them that they are important. When parents respond to their children's grades with encouragement and praise, it stimulates an intrinsic motivational orientation characterized by a preference for challenging tasks, curiosity, and a genuine interest in learning. As a result, pupils who experience parental involvement show higher levels of effort, concentration, and attention. In addition, pupils with involved parents are more likely to take personal responsibility for their own learning (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). When students perceive that their parents place a high value on education and have high expectations for their academic success, their interest is significantly influenced, as are their involvement and confidence in their academic activities. This indicates that parents' educational values and aspirations are effectively transmitted and communicated through their active involvement, thereby shaping their children's motivation to excel academically (Fan & Williams, 2010). Furthermore, when parents actively engage in school-related activities, they not only strengthen the connection between home and school but also demonstrate their genuine appreciation for their children's education. As a potential result of such involvement, children are more likely to set higher academic goals and develop greater confidence in their ability to achieve those goals. When students see their parents as role models and trusted partners in the learning process, this

positively influences their self-assessment of their abilities and performance (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

There are also studies that point to several reasons that could be related to weaker involvement, like time constraints, work responsibilities or even lack of knowledge (Spear et al., 2023; Şengönül, 2022). Thus, according to Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2005), parental participation in school activities positively predicts children's involvement in school, specifically their school engagement. But interestingly, the results show that more contact between parents and teachers was linked to less involvement from the children in school. This negative association is attributed to the fact that such contacts are primarily initiated due to student behavior problems, which is the most common reason for parents to get in touch with teachers. Therefore, it is not contact that is harmful. The negative association exists because those contacts are primarily associated with behavioral problems. In today's ever-changing environment this type of support is more important for children than ever, but, at the same time, some parents find it more difficult to invest their time in school activities, as many of them have demanding jobs.

While general research on parental involvement and student motivation is extensive, findings are often context dependent. The socio-cultural and educational nuances of the Romanian context may significantly influence how parental involvement manifests and impacts student motivation compared to other educational systems. Parental involvement styles, expectations, and actual practices can vary significantly across cultures (Abbas et al., 2023). Romanian culture might present unique dynamics in parent-school interactions, parenting styles, and family emphasis on academic areas like reading, writing, and mathematics. Understanding these specific dynamics is essential for creating effective interventions within the Romanian educational context.

2. Methodology

The study aims to investigate the relationship between family-school partnerships and pupils' motivation for reading, writing, and mathematics. It aims to provide new insights on the topic, from the perspective of the Romanian context. Thus, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Parents' school-based involvement and pupils' motivation for reading are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 2: Home-school communication and pupils' motivation for reading are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 3: Parents' home-based involvement and pupils' motivation for reading are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 4: Parents' school-based involvement and pupils' motivation for writing are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 5: Home-school communication and pupils' motivation for writing are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 6: Parents' home-based involvement and pupils' motivation for writing are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 7: Parents' school-based involvement and pupils' motivation for mathematics are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 8: Home-school communication and pupils' motivation for mathematics are positively correlated.

Hypothesis 9: Parents' home-based involvement and pupils' motivation for mathematics are positively correlated.

2.1. Research design

The study presents a quantitative, non-experimental, correlational research design. The two variables correlated are parental involvement in family-school partnerships and pupils' motivation to learn. The choice of research instruments was based on the need to use validated scales that capture the multidimensional nature of the constructs under investigation.

To assess parental involvement, the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ; Garbacz & Sheridan, 2011) was selected, using the version adapted for elementary school. Although the original version (FIQ-EC) was designed for early childhood education (McWayne et al., 2015), this study utilized the adaptation which recalibrates the items to reflect activities that are specific to school-age students. Regarding student motivation, a complementary instrument focused on literacy and mathematics was used (Guay et al., 2010), a choice justified by these questionnaires' ability to capture discipline-specific motivational variations. The use of these adapted versions ensures the relevance of the items to the developmental stage of third- and fourth-grade pupils.

Parental involvement was measured through self-reported behaviors with the Family Involvement Questionnaire for Early Childhood (FIQ-EC; Garbacz & Sheridan, 2011), measuring the frequency of specific behaviors initiated by the parents. FIQ-EC consists of 30 questions divided in three different dimensions, namely school-based involvement (e.g., “I participate in parent and family social activities at school.”), home-school communication (e.g., “I talk to the teacher about my child’s accomplishments.”) and home-based involvement (e.g., “I help my child with homework.”). Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from *almost never* (1) to *almost always* (4).

Student motivation to learn was measured through self-reported behaviors using The Elementary School Motivation Scale (ESMS; Guay et al., 2010), an instrument that analyzes three dimensions of motivation (intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, and controlled regulation) in relation to three different subjects (writing, reading, and mathematics). Three items were adapted for each of the three dimensions, which were related to each subject, so that for each subject there are nine items, resulting in a total of 27 items. Some examples of items include: “Reading interests me a lot” (Intrinsic motivation for reading), “In life, it’s important to learn how to read” (Identified regulation for reading) or “I read to please my parents or my teacher” (Controlled regulation for reading). The items were similar for writing and mathematics. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses ranging from *always no* (1) to *always yes* (5). Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory (SDT) provides a robust framework for understanding student motivation by emphasizing the quality rather than just the quantity of motivation (Abdolrezapour et al., 2023). When three fundamental psychological needs – autonomy (feeling of choice), competence (feeling capable), and relatedness (feeling connected) – are satisfied, students develop more autonomous forms of motivation, such as intrinsic motivation (engaging for inherent enjoyment) and identified regulation (valuing the importance of the activity). This autonomous motivation, fostered by supportive environments from parents and teachers, leads to enhanced engagement, learning, academic performance, and overall psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

As both original studies were published in open-access format, the scales were utilized in accordance with the open-use policies. The two instruments were

back-translated into Romanian from English by two translators, who compared the two translations and made changes where necessary, thus complying with the translation procedure, whose purpose is to reduce the possibility of translation errors, resulting in the most accurate translation possible.

2.2. Participants

The sample for this study consists of third and fourth grade pupils and their parents. Parents serve first and foremost as role models for every child, a fact that is particularly evident at a young age; that is why this study is conducted with primary school students in the third and fourth grades. Students younger than third grade were excluded due to the possibility that they might not perceive differences between motivation for a specific subject or the various types of motivation, as children aged 5 to 7 are characterized by “all-or-nothing” thinking (Guay et al., 2010). During this period, students are in the midst of development. The most significant changes can occur at this age—changes that will influence the child’s life for a long time to come. The students were selected from a school in the urban area of the city of Arad. The questionnaire was applied during the school year 2022–2023 to four classes in total, two of 3rd graders and two of 4th graders. The questionnaires for the pupils were applied by one of the authors in each class, on the same day, whereas the one for the parents was given to the teachers to give to the parents and was retrieved after one week. All the students from each class were included in the study. Partially filled in questionnaires or those from parents who explicitly refused to participate were excluded from the final analysis together with the response of their child. The current research was conducted in the context of a final paper for a bachelor’s degree.

In terms of class distribution, out of the 79 participants, there is a slight predominance of third-grade students (approx. 55%) compared to fourth-grade students (approx. 45%). Analysis by age reveals that the majority of students are 11 years old (over 50%), followed by those aged 10 (approx. 35–40%), while the proportion of 12-year-olds is the lowest (approx. 10%). From a gender distribution perspective, the sample shows a relatively even split (approx. 55% were female, compared to approx. 45% male participants).

2.3. Procedure

Before the actual data collection, parents had to sign an agreement in order for the pupils to be able to participate in the research. First, they received the agreement and the questionnaire for their parents in printed form. They gave both forms to their parents to fill out at home and then they brought them back to school. Only then was the questionnaire administered to the pupils, under supervision, in physical format in the classroom. Before completion, instructions and explanations were provided on how to complete the questionnaire. The completion time was around 20 minutes. In order to correlate the parents' answers with those of the pupils, each participant had to fill in a "secret code" consisting of the child's initials and date of birth. All data was collected in March 2023.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive data

Given that the instruments were translated and applied in a new cultural context (Romania) without prior validation on this specific population, to measure the internal consistency reliability of the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ; Garbacz & Sheridan, 2011) and The Elementary School Motivation Scale (ESMS; Guay et al., 2010) instruments, Cronbach's Alpha measure was applied, as it is the most used method when you have multiple Likert scale questions for which the reliability needs to be determined (meaning it measures the same underlying construct). If the α values are above .70, then you can trust the instruments have a good internal consistency reliability. In this case, the values obtained for parental involvement ($\alpha > .85$) indicate excellent reliability, while for the motivation scales, the values (α between .62 and .75) confirm satisfactory internal consistency, thus validating the use of these data in the present study (Tables no. 1 and no. 2).

Table no. 1. Means and standard deviations for every dimension of the FIQ-EC questionnaire

Variables	Participants	Min.	Max.	M	Cronbach's Alpha	SD
School-based involvement	79	1.00	3.90	2.28	.875	.769
Home-school communication	79	1.00	4.00	2.76	.958	.921
Home-based involvement	79	1.70	4.00	2.94	.869	.598

Table no. 2. Means and standard deviations for each of the three subjects covered, reading, writing, and mathematics, measured by the ESMS questionnaire

Variables	Participants	Min.	Max.	M	Cronbach's Alpha	SD
Motivation for reading	79	1.78	5.00	3.54	.620	.600
Motivation for writing	79	1.56	4.78	3.26	.670	.645
Motivation for mathematics	79	1.67	5.00	3.48	.757	.797

3.2. Pearson correlations

Table no. 3 presents the correlation values for all the analyzed dimensions regarding pupils' motivation for learning and parents' involvement. There are two significant associations, as follows: parents' school-based involvement and pupils' motivation for reading (hypothesis 1, $r = .250^*$; $p = .013$, $r^2 = .062$) and parents' school-based involvement and pupils' motivation for writing (hypothesis 4, $r = .208^*$; $p = .033$, $r^2 = .043$). However, the relation between parents' school-based involvement and pupils' motivation for mathematics (hypothesis 7, $r = .164$; $p = .075$) is not statistically significant.

Table no. 3. Correlation between pupils' motivation and parents' involvement

Dimension	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. M_School-based involvement	—					
2. M_Home-based involvement	.546	—				
3. M_Home-school communication	.507	.697	—			
4. M_Motivation for reading	.250*	.152	-.001	—		
5. M_Motivation for writing	.208*	.125	.019	.768	—	
6. M_Motivation for mathematics	.164	.162	.067	.599	.602	—

Note. * $p < .05$

No statistically significant association has been found between parents' home-based involvement and pupils' motivation for reading (hypothesis 3, $r = .152$; $p = .090$), pupils' motivation for writing (hypothesis 6, $r = .125$; $p = .136$), or pupils' motivation for mathematics (hypothesis 9, $r = .162$; $p = .077$).

Between the home-school communication and pupils' motivation variables there are no statistically significant associations: pupils' motivation for reading (hypothesis 2, $r = -.001$; $p = .497$), pupils' motivation for writing (hypothesis 5, $r = .019$; $p = .434$) and pupils' motivation for mathematics (hypothesis 8, $r = .067$; $p = .280$).

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the family-school partnership and pupils' motivation to learn, reported on three different subjects, namely reading, writing, and mathematics. A correlational analysis was performed to determine whether there was a significant association between the two variables. According to the hypotheses, nine correlations were made between each dimension of the two questionnaires. Of these associations, two were significant and seven were insignificant.

According to the descriptive data, the means regarding pupils' motivation indicate an above-average trend, suggesting that although students are motivated to learn, this motivation is not very high. The highest mean is the one for pupils' reading motivation, indicating that this subject is the one for which students are most motivated. The lowest level of motivation is for writing, suggesting that the students do not feel strongly motivated for activities that involve writing. A possible reason for this might be the anxiety pupils feel in relation to writing tasks, such as fear of making mistakes or being judged (Kaya Özgül & Ateş, 2023).

The means for the questionnaire items measuring parental involvement also indicate an above-average trend, suggesting that there is a level of parental involvement in the educational process both in terms of school-based involvement and in terms of home-school communication and home-based involvement. The highest mean registered is the one regarding home-based

involvement, and the lowest one is the one regarding school-based involvement. Thus, as expected, parents tend to be more involved in their children's activities at home, compared to their school-related activities. Given that parents have more control and comfort at home, leading them to feel more at ease and confident in supporting their child, this result is not surprising, argument supported by Şengönül (2022).

In relation to the correlational analysis, the findings suggest that there is a statistically significant association between pupils' motivation for reading and parental involvement in school-based activities, with an average effect size, which is consistent with the studies conducted by Çalışkan & Ulaş (2022), Graham et al. (2012), and Sénéchal and Young (2008), whose results indicate that parental involvement was associated with higher levels of reading motivation and reading comprehension.

There is also a statistically significant correlation between pupils' motivation to write and parental involvement in school-based activities, with an average effect size. These results correspond to those of studies conducted by Jeynes (2012) and Özyıldırım (2024), which highlight the fact that parental involvement has positive implications for pupils' motivation to write and engage in writing-related activities.

It can be observed that there are no statistically significant correlations between the three approaches to motivation and the dimension regarding family-school communication. This indicates that the communication between parents and teachers might be flawed, that a barrier in communication might exist, which can negatively affect the child. One possible reason for this might consist of a difference in attitude and perception between the parent and teacher, or the beliefs of the parent and teacher about what effective and beneficial involvement means (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

The relations between the three approaches to pupils' motivation and the dimension involving parental involvement in home-based activities are also statistically insignificant. The study conducted by Fan (2001) explains that a possible reason for this result might be related to the different expectations parents have regarding their involvement or even a series of cultural differences, aspects also supported by the study conducted by Jeynes (2012).

Although numerous studies highlight the benefits of parental involvement in the educational process on pupils' motivation to learn (Huat See & Gorard, 2015; Jeynes, 2012; Kim, 2022), there are a number of factors that can negatively influence this relationship, taking into account aspects that may be related to both pupils and to their parents. Regarding students, such a factor could be represented by individual differences between them, as each student has a unique personality, so there is a possibility that some of these aspects may not fit the needs of some children. Therefore, there is a possibility that some students may not be more motivated to learn just because their parents are involved. Another factor could be related to student autonomy. When parents are overly involved and exercise excessive control over their child's academic life, it can undermine the student's sense of autonomy and decrease their motivation. So, whether we are talking about relationships between students, feedback being received, or even learning in a safe environment, it is important to consider this perspective. According to Ryan and Deci (2020), controlling behaviors are negatively related with students' autonomous motivation. Thus, students taught with a more controlling approach not only lose initiative but also learn less effectively. Another factor could be the excessive pressure that some parents put on their children, even if they have good intentions. Being unprepared to support their children could do them more harm than good. At the same time, parents' desire to motivate students could have the opposite effect on them.

Also, socioeconomic factors, although not addressed in this study, could play an important role in influencing students' motivation to learn. A study by Poon (2020) found that in families with medium socioeconomic status, there is a higher level of parental expectations, parental involvement, and child involvement compared to families with low socioeconomic status. This suggests that socioeconomic status plays a significant role in shaping parental factors that promote academic achievement. The study also noted that parents with low socioeconomic status generally have lower levels of education and may feel less competent and confident in supporting their children's education. Socioeconomic status has a big impact on a child's physical, social, cognitive and emotional development. According to Liu et al. (2022), children that come from high socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to fulfill their cognitive potential, which also has a positive impact on their academic development.

4.1. Practical implications

From a practical perspective, the results indicate the need for teachers to take an active role in managing relationships with families, transforming the school from a purely administrative space into a center for educational collaboration. To boost student motivation, teachers should prioritize strategies that encourage parents' physical presence in the school environment, moving beyond the traditional format of parent-teacher conferences. One effective approach is for example the implementation of "Family Literacy Workshops", where parents are invited to participate directly in the teaching-learning process, serving as positive role models for the children. Additionally, teachers can facilitate engagement by diversifying channels of interaction, using digital platforms not only to monitor progress but also as tools for inviting parents and planning collaborative classroom events. Thus, by creating opportunities for volunteering and decision-making involvement, the teacher can reduce the participation barriers identified in this study regarding the low score of the dimension of school involvement. Teachers should foster open communication and provide resources for involvement, as they can deepen understanding and build trust between parents and teachers (Spear et al., 2023). At the same time, it is important for schools to consider the resources that parents have available to facilitate learning, as they might be limited for some parents. This refers both to the various material resources that parents can use and to the time resources they have available.

4.2. Research limits and future studies

A notable limitation of the present study lies in its methodological framework, specifically its reliance on a quantitative, correlational design. Conducting such a study does not allow the establishment of causality. Thus, the existence of a link between variables is obvious, but the cause of this link cannot be determined. The small number of participants is also a limitation as it leads to results with low statistical power and increases the possibility of a type II error, i.e., that an effect that exists cannot be identified. Since the sample consisted of only 79 participants who were selected from a specific educational context (third and fourth grades), the conclusions cannot be generalized to the entire population of primary school students in Romania.

Also, there are some limitations regarding the data collected from the parents, as there was some resistance from some of them in providing personal information. That led to very little demographic data that would have been relevant for a deep understanding, like their education level, age or even what they do for a living. When it comes to parents, this could have a big influence regarding their children's motivation to learn. Parents with lower levels of education may feel less confident in their ability to support their child's academic progress. They may feel intimidated by school environments or unsure about how to navigate the education system to provide their children with the necessary support. Thus, children with more educated parents tend to have higher academic achievements (Vadivel et al., 2023).

Another limitation of this study may be the cultural adaptation of the questionnaire used to measure parental involvement on the Romanian population. For example, a positive response to the item "I participate in workshops or courses offered by the school" implies that the school organizes such activities. Thus, a parent's negative response to this item may be due to the lack of such workshops, rather than a lack of parental participation in them. Parents also completed the questionnaires separately, so there was no control over how they were completed or over the environment in which they were completed.

The pandemic and the shift to online learning introduced some significant changes in the way parents supported their children and the dynamic of the parent-teacher relationship. This could impact future studies. Both teachers and parents were unprepared for the sudden transition to online learning. This lack of readiness on both parts led to hardships and increased pressure on parents (Alharthi, 2023). As teachers themselves were unfamiliar with what online teaching and assessment implied, they often resorted to repetitive lessons and provided little feedback, aspects which could have strained collaboration with parents that were seeking guidance during those times (Rousoulioti et al., 2022).

One aspect that has not been considered is the role of the teachers in this whole process and the effect that their involvement could have as a mediator in terms of parental involvement and pupil motivation. Therefore, future studies should also include an analysis of teacher involvement or an analysis of their teaching methods and approaches in relation to the two variables that have already been

analyzed. It is also recommended that the sample be expanded to include a larger number of participants and that it be diversified by including students from both rural and urban areas, thereby ensuring a more diverse sample. At the same time, it is recommended to collect data on parental involvement in several ways (observation, questionnaires for teachers) to avoid the subjectivity of their self-reporting data provided in the questionnaire.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings highlight that pupils' motivation for reading and writing is not related solely to intrinsic or school-related factors but is closely linked to the active involvement of parents in the school ecosystem. There could be benefits in terms of student motivation and parental involvement in school activities and the relationship between the two that can be explored, but there are still several barriers to these aspects in Romania, leading to the confirmation of only two of the nine hypotheses, the rest being statistically insignificant. It is important to note that even though not all associations present significant results, parental involvement can play a crucial role in creating a supportive and nurturing environment for learning. The fact that parental involvement in school correlates with motivation to read and write underscores the need to shift from a model of passive involvement, only limited to the activities at home, to one that is active and participatory and that also supports parent-teacher communication. Parents can promote a positive attitude towards education, provide resources, and engage in open communication with their children, which can indirectly contribute to their motivation and overall educational success. The significant associations that were identified suggest that, when parents are visibly involved in school activities, students perceive a unity of expectations and values between the family and educational environments.

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