

Involvement of Parents in School Obligations of Children of Younger School Age

N. M. Milanović

ABSTRACT

Starting from the fact that the role of parents in creating work habits and a positive attitude towards school is of great benefit for the development of students. The aim of this empirical research is to determine the involvement of parents in the performance of school obligations of children of younger school age. The research was conducted on a sample of one hundred and sixty-five parents of children of younger school age. Parents are of the opinion that children are overloaded with school materials, and that teachers are not too demanding in working with students. In addition to obstacles, such as overwork, fatigue, ignorance of the material, parents set aside a certain amount of time every day (between 45 minutes and 60 and 120 minutes) for learning with children and fulfilling school obligations. Although the modern age imposes many endeavors, the views of parents are positively directed towards involvement and commitment in the process of learning and working with children at home.

Keywords: Learning, Parents, School Obligations, Students of Younger School Age

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N. M. Milanović

Faculty of Education, University of
Kragujevac, Jagodina, Serbia.
(e-mail: nedeljko996@gmail.com)

I. INTRODUCTION

The abundance of materials and requirements placed in front of younger students in the process of formal education requires the involvement of parents in working with children and providing assistance in successfully mastering school obligations. "A family represents a more basic system by nature and the number of needs that are met through it, by the nature and duration of established relationships, by the importance of total, and above all emotional investments in the child" (Matejević & Jovanović, 2017, 10). A family is a place where the child receives education and guidance (Roostin, 2018). When it comes to guidance, an important predictor is the positive orientation of children towards learning through the involvement of parents in the joint performance of school obligations and activities. Parents tend to set too high or too low expectations for their children, and that is why it is important to suggest to parents that these expectations be realistic in relation to concerning the child's possibilities (Slijepčević *et al.*, 2017). The guidance of children should be positive, spontaneous and accompanied by a pleasant atmosphere interwoven with a respectful relationship between parents and children, and parental expectations should be realistically considered. The very departure of a child to school brings with it many changes, as well as new roles, tasks and challenges in the family (Polovina, 2009). Confusion and fear are often present in parents in the process of educating their children, especially when it comes to the first child of school age and his encounter with school obligations. It is necessary for parents to be involved in the education of their children

through conversations about school events and the contents they learn, writing homework together, learning (Jethro & Aina, 2012). Therefore, the postmodern participation of parents in the fulfillment of children's school obligations is accompanied by a spectrum of activities that seek to help and guide the child towards the right to do and develop good work habits.

The quality of parents' commitment and involvement in school obligations can be influenced by various factors. Preoccupation with the obligations of everyday life that accompany low incomes, as well as inflexible working hours affect the participation of parents and their commitment to the education of children (Ho, 2009). Therefore, low income, overworked parents, parents staying working overtime, additional jobs, ignorance of the material and school content, accompanied by the ignorance of the parents to explain the necessary material to the child, health, parental motivation and many others can impair the quality of parental participation in the process of fulfilling school obligations with children. Therefore, the difficulties of parents in helping students fulfill their school obligations are accompanied by a spectrum of problems that can potentially occur. "The role of an adult is to see children's capacities, understand children's needs and stimulate the child so that he or she can learn in the way he or she wants to grow up" (Gardašević, 2021, pp. 29-30). It is necessary to harmonize all factors and be completely focused on children's development. Certainly, this fact is theoretically acceptable, while in practice and in the harsh world of today, it is not at all easily achievable.

Based on what we have seen, we come to the problem of

our work: to what extent are parents involved today in the performance of school obligations of children of younger school age? Empirical results will answer this question and present the role and importance of parental support in the process of formal education of younger school-age students.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Sample

One hundred and sixty-five parents of children of younger school-age participated in the research. The overview structure of the sample by number of children (Fig. 1), monthly income (Fig. 2) and parents' education (Fig. 3) were presented graphically.

Based on the analysis of the data obtained in Graph 1, we can see that most parents participated with two children 66.7%, with one child 20%, with three children 7.9% and with more than three children 5.5% of parents.

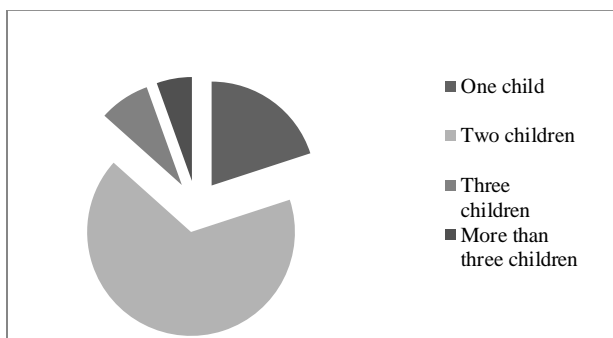


Fig 1. Sample structure by number of children in the family

Graph 2 shows the structure of parents' monthly income: 9.1% of parents have a monthly income of up to 50.000 RSD, 32.7% between 50.000 and 70.000 RSD, 34.5% state between 70.000 and 100.000 RSD, while 23.6% of the estimate has a monthly income of over 100.000 RSD.

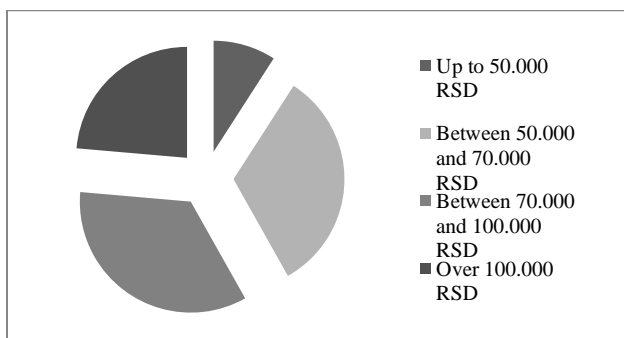


Fig 2. Sample structure by parents' monthly income

Taking into the account the parents' education, 66.1% of parents with completed high school, 1.8% with college, 19.4% of parents with a university degree, 10.9% with a master's degree and 1.8% of parents with a doctorate participated.

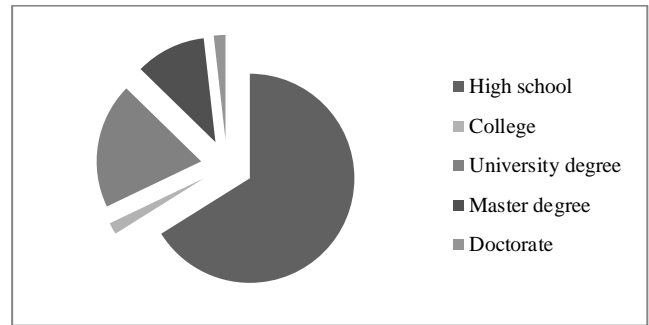


Fig 3. Sample structure according to parents' education

B. Method and the instrument

In this empirical research, we used a descriptive method, a survey and a scaling technique. A special instrument was developed for this research - a questionnaire with an assessment scale. The research was conducted in October 2021 using an electronic questionnaire. Data processing was performed in the SPSS program. In addition to the application of frequencies and estimates, parents' agreement with the claims was shown by calculating the arithmetic mean, while we used the chi-square test to determine statistical significance.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the research is to determine the involvement of parents in the performance of school obligations of children of younger school age.

Research tasks:

1. Examine how many daily and which subjects parents usually study with their children.
2. Determine parents' attitudes towards the importance of children's formal education.
3. Investigate the commitment and activity of parents in fulfilling their children's school obligations.
4. Determine how parents perceive their involvement in the performance of their children's school obligations.
5. Investigate whether there are obstacles to involving parents in the process of fulfilling school obligations with children and, if so, what are the obstacles.
6. Examine how parents would assess their commitment and work with children of younger school age and investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference with regard to parents' education and the number of children.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to purposefully look at the researched problem, we started the research with the first research task, which was to examine how much daily parents study with younger school-age students and in which subjects they mostly need help.

TABLE I: WHAT SUBJECTS DO PARENTS STUDY TOGETHER WITH THEIR CHILDREN

		Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Subjects that parents learn together with their children	I study Serbian language together with the child	9	5.5
	I study mathematics together with the child	27	16.4
	I study all subjects together with the child	129	78.2
	Σ	165	100

The results in Table I show that most parents with children study all subjects. This distribution of answers is expected because children of younger school-age need help and support in all subjects.

TABLE II: HOW MUCH PARENTS STUDY WITH THEIR CHILDREN DAILY

		Frequencies	Percentages (%)
The time that parents spend daily learning with their children	About 45 minutes	78	47.3
	Between 60 and 120 minutes	75	45.5
	Between 120 and 180 minutes	12	7.3
	Σ	165	100

On average, parents mostly study between 45 minutes and 60 and 120 minutes with their children. The least parents answer that they study with their children between two and three hours a day. The age of the child is a factor that affects the time devoted to learning and school obligations because younger children don't have much patience and concentration to dedicate only to these obligations. Play and entertainment are activities for younger children to which they gladly respond. Based on this fact, different teaching approaches have been developed that have proven to be effective (Radulović *et al.*, 2016; Radulović, 2021).

The second task was to determine the attitudes of parents towards the importance of formal education of children of younger school age. The parents were able to agree with the offered claims with 5 - I completely agree; 4 - I agree; 3 - I partially agree; 2 - I don't agree and 1 - I completely disagree.

TABLE III: PARENTS AGREEING WITH CLAIMS REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN'S FORMAL EDUCATION

Variables	N=165	M
I pay special attention to the education of the child.		4.75
I think that the children at school are overloaded with material.		4.01
I think that teachers are too demanding in working with students.		2.79

In Table III, we show the mean value of parental consent with the offered statements concerning the formal education of children. The parents very much agree with the statements: I pay special attention to the education of the child ($M = 4.75$) and I think that children in school are overloaded with material ($M = 4.01$). Authors (Munjiza, 2015; Peko, Dubovicki & Varga, 2017; Zvizdić & Dautbegović, 2020) point out that student overload is one of the problems that students face in a modern school. Parents generally disagree with the statement I believe that teachers

are too demanding in working with students ($M = 2.79$). The obtained data lead us to the conclusion that parents are of the opinion that the school overloads students with materials and contents, while teachers are not too demanding in working with students.

When it comes to learning at home, we first think about doing homework. We considered the involvement and commitment of parents through involvement in writing homework, writing additional assignments intended for practice and talking to parents and children about the material they were working on in school. So, our next task was to investigate the commitment and activity of parents in fulfilling the school obligations of children of younger school age.

TABLE IV: AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF PARENTS IN THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL OBLIGATIONS

Variables	N=165	M
I write homework together with the child.		2.93
I write extra assignments for the child in order to practice a certain material.		3.89
I talk to the child about the material they were working on at school.		4.67

The answers presented in Table IV indicate the occasional involvement of parents in the preparation of children's homework. Parents believe that children practice what they have learned in school as homework, and that this should be their independent work. The authors (Burgić *et al.*, 2017) believe that parents should provide help to their children if they need to do their homework, but not to solve tasks instead of their children. So, obtaining ready-made solutions reduces the productivity and engagement of students in doing homework. Some of the good sides of homework are the independence of students, practicing and connecting the content that was done in school, as well as the possibility of working together with parents through which they will communicate, exchange opinions and spend some time together (Mrkonjić, 2007). By analyzing the answers, we can see that parents are more engaged in writing additional tasks to their children and by talking together about the material they are working on at school. Therefore, in order for parents to create a good attitude of children towards learning and writing homework, it is necessary to provide support and encourage the child with encouragement, praise, awards (Čeka & Murati, 2016).

Knowing that parents are exposed to various stressful situations today, we wanted to determine how parents perceive the performance of school obligations with their children.

TABLE V: AGREEING WITH CLAIMS AIMED AT HOW PARENTS EXPERIENCE LEARNING WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Variables	N=165	M
I find it stressful to do schoolwork and study with my child.		2.77
I see fulfilling school obligations and learning with a child as a challenge.		4.35
I find the performance of school obligations and learning with the child-pleasant and positive.		3.96

The least parents answer that fulfilling school obligations and learning with the child is stressful. In general, parents perceive the process of learning and fulfilling school obligations with their children as a challenge, both very pleasant and positive. These answers indicate that despite the numerous problems that parents face, their attitude

towards learning with their children is colored by pleasantness and positivity.

We tried to examine parents whether they think that the education of children of younger school age would not be successful without the involvement of parents in working with them. As many as 69.1% of parents completely agree with the offered statement, 25.5% partially agree, while 5.4% think they don't agree. Most parents believe that the success of the education of children of younger school age would not be successful and high quality without the support and help of parents. Parents explain this agreement with the arguments that it is necessary to be with the child and influence the development of work habits, give answers to the ambiguities they encounter, practice with them and build a beautiful image towards learning.

In the time in which we live, there are many obstacles that can potentially stand in the way of full and quality involvement of parents in the process of fulfilling children's school obligations. Therefore, our next task was to investigate whether there are obstacles in involving parents in the process of fulfilling school obligations with children and, if so, what are the obstacles.

The analyzed responses of the parents are as follows:

- 54.5% of parents state overwork;
- 29.1% of parents emphasize fatigue from work and daily obligations;
- 1.8% of parents cite ignorance of the material that the child is doing at school as an obstacle;
- 14.5% of parents answer that there are no obstacles in the process of learning and fulfilling school obligations with children.

Parental perception of commitment and involvement in the learning process and joint fulfillment of school obligations with children is an important factor in understanding this problem. With the last task, we wanted to examine how parents assess personal commitment and work with children of younger school age.

The largest number of parents, as many as 60% estimates that their own commitment to learning with children and involvement in the performance of school obligations is completely dedicated, 7.3% say that they are committed and 32.7% of parents state that their opinion is that they are partially committed to these activities with children (Fig. 4). Parents support this assessment with arguments stating that the range of everyday obligations does not allow them to fully and devotedly dedicate themselves to learning and full involvement in school obligations. Therefore, it is important that teachers apply to teaching approaches that will more clearly present the studied theoretical concepts (Jovanović *et al.*, 2017; Knežević *et al.*, 2020; Radulovic & Stojanovic, 2019;) and connect information into one coherent image (Trivić *et al.*, 2019).

Data analysis shows that there is a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2 = 22.488$; $df = 8$) between school education and parental commitment assessment. Most parents with high school state that they are completely committed to fulfilling their school obligations with their children, unlike other parents with high school, college, master's degree or doctor of science. Also, statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 24.528$; $df = 6$) exists between the assessment of commitment to school obligations and the number of children, where parents with one and two children assessed their commitment with, I am completely committed from parents with three or more children.



Fig 4. Commitment and involvement of parents in the process of learning and fulfilling school obligations of children

V. CONCLUSIONS

The role of parents in the first cycle of formal education, and even in later grades, is crucial for the formation of students' personalities and building their relationship with the school, learning and fulfilling school obligations. Parental approach and attitude towards the child in the process of learning and work in many ways creates the child's desire and affection for school obligations, content and activities.

With this article, we tried to show the involvement of parents in the performance of school obligations of children of younger school age. One hundred and sixty-five parents contributed to our research.

The obtained results lead to the following conclusions: parents with children of younger school-age study on average between 45 minutes and 60 and 90 minutes a day; they mainly provide help and support to children from all subjects; as many as 69.1% of parents believe that the education of children of younger school age would not be successful without the active involvement of parents in working with them; as obstacles that can potentially hinder the joint process of learning and fulfilling school obligations, parents cite overwork, fatigue, ignorance to show the child the material that is being processed in school. More often, parents with high school stated that they are completely committed to fulfilling school obligations with their children, unlike other parents with high school, college, the title of master or doctor of science. Parents with one or two children more often rated their commitment as completely committed than parents with three or more children.

In addition to the challenges of everyday life and the many efforts that today's parents face in the transitional framework of modern society, their views, although accompanied by obstacles (overwork, fatigue, ignorance of the content), are positive towards involvement in learning and working with children at home.

The results of this article can be an idea for future theoretical and empirical research in a broader consideration and highlighting the importance of the role of parents in the process of involvement in the performance of school obligations of children of younger school age.

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MA NEDELJKO M. MILANOVIĆ.

Nedeljko M. Milanovic was born on 10.03.1996. in Belgrade. He is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Philosophy University of Nis, Department of Pedagogy. He works as an assistant at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina, University of Kragujevac.

During his undergraduate and masters academic studies, he was awarded for his student achievement: a scholarship from the Ministry of Education,

Science and Technological Development and a scholarship from the FUND for young talents of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which awards the best students in the Republic of Serbia. He is engaged in scientific research work in the field of upbringing and education.