

Parents' Attitude in Reference To Online Education

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Abstract

The crisis caused by the SARS - CoV– 2 pandemic in the the spring of 2020 has brought to light the issues that existed in society, which will certainly contribute to a radical change in the education system. The change must include the involvement of parents on a larger scale, but also of community members, as active partners of teachers, in the education of the younger generation. The students themselves should be taught to learn, to be open to learn for themselves, first of all, making the best out of their extended intelligence, which would later become important assets for the progress of society. Specialized studies have underlined the importance of parents' attitude towards school, towards education in general, and the fact that it has a tremendous influence on the child. This study intends to provide a quantitative-qualitative research in order to identify parents' attitude in relation to online education. Gathering data from the questionnaires and interviews provided by parents, I have reached the conclusion that parents' attitude towards online education has played a very important role in accommodating children with an unprecedented situation and in involving them in remote learning.

Keywords: attitude, on-line, education, research, school

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Beginning with March 11, 2020, following the decision of the Ministry of Education and Research to suspend face-to-face courses, the education system has been reorienting towards new communication and cooperation practices in order to provide ongoing learning and the ongoing operation of organizations. Adults and children alike now have the possibility to find new ways of social connection and new forms to continue their professional, social, cultural, ludic and leisure activities. In this regard, the use of new technologies soared to unimaginable heights several months ago.

Online schooling is the natural answer that the education system relies on to make up for the disappearance of traditional school. And we, the parents, came face to face with a unique situation that requires our creativity, patience and pedagogical talent.

The Ministry of Education and Research, through the National Center for Education Policy and Evaluation – the Education Research Unit, has conducted a research addressed to students, teachers, school principals and parents, on the assessment of the remote learning process during the suspension of face-to-face courses, in order to identify the respondents' perceptions and points of view concerning the access, conduct, remote learning, support needs and priority areas of intervention by central and local authorities, and proposals to increase the efficiency of the remote learning process.

According to the Evaluative Research Report “Online School - Elements to Innovate Education” (Botnariuc, et al., 2020), which describes all the contextual elements of the online school in Romania, the following is also mentioned: the education system is only partially prepared, part of the teachers do not currently have sufficient information and skills specific to computer-assisted training, the curriculum allows only to a variable/sequential/revised extent the transposition into remote activities, edtech companies have not been stimulated to build interoperable solutions, tailored to the needs of the education system.

A SuperTeach study shows that parents have a positive attitude towards online education and wish to implement digital tools even after their children return to school. Thus, 71% of parents believe that the education system must be digitally prepared for exceptional situations (heavy snow, epidemics), while 40% support online teaching combined with face-to-face teaching.

The results of the „Vocea SuperTeach@Părinți” survey, conducted between May 3-7, 2020, also point out that 35% of the surveyed parents believe that online teaching should be fully introduced in the educational process.

2. Literature review

As regards the issue of attitude, psychological literature is extremely abundant. A definition that has become a landmark in addressing attitudes has been proposed by G.W. Allport (1935, p. 810): “*A mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related*”. The American sociologist William I. Thomas (1863-1931) together with the Polish philosopher and sociologist Florian Znaniecki (1882-1958) had a substantial contribution in establishing the concept of "attitude" as a central concept in science. The two authors of a monumental sociological monograph in five volumes have a distinctive conception, in that they link this phenomenon to social values. They defined attitude as "*a value-oriented mental state of the individual.*" (in Allport, 1966, p.19)

In the Romanian specialized literature, it is worth mentioning the work of Anatol Chircev, "Psychology of Social Attitudes with Special Regard to ROMANIANS" (1941), where the author shows that all attitudes are social, as they are born in interaction with others. He calls the attitude "*a directional disposition, with a less cognitive and more affective substratum, a less native and more social nature and with a more dynamic character than postural and static.*" (Chircev, 1941, p. 31)

It is noticed that the definitions of attitude differ depending on how they focus on assessment, emotional states, cognition, or behavioral dispositions. I. Radu (1994, p. 64) believes that attitude is a "*a mental disposition or predisposition, a propensity to react in a characteristic way to the facts of reality*". Attitudes are thus defined as "associations between social objects and the subjective evaluations of those objects, often constituting orientations of the self towards different institutional frameworks that the subject is directly confronted with or which are stored in memory". (Gavreliuc, 2019, p. 100). If a person has a positive or negative attitude towards someone

or something, it is perceived by psychologists as a mental disposition to feel, think and be inclined to behave towards that someone or something in a positive or negative manner; "*attitude is a predisposition to react positively or negatively to a person or object, or to a set of people or objects*" (Tapia, 1991, p.183). In another definition (Eiser, Van Den Plight, 1988, p.29): "*attitudes are resilient systems of positive or negative evaluation, emotional feelings and techniques of action pro and con related to social objects.*"

In the opinions and guidelines of some authors, attitudes were seen either as a reflection of values and/or personality traits, as reactions to stimuli or variables that occur between a stimulus and a response, or as subjective or objective assessments of anticipation of the immediate or long-lasting individual behavior.

Numerous theories highlight three components of attitudes, namely: a) the cognitive and evaluative component, which refers to knowledge, ideas or beliefs about the object of attitude; a belief is a conclusion about a fact (a); the affective or emotional component representing the emotion that the idea is charged with. Every person likes or dislikes a certain person, a certain group or a certain situation. In front of an object, situations, people or only when they are called on, certain emotions are born, that determine various manifestations of the body; emotions can be: favorable/unfavorable, shallow/intense (b); the conative or behavioral component that focuses on the intention to act, on the disposition to react; the action taken towards someone or something is not part of the attitude itself, but the tendency to act is part of the attitude (c)

A special place in the works dedicated to attitudes is given to the issue of correlation that manifests itself between the three components. The basic idea, which emerges from studies and experiments conducted in time, is that of a close correlation between the three components, called by Guire J-P "an interactive trilogy" (Tapia, 1991, p. 70).

Studies on the components of attitudes have led to the conclusion that the connection between the behavioral and the affective component is stronger for attitudes acquired directly through personal experience (Eiser, Van Den Plight, 1988, p.25). Attitudes have an anticipatory function, announcing the behavior that will be followed by an individual or a group.

Attitudes are not things that can be measured accurately, they can only be deduced from someone's words or actions. Measuring them "*is probably the most difficult assessment task*" (Eiser, Van Den Plicht, 1988, p.11). The difficulty of measuring attitudes also results from the fact that behavioral patterns are not always clear, and behavior is the result of many complex factors - feelings rooted in previous experiences, assessments of others' expectations, anticipations of the consequences of a certain action. The measurement can target each component based on smooth differentiation elements, most of them based on opinions (verbal statements). Numerous types of attitudinal scales (Likert, Osgood, Moreno) are used for the organizational environment, scales that have been created taking into account the accuracy of the measurement. An attitude once formed influences how the related information is understood. After deciding to adopt a certain attitude concerning a certain matter, people often interpret new information in a way that will be compatible with their beliefs. Supporting someone's opinion may also determine taking over their behavior.

Behavior refers broadly to "*a set of observable and potentially measurable activities*" (Luthans, 1985, p. 88). In general, analyzing the attitude-behavior relationship, it is believed that, if one knows the attitudes of one person towards another, towards a group, an object or a certain matter, it becomes possible to predict their behavior.

Recent research in the field of socio-human sciences presents several variables involved in child development, and the most significant are: parents' attitudes, personality traits of parents, parental strategies, parental educational behaviors, style of interaction with the child. Countless studies mention that a parental behavior, in the multiple-aspect interaction with the child, is determined by the personality traits of the mother and father. They act as a "*mental filter through which you perceive the world*" (Keller, p. 24). These filters, which are nothing but our attitudes, may be positive, optimistic in some people, while in others they may be negative, pessimistic. The terms by which these psychological formations are determined and their content, structure and dynamics depend on scientific paradigms, on the theoretical orientations of their authors.

From the analysis of the specialized literature, we notice that parental attitude is described by various terms. However, in almost every approach, an initial dichotomy can be detached, which generates

the ambivalence and polarization of the term. On the one hand, the main characteristic of a parental attitude consists in the manifestation of love for the child, which determines their trust and unconditional acceptance. On the other hand, parental attitude implies exigency and control, through which the parent tries to bring the child's behavior in accordance with the existing moral, social norms.

3. Methodology- Quantitative-qualitative research in order to identify parent's attitude in reference to online education

This study intends to identify the attitude of parents in reference to online education, as well as to capture the opinions of parents regarding the involvement of children in online learning activities. All this has been achieved departing from the hypothesis that, if the parent's attitude is positive towards online learning, then the child's level of involvement is higher.

In the context of the special situation generated by the COVID-19 epidemic, questionnaires were launched online, which also had certain advantages, such as: enough time for respondents to formulate answers, lower costs, less stress in formulating them. The interviews were conducted online as well, through digital platforms.

4. Results and discussions

The quantitative research (questionnaire) was applied to a number of 58 parents of 6th and 7th grade students registered at a Gymnasium School in Bucharest, between December 2020 - January 2021, by applying the questionnaire online and by monitoring answers in graphs and charts. A number of questions were meant to identify parents' attitudes towards remote learning. The responses mostly showed a positive attitude of respondents towards online education, with an impact on the children's level of involvement. More women than men participated in this study, representing 71.1% of the respondents.

Most of the respondents fall into the age category of 35-45 years old, mature people, with a certain degree of education, able to face the new challenges brought by the COVID -19 pandemic.

I also intended to find out what studies the respondents followed. The majority of respondents are people with higher education, 58.6%, and 37.9% have completed secondary education.

Depending on the parents' level of education, respondents in this study, it is noted that the participation rate of children in online learning activities is very high, and it is high among children who have at least one parent who completed higher education.

The possibility that the student may have a personal computer/laptop with Internet access is also higher when parents have a higher education level. The highest rate of access to a personal computer/laptop, with internet connection, is reached by children from large urban areas - the Capital City. Respondents are also part of the large urban environment, which gives them great opportunities to access everything that means quality education.

Another group of questions intended to outline parents' views on children's involvement in remote learning. It was found that 51.7% were satisfied with the involvement of children in online education to a very large extent, and 25.9% to a large extent. This is a consequence of the positive attitude of parents towards online education in restricted mobility conditions set as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data obtained from interviews

Following the interviews given by both parents (with certain charges in the Parents' Committee per school grades), Was found another positive attitude towards online learning in a pandemic context.

It should be noted that, although parents have a positive attitude towards online education during the pandemic, they believe that traditional education should be resumed when the restrictions are lifted. Also, during the structured interview, the two interviewed parents expressed their opinion concerning the introduction of some forms of online education after the children return to school, but only as a complement to the traditional education.

We started the questionnaire with a general question, referring to the participation of children in online courses, where 82.8% of the respondents confirmed their participation in all courses, and 17.2% stated that they did not always have access to digital devices. Another question of the questionnaire intended to find out the

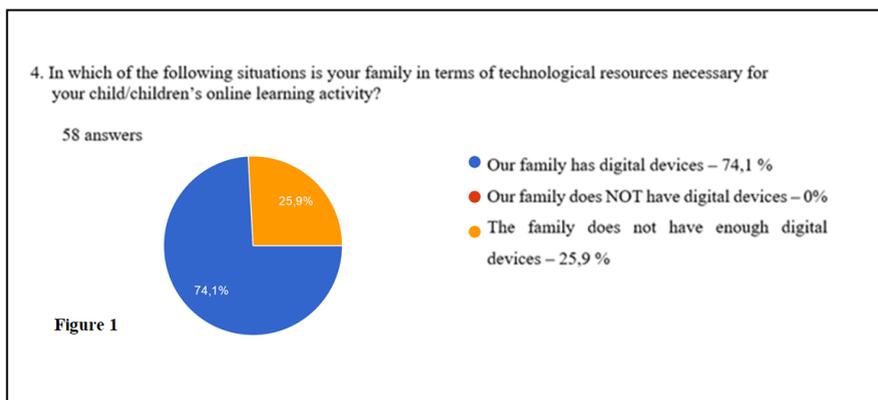
answer concerning the possession of digital devices necessary for remote learning, and all the parents gave a 100% answer that they benefited from digital devices that would ensure online learning.

By question no. 3, the research aimed to find out the parents' opinion concerning the material support of children in online learning, and they answered that they would financially support the purchase of digital devices in a percentage of 37.9%, while 62.1% of parents said that school should be in charge of this. We correlated the next item of the questionnaire with the answer received from the parents during the interview and I found out that most parents have several children who

Fig.1. Access to digital resources
Source: Author

go to school online and cannot purchase a digital device for each of them.

Following the interview, we found that all families have digital devices required for remote learning and their children have the possibility to use them. The interviewed parents pointed out that, although all families have digital devices, they are insufficient because there are several children in the family who study online and also



because most parents work online as well. (**Fig.1**)

"I, for instance, have two children who study online, and my husband is working from home for the moment. It is very difficult for us, because we only have one laptop and one mobile phone." (respondent parent)

The no. 5 question allowed me to identify the fact that parents have a positive attitude towards online learning, by being

directly involved in supporting their children, in a proportion of 72.4%. There was also a category of parents who were not involved at all in supporting their children, but the percentage was insignificant, respectively of 6.9%. Question with no. 6 follows in continuation of the previous one, and it aims at checking parents' honesty regarding the support and encouragement of children in online learning, by identifying the main activities that they are involved in.

Most of the respondents identified the following online activities: online lessons 94.8%, tests 84.5%, projects 55.2%, individual tasks 53.4%, portfolios 50%, which indicates the child's high level of involvement in learning. (**Fig.2**)

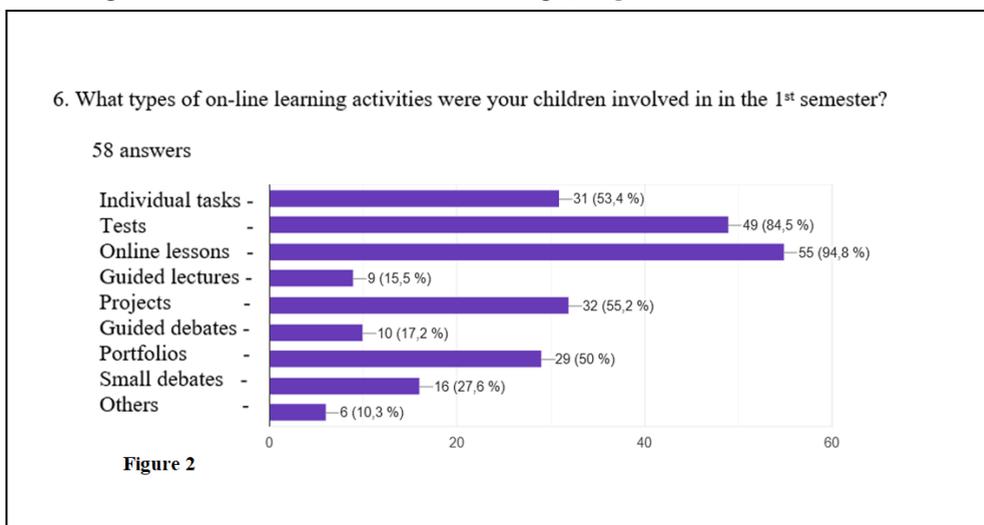


Fig. 2. Types of on line activities
Source: Author

The next question in the questionnaire measured the degree of parents' involvement in helping children and checking their online activity. 43.1 % of the respondents indicated a high degree of participation, largely due to the fact that many of the parents worked from home, due to the restrictive conditions in the city, a reason identified during the interview.

In order to check the respondents' honesty concerning their participation in online education, I drafted item no. 7 of the questionnaire, where we may identify parents' opinion on the online tasks assigned to students. The positive influence of parents concerning their attitude towards online learning tasks also shows in

the child's level of involvement in online learning. Opinions were divided, with respondents highlighting the usefulness of interesting learning tasks that motivated children to solve them with ease and interest, 63.8%, and, on the other hand, there were parents who did not express an opinion in this regard, 24.1 %, while 12.1% found online tasks unattractive and tiresome.

In accordance with identifying the respondents' positive attitude, I prepared the following question of the questionnaire, referring to the degree of adaptability to the pandemic situation that we are all in, to their openness to what is new. Most of the respondents, 43.1%, have adapted to a very large extent to the current situation, followed by 24.1%, who have adapted to a large extent, which indicates an openness to what is new and to an educational progress. This must be correlated with the answers regarding the personal data of the respondents, most of them being young people, with higher and secondary education, from the urban environment, which is a gain in adapting to the new living conditions, being accustomed to technology.

The research highlights, through question no. 10, a number of positive aspects of this period, pointed out by respondents, as a result of the positive parental attitude with an impact on the level of children's involvement in learning: children learn to adapt to changes 81%, children become more responsible 58.6%, the same percentage of 58.6% of respondents indicated the use of digital platforms as a positive aspect of this period. A significant percentage of 31.1% of respondents identified that online activity forced children to manage their time more efficiently, thus becoming more responsible and calculated in organizing their daily schedule.

Further, the research aimed to find out from the respondents what online learning activities stimulated children's involvement in learning, as an openness to what is new that arouses curiosity, as a motivating factor that determines children to actively participate in online education. Respondents identified the video meeting with teachers and colleagues as a new element for children in 58.6% of the answers, along with video materials used in 43.1% of the answers. 20.7% of the parents responded negatively, children did not like online learning activities. The negative answers are in line with the answers to question no. 8, where 24.1% stated that learning tasks were

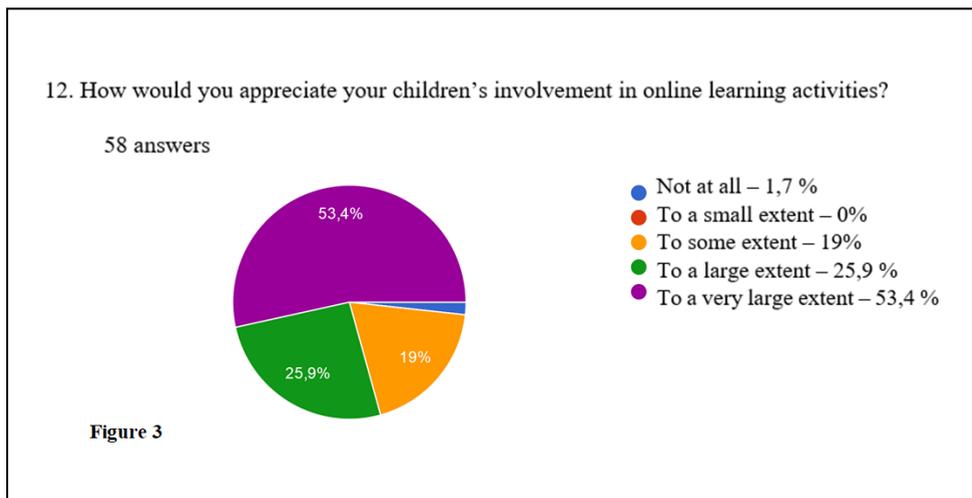
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uninteresting. In order to capture the parents' opinion on the involvement of children in remote learning activities, we prepared the following question of the questionnaire (Fig.3).

Fig.3. Appreciate online learning activities

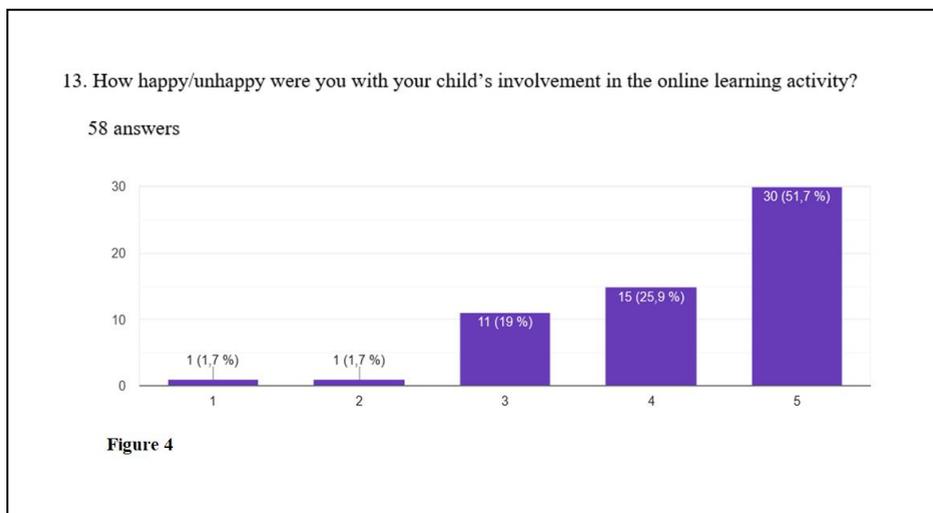
Source: Author

The parents' answers were: 53.4 % to a very large extent, 25.9% to a large extent, 19% to some extent. We note that parents were very pleased with their children's involvement in online activities, on the



one hand due to the positive attitude of parents towards this type of learning, and, on the other hand, due to the fact that these children come from the urban

environment, where the chances of internet connection and of



access to a digital device are very high. The following question is correlated with the previous one, where parents appreciated the children's involvement in the online learning activity to a very large extent and to a large extent, as this is the only way to learn for the moment. On a scale of 1-5, respondents expressed their opinion regarding the satisfaction with their children's involvement in online education, and 51.7% said they were extremely satisfied, 25.9% were satisfied with their children's involvement in remote activities. (**Fig.4**)

Fig.4. Children's level of satisfaction

Source: Author

This item captures the parents' opinion regarding the children's involvement in the online learning activity and the achievement of the second specific objective of the research.

In order to capture the parents' opinion on the importance of their attitude towards online learning through their involvement, we applied the question with no. 14. 34.5% of the respondents appreciated that their involvement implicitly motivated the involvement of children in the remote learning activity. An important category of parents, of 34.5%, answered that they did not know whether their participation represented a motivating factor for their children, which indicates that they are not aware of the impact of their attitude towards online learning on their children.

In the last part of the questionnaire, I formulated four questions concerning the respondents' personal data.

Conclusions

From the data gathered following the questionnaires and interviews applied to parents, I have reached the conclusion that parents' attitude towards online education has played a very important part in accommodating children with an unprecedented situation and in their involvement in remote learning. The wisest thing we can do at this time, we, as parents, is to show our children, through the power of our personal example, that we can adapt and find the right attitude, because I believe that the attitude is the most important in particular situations, so that we may focus on finding solutions, on accessing this new reality. It brings me great joy to see that parents have been actively involved in expressing their opinion on the organization of the remote learning process. Most of them have shown responsibility and openness to effective communication, and they supported their children when this was needed. Parents pointed out that they were actively involved in the remote learning process, many of them working from home, which gave them the opportunity to observe and provide help to children when they needed it, which determined children get even more involved in learning activities.

In most cases, parents had a positive attitude towards online education, starting with those who were actively involved in creating conditions for children and providing support to monitor and encourage learning at home, on the one hand. On the other hand, there were parents who were less receptive, but these summed up a very small percentage. The family has a great influence on children's attitudes, as it is the first and the most significant source of values and behaviors. Knowing the influence of parents' attitude on children is necessary to properly build the educational process and to provide the necessary psychological support to children in learning. The teacher should be the first to know the psycho-social implications of role-play and should be able to use it at all disciplines, combining playing with learning and thus making the lesson more attractive and pleasant for the students. (Vlaicu, 2014, p. 157-167)

Parents must arm themselves with patience, they must not focus so much on knowledge and on grades, but primarily on children's safety, health and an emotional balance provided both in the family, and in society, including at school. The biggest challenge

for parents, who have worked from home during this period, was to accomplish their job duties and at the same time to answer their child/children's needs. Beside the changes that occurred in situations of isolation, parents had to manage their children's emotions as well, along with their tiredness, chores and job duties, while satisfying their children's needs.

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