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Time management and division of domestic tasks in Romanian families

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Abstract

Time management and the division of domestic tasks is a real problem for Romanian families. These days, in reality, parents spend less and less time with their children, as they are busy with their jobs, and, consequently, in the absence of the parents who are supposed to supervise them, little ones take refuge in the latest technological developments, i.e., phone, tablet and computer. I dedicate this study to the teachers, parents and to all those interested in how they can use their time efficiently and in how this influences the division of tasks and responsibilities in a family so that it may function in a balanced way, develop harmonious relationships and a healthy emotional state.

Keywords: time management, domestic tasks, responsibility, discipline

Introduction

All parents want the best for their children, and they want to influence their lives in a positive way. But there is a long and often difficult road from desire to the necessary knowledge and skills. Parenting is learned; good parenting is also learned. The challenges of parenthood today are diverse, complex and no user's guide is provided. When parents experience a sense of helplessness, exhaustion in the face of life's challenges, the path to knowledge must not be abandoned so that balance and applicable solutions can be found[1].

Problem statement

Time management is perceptual in nature and begins to develop during childhood. It is essential that time is used correctly and efficiently from an early age. Therefore, time management should also be started at an early age and completed in adolescence, when the sense of time management should already be developed. If for a young child, the

[1] Beaulieu, Danie, *100 de trucuri pentru o relatie buna cu copiii,* Editura Niculescu, București, 2021, pp.7-9.

world is made up of moments, the understanding of all the dimensions of time is only achieved between 14 and 18 years of age, i.e., in adolescence. Time management should be understood as the effort children make to organise the use of their time in the most efficient way possible so as to increase the likelihood of achieving important personal and educational goals within a given time frame.[2] This type of management is an important factor in the process of becoming independent and autonomous and in successfully carrying out daily activities, having two essential components: managing one's own time and adapting to time demands. The development and internalisation of these two components depends on the individual's perception of time and on his/her time orientation.

"Responsibility is a key concept in the policy and the public debate around the lives of children and families, and it is a skill that is formed early. Children need to develop a sense of responsibility in order to be prepared for adult life, for multi-tasking. By helping children develop responsibility, we encourage them to reach their full potential. Responsibility involves decision-making, self-confidence and commitment to one's actions-whether good or bad. Taking responsibility can start early and is one of the best values children can acquire. Cooperation and helping others can be an important way for children to learn responsibility. Parents can help them develop and improve their cooperative attitudes by providing challenging, satisfying and developmentally appropriate tasks. It is beneficial for children to feel that they are fulfilling a real task and contributing to family life"[3]. Family discussions are valuable experiences that teach children about decision making and cooperation, responsibility. These meetings give family members the opportunity to discuss problems and organise tasks, plan events or outings together.

Understanding children's development and giving them careful guidance on their behaviour can lead to the development of self-management skills, self-confidence and problem-solving skills; only then discipline and empowerment become effective benchmarks in life[4].

Overparenting is a topical issue, a priority for contemporary society and its current challenges, especially in view of the fact that many families are engaged in long hours jobs, that there is a multiplication of information media and a pressure to measure performance in more and more life areas, all this considering that parents' desire to have successful children has become very high.

Tasks and expectations must be in line with the child's potential. With regard to overburdening children in early education, it is noted that this strain within a formal setting can have beneficial effects when the task is within their capacity and when they are cognitively and emotionally supported to perform the activity.

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[2]Pânișoară, Georgeta, *Parenting de la A la Z*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2022, p. 317.
[3]*Ibidem,* p. 408.
[4]Ionescu, Mihaela, Negreanu, Elisabeta, *Educația în familie. Repere și practici actuale*, București, Editura Cartea Universitară, București, 2006, pp. 21-30.

Do parents no longer have sufficient time for the challenges of parenthood? Do children spend time in a disorganized manner, focused on activities that do not always have a positive impact on their behavioural and emotional development, are they deprived of parental control, discipline and responsibility for tasks that can shape them as future adults?[5] If parents show a poor sense of planning their family time, household activities and family tasks, then there is a risk that their children will be involved in activities that will have negative effects on their harmonious development and upbringing as responsible adults.

Purpose of the study

This research is observational-descriptive in nature. The aim is to demonstrate that good time management and a clear division of tasks in the family will lead to a fulfilling life for both children and adults.

Through this research, I aimed to achieve the following objectives: to demonstrate that there are different ways of spending leisure time and that young children do not always manage to choose the most suitable ones; to show that families in Romania have difficulties in organizing household activities and dividing tasks in the family; to show, with the help of the instruments used, that not all parents spend enough time with their children.

Research methods

The tools used allowed the investigation of the issues presented. Tools were applied on a sample of 15 students in the fourth grade, from the secondary school "Dumitru Brezeanu" in the village of Teisani, Prahova County and 15 parents. In order to achieve the established objectives, the following research methods were used: two questionnaires on how to spend leisure time and on the lifestyle of the contemporary family, case study.

Findings

The analysis of the questionnaire results on spending leisure time shows that the predominant activity practiced by students, as a percentage (47%), is virtual, performed by means of computer or tablet games. According to the data obtained, most pupils spend their weekends in the virtual environment, attracted by the multitude of applications available. A small number of them spend time with their parents (13%), reading (13%) or doing sports activities (13%). 7% of those surveyed answered that they spend time with relatives (visits) or friends. In terms of spending leisure time on weekdays, students pay most attention to watching TV or playing games on their phones (27%), with few choosing to spend time with family (13%) and very little time for personal development through reading and artistic activities (7%). If in the past fourth graders rode bikes, played football with neighbors and read books about spectacular adventures, today they find themselves in online games with friends, cartoon characters and virtual phone apps.

[5] *See* Hărăguș, Paul Teodor, *Folosirea timpului și distributia sarcinilor domestice în familia din România,* Cluj Napoca, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj Napoca, 2010.

The majority of students' responses capture the fact that TV is an option available to them. According to the percentage we obtained, it could be considered that there is equality between those who choose to watch TV programmes (27%) and those who choose to practice artistic activities (27%), but the latter had been stimulated by the teacher, who had given them the task of rehearsing a play. Some pupils also opt for household activities or sports activities, but the lowest percentage is for reading (7%), which shows that this activity is not stimulating enough to attract young schoolchildren. Regardless of the variety of outdoor activities pupils can do (hiking, sports, household activities), most choose to spend their free time at home, in front of the TV or listening to music. They find it much easier to sit in front of the TV or play online games than to clean their room (13%), shop (34%) or supervise their younger siblings (7%). Most of the students surveyed spend their free time alone (40%), and only a few with friends (27%), colleagues (20%) or parents (13%). The lowest percentage is represented by children who spend their free time with their parents.

The parents' questionnaire gives us the following data: most of the parents have attended vocational school or high school, very few have a university degree. Only three parents have only attended secondary school. Occupations are varied, ranging from simple occupations to those requiring advanced studies (engineer, surveyor, educator, etc.). Most of the pupils' parents are aged between 31 and 40, with only a few parents aged over 40.

From the parents' answers, it appears that they spend little time with their children, because they have jobs that take up a lot of their time and that they cannot give up, as they need to bring enough income home; children are left in the care of grandparents or alone if they are older. Even in families with stay-at-home mothers, the number of hours spent with children is quite low. Analysing the answers given by parents, I note that almost half of the families spend only two hours a week with family members outside the home and a much smaller percentage spend between 4-6 hours; only one family, out of the 15 surveyed, spent more than 6 hours of free time with family members. The free time spent with the family is devoted to shopping and much less to other activities that are beneficial for bringing the family together and strengthening the parent-child relationship, such as walks, picnics, family sports activities. Parents reported that they would like to do as many activities with their children as possible, but work does not allow them. Holidays together with the family are not on the parents' mind because of lack of time (40%) and lack of necessary income (27%). Parents all answered that the decision to spend the holiday in a certain place and in a certain way is taken by all family members after discussing the topic. Children are not always interested in spending their holiday in a particular place, and unexpected events are the ones that ruin any holiday plans.

According to parents, students are involved in various activities during the holidays. They have the opportunity to practise their foreign language skills (47%), to exercise as part of dance classes (27%) and to visit new places on class trips (33%).

Parents said they are the ones who make the family's schedule. In making plans for the next day, they also take into account the opinions of the older children. Parents use several methods of informing the family, with the predominant one (47%) being

planning during family dinners. Other methods used include open discussions or family council or even lists left for family members.

In most of the 15 families surveyed, where both parents work, household responsibilities are shared equally between mother and father, with the children receiving tasks they handle in their absence. A further 27% are families in which the children's grandparents are present, and they take care of most of the family responsibilities, being helped by grandchildren. Particular cases with a very low percentage are the two families in which the housewife mother and the father who works during the night stay with the children during the day and, with the help of their eldest children, take care of most of the household chores.

Parental involvement in the lives of their children reflects in students' behaviour and inclinations. Parents' absence from students' lives, for various reasons, leads them to find company online or in TV programmes, ignoring activities that could support their harmonious development. The absence of parents is also reflected in the fact that students dislike household activities and are not taught to take responsibility for tasks within the family. Most of the parents interviewed are unable to spend more time with their children because they both work and consider this absolutely necessary to ensure sufficient income for a decent living. Comparing the answers given by students to the questionnaire addressed to them with those given by the parents to the second questionnaire, we found that their answers complement each other. The reason why pupils claim to spend a lot of time alone can be seen in the reduced number of hours parents claim to allocate to their children. The rather low frequency of family activities is reflected in the activities of pupils who are tempted to take refuge in the virtual environment in the absence of their parents. The low number of children who are involved in outdoor activities is the result of their parents' busy schedules, leaving their children home alone or in the care of grandparents. Children's preferences for watching TV, listening to music and playing online games, activities that are becoming habitual for them, also result from the absence of parents who have to work during this time. In fact, this is a problem facing today's society: dependence on the virtual environment, a habit that leads to a lack of interest in other educational activities or activities that are more beneficial to the child's development.

Conclusions

Time is the most important thing in a man's life. The irreversible passage of time leads us to cherish every second and to organize our "time in life" in the best possible way. There are many ways to organize time (priority matrix, pyramid technique, Pareto's law, A-L-P-E-N planning)[6] and whatever we apply in our lives, the essential thing is to put first what is most important for us, to prioritize. For any family, I believe that children come first, the most precious "asset" in the family, the next generation, that is why they should be given most of the time in their parents' lives. Regardless of the type of family and the number of members it is composed of, as is evident from the research

[6]*see* Seiwert, Lothar., *Managementul timpului în 30 de minute*, Editura Didactica Publishing House, București, 2018.

we conducted, career and time spent with children are weighed against each other. Unfortunately, nowadays most parents work to support the family financially and fail to spend much time with their children, which is very important in their emotional development and in shaping them as responsible future adults. In the wake of the feminist movement, women, having acquired equal rights with men, have gradually evolved from the traditional family housewife, who in addition to her domestic duties is also responsible for the care and upbringing of her children, to a woman active in the labour market who contributes to the family income and has to leave her children in the care of grandparents or older children. Also, unlike the traditional family of a few decades ago, which was content with a modest home, nowadays people tend to have more than the necessary comforts and try to satisfy not only their children's needs but also their demands, which requires higher incomes and therefore longer working hours at the expense of time spent with children. According to research conducted in a rural classroom, very few families have stay at home mothers, and equally few families have children who stay with grandparents, a fairly strong support for them, and who successfully replace the mother or father. Certainly, in urban areas, both parents work in most families, including older children (on holidays), in order to provide sufficient income for the family.

Technology has evolved a lot in recent years, radically changing the way we communicate and inform ourselves during the last decades. The internet and social media are increasingly used for both business and information purposes, but also out of pure curiosity. Few parents admit that they spend a lot of time on the Internet, following and communicating with strangers, friends and colleagues, precious time that they should be devoting to their children. We as a society cannot decry the fact that children left unattended for long enough are tempted by the virtual environment, as are some parents. Unfortunately, this is not beneficial to their development and moreover, they gradually develop an addiction.

We often see cases nowadays of children coming to school exhausted because they've been playing late on the computer, children not saying hello on the street because they don't look up from their phones or not paying attention to traffic rules because they're caught up in a conversation on social media. I hope that in the future, there will be fewer of these cases, i.e., parents will be able to have an impact on their children's behaviour, getting them to reduce hours spent on the computer or on the phone in favour of various activities outside the home. I would be happy to see again the children of yesteryear playing hide-and-seek in the ditch, playing ball in the alley or sledging in the snow down the hill.

I encourage parents to devote as much time as possible to their children, to try and organise their time as well as possible and to spend as much time together as possible. They could somehow reduce their working hours or even rest hours to be more present around their child. Parents who work abroad or in distant cities should give up their job in favour of somewhere else nearby, which, while providing a lower income, would give them the chance to spend more time with their children. Every moment spent with the little ones strengthens the parent-child relationship and increases their self-confidence.

Parents could encourage children to spend as much time outdoors as possible, entice them with various activities and games in nature, even using rewards, and limit their time on the computer or phone. As parents, you need to be a role model for your own children. At an early age, the parent should be both the child's friend and the guide in whose footsteps the child will walk in life.

Disciplining children is one of parents' most important but difficult responsibilities and we cannot claim to have any model in place to formulate and implement it. The purpose of this discipline is to encourage appropriate and accepted behaviour in the child which will subsequently position him/her as an emotionally balanced adult.

Effective discipline is about consistency, about both sides following the rules, about taking the time to learn and practice disciplined behaviours. Why do we need to address this level of discipline in the context of education? A dilemma that can be explained by the need to bring order, organisation and routine to the behaviour of the individual, the child, the future adult. This systematization and order in everything that surrounds the child, the insistence on planning the daily schedule, the way of interacting with others will lead him/her to success and to an evolution in accordance with individual potential. Discipline is the structure that helps the child to fit happily and effectively into the real world. Focus should be placed on the interaction between parent and child, as well as on the attitudes and responsibilities of the parent in general.

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Gestionarea timpului și împărțirea sarcinilor domestice în familia din România

Rezumat

Gestionarea timpului și împărțirea sarcinilor domestice reprezintă o adevărată problemă pentru familiile din România. Realitatea zilelor noastre arată că părinții petrec din ce în ce mai puțin timp alături de copiii lor, ei fiind ocupați cu job-urile, iar cei mici se refugiază în rezultatele evoluției tehnologiei, și anume telefonul, tableta și calculatorul, în absența părinților care ar trebui să îi supravegheze. Dedic acest studiu cadrelor didactice, părinților și tuturor celor interesați de modalitățile în care își pot folosi timpul eficient și de cum influențează acest aspect împărțirea sarcinilor, responsabilităților într-o familie pentru ca aceasta să funcționeze echilibrat, să dezvolte relații armonioase și o stare afectiv-emoțională sănătoasă.