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# Parental Involvement as a Key-Determinant for Equal Educational Chances: Evidence from Seven South Eastern European Countries

*Claudiu IVAN<sup>1</sup>, Aliona CRISTE<sup>2</sup>*

## Abstract

This research highlights the determinants of parental involvement, and the role of parental involvement in generating educational outcomes for children across seven countries from South East Europe<sup>3</sup>: Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldavia and Romania. A unique dataset, collected as a part of the 2009 Cross-National Survey of Parents in South East European (SEE) countries, was used (N = 7,776 parents). We applied Epstein's theory regarding parental involvement and used logistic regression for the statistical tests. The results indicated that parental expectations regarding a child's future education are highly relevant for expected school attainment; at the same time, parental involvement in the form of participation in class meetings or the perceived obligation to offer support to children doing homework had no significance for variations in child achievement. We discuss the potential reasons for the differences between the effects of the two dimensions of parental involvement on pupil's attainment in school. Our results suggest that policies which seek equal opportunities in education should focus more on parental expectations as a crucial determinant of school performance. In other words, such policies should offset the effects of variations in parental expectations. Other outstanding results are that Montenegro and Albania are exceptions from the aforementioned findings and the correlation between parents' expectations and children's attainment in school is strongest in Romania, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These results are worth further research.

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<sup>1</sup> Sociologist, Ph.D. candidate, Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative, Facultatea de Științe Politice, Strada Povernei, Nr.6, Sector 1, București, ROMANIA; Email: claudiu.ivan@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Sociologist, Ph.D. candidate, State University of Moldova, the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Chișinău, REPUBLICA MOLDOVA, Email: cristeialiona@gmail.com

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*Keywords: Parental involvement, Parental expectations, Cross-National Survey of Parents in SEE countries, Equal opportunities in education, Logistic regression analysis.*

## **Introduction**

This article looks at the role of parental involvement in ensuring equal opportunities in education. Except (to a certain extent) for the Scandinavian countries, unequal opportunities in education in Western Europe remain at the same level they were a few decades ago (Blossfeld & Shavit, 1993, Bynner & Joshi, 2002, Breen, 2004). The situation is similar in South East European countries, where disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes continue to exist despite the efforts of recent decades (Crighton, 2008a, Crighton, 2008b, Pop, 2009, Vlăsceanu, 2002, Voicu & Vasile, 2010, Ivan, 2009). During the last 10 years the SEE countries have underwent multiple legislative amendments oriented towards anti-discriminatory and democratic actions to create equal opportunities in education. Many researchers conducted on national and international level highlight the positive effects of parents' participation to school life (Creighton, 2008a). Thus, the development of the partnership between school and family by encouraging parents to participate to school life becomes the common objective of SEE countries. In this context, the social mission of school goes far beyond the simple accomplishment of the pedagogical objectives established in the syllabus paying a special attention to the family that besides the physiological responsibility has a moral duty to take an active part in children's education standing for a mediator in the communication with the other social actors, especially with the school. Equality in education has a considerable role to play in regards to social and economic development, one of the most important in the Western world (and beyond); the pre-eminent concern should be to address the key challenges of the current welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 2002, 2007, Farkas, 2003). Levels of awareness in the field of equal opportunities have risen in recent decades, and parental involvement is one of the fundamental reasons why. This study analyses parental involvement from a specific perspective: the relevance of this phenomena for the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational process. We have focused on seven countries from South East Europe: Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldavia and Romania. This choice is justified, taking into account the scarcity of studies dedicated to this topic in this part of the world. Firstly, several benchmarks of theoretical framework will be provided to guide our inquiry.

## **Parental involvement – a key concept in the educational process**

Previous empirical studies have revealed the key mechanisms responsible for social inequality in education. These include family structure and size, cultural and human capital of the family, the family's income, the relationship between parents and children, deficiencies in the education system (e.g. favoring children from certain backgrounds) and differences in children's health and nutrition levels (Erikson & Jonsson, 1996, Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997, Duncan *et al.*, 1998, Esping-Andersen, 2007).

In particular, the role of children's cognitive or non-cognitive abilities during preschool years has been highlighted, as have extra-curricular activities (private training, for instance), and the ability of public policies for equal educational opportunities to intervene in this area (Heckman, 1999, Esping-Andersen, 2007). It should be pointed out that a partnership between the family and school is indispensable to a child's education and helps to establish a bond between parents, teachers, and other community members (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). These bonds have a direct impact on the quality of education provided to students and lead to lasting benefits for society. The concept of *partnership* is often used to refer to a significant and cooperative relationship between parents, schools and communities, and is construed as a process in which those involved aim to provide mutual support to the greatest possible extent in order to promote the learning, motivation and development of pupils. The core element in the development of a cooperative relationship between parents and schools is parental involvement. The notion of *parental involvement* has been expanded from parental participation at schools to involvement in their children's home education. The differentiation of parental involvement/participation may take two broadly forms: home involvement and school involvement. Home involvement consists of the following dimensions:

(1) home discussion of – among other things – school activities; (2) home supervision or, in other words, monitoring of the child. School involvement refers to (1) school communication or parent-school contact; (2) participation of parents in, for instance, school activities or organizational matters. In this case, the concept of *parental involvement* has been defined as the role of parents in the support of their own child, both at home (e.g. reading out loud) and at school (e.g. discussion of marks with teacher) (Smit *et al.*, 2007).

Consequently, it is important to make a distinction between non-institutionalized forms of parental involvement (e.g. lending a helping hand) and institutionalized forms of parental participation (e.g. parents' councils, advisory boards or school administration membership). Analyzing Epstein's theoretical interpretation, a six-level framework of parental involvement can be distinguished (Ep-

stein & Sanders, 2000, Escoffery, 2007) which asserts that school and family involvement represents a shared responsibility of overlapping spheres of influence, with the child at the center. This multi-dimensional system provides a theoretical framework for assessing and evaluating parental involvement and underscores Epstein's notion of promoting positive parent-school relationships. The six levels include: (1) parenting/assisting parents in child-rearing skills; (2) school-parent communication; (3) involving parents in school decision-making; (4) home-based learning; (5) involving parents in voluntary activities with schools; and (6) involving parents in school-community collaborations. Epstein's view and construct looks primarily from the perspective of the educational organization concerned. However, the emphasis is upon building educational partnerships between the educational organization and involved parents.

The importance of this topic was further recognized by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (Epstein & Sanders, 2000, Escoffery, 2007) in their study of parental involvement and its association with the enhancement of children's school attainment. Grolnick and Slowiaczek described three types of parental involvement in children's schooling: (1) parental involvement; (2) cognitive intellectual involvement; and (3) personal involvement. Parents' attitudes regarding participation in their child's education is present within the types of involvement described by these researchers. The first type, parental involvement, entails a parent's participation at school and home (e.g. attending school activities, helping with homework). The second type of involvement is represented by those activities which address cognitive intellectual involvement (e.g. exposing the child to intellectually stimulating activities such as going to the library or talking about current events). Finally, personal involvement consists of parents knowing and keeping abreast of what is happening to the child at school.

One conclusion that emerges clearly in this context is that the family, together with the school, is the key issue in the educational process. Any public policy aiming at increasing equality in education has the child as the ultimate beneficiary, but there are two instances that filter its effects: the school and the family.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is important to understand both the role of the family and the role of school, as well as the proper relationship between schools and families in the educational process. Schools and teachers should have, in addition to the traditional role of educating children in school, the role of supporting families in adequately addressing children's educational process. With regard to pupil attainment, parents, schools and school should normally play a proactive role: parents, on the one hand, should support the formal education process through involvement in the classroom, and teachers/schools should help parents to identify the correct courses of action to support children's quality education. The partnership between families and schools is thought to be a key factor in the success of policies for

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<sup>4</sup> We left aside the issue of children without families, which requires a special debate with a different approach.

ensuring equal opportunities in education (Epstein & Sanders, 2000, Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). The child universe consists of a fluctuation between these two dimensions. However, public intervention to increase equality in education can only succeed while struggling for their synchronous operation.

### **Research aims and expectations**

The analysis aimed to examine two fundamental questions. What is the relationship between parental involvement and pupils' attainment in school? What determines or characterizes parental involvement in the dimensions considered here?

In order to answer them, we used a unique database compiled by the Open Society Institute in 2009, with contributions from the Education Support Program of Budapest, which had collected data from seven countries in the region: Romania, Moldova, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Albania. A broad-based investigation (7,776 parents sampled) has allowed for confident results and has also shown variations in the model used in a comparative analysis between these countries. One dimension of the analysis looked at the specific role that parental involvement plays in pupils' educational attainment; also examined were the elements which describe variation in parental involvement. In addition, the study compared the situations in the aforementioned countries.

Previous studies and research have shown that there is a significant correlation between the degree of parental involvement in children's school education and their educational attainment. Moreover, some authors have assessed that parental involvement in the education of children is actually the main driver behind academic success and attainment (Hara & Burke, 1998). Jeynes (2007) found that, in a meta-analysis of 52 studies in the US, there is a significant correlation between the degree of parental involvement and students' academic attainment in urban secondary schools. Similarly, Barnard (Barnard, 2004) found a significant relationship between parental involvement in elementary schools and their children's educational attainment, concluding that such involvement in schools is an important component of early childhood education, and one which may help promote long-term effects. Similar conclusions concerning the positive effects of parental involvement on children educational outcomes are also supported by other authors (See Fan & Chen, 2001 or Feinstein & Symons, 1999). We expected, with regard to such studies, that parental involvement would impact significantly on children's educational attainment.

Another basic assumption consists of the fact that besides conveying an educational status, the different positioning of parents according to traits they may have (e.g. educational, cultural, values-related, time and financial resources) may

impact upon their involvement in pupils' school education. For example, parents that have reached a higher educational level may find their way more easily through the school 'maze', and may more clearly understand the importance of education in later life. From this, one could assume that they would be more involved in their child's school activity. Practically, variations in families (i.e. educational status, values, attitudes, and – broadly speaking – practices in raising children) reflect variations in parental involvement. In this framework, the expectations were that parental involvement would be significantly correlated with variables such as parental educational status, cultural capital, family size and family values, household wealth, parents' spare time, and specificities of the parent–school principal relationship. As regards changes in the countries included in the analysis, we had no good reason to believe that there would be a variation of results at that level.

Taking into account the requirements and purpose of our research, the concept of 'parental involvement' was understood with regard to two general dimensions: (1) the commitment to child development with regard to the educational process, starting from the pre-school age; assistance in developing a lifestyle that supports academic support (Lareau (2003) illustrated this phenomenon by the term "concerted cultivation"); providing a framework within which to develop children's cognitive skills (this dimension was operationalized as the expectations of parents as to their child's future education); (2) being specifically involved in the school education process by maintaining a close relationship with teachers, with direct support in training (this dimension has been operationalized through the participation of parents in class meetings and parental support for children in doing their homework).

## Methods

This research analyzed statistical data collected as a part of the 2009 Cross-National Survey of Parents in SEE countries, carried out by the Open Society Institute. This survey was administered on representative samples of parents from ten countries. Due to variations in sample sizes, and some missing results for the comparative analysis within the specific statistical model, we had to omit data collected from Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia. In the end, the analyses were performed using data collected from the following countries: Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, and Romania. Parents sampled in every country were selected starting from a representative sample of schools stratified by region and type of settlement, proportionate to total population distribution. The schools included in the sample were elementary schools (the first eight grades of primary and low secondary education). A number of parents were selected from every school and supplied with a questionnaire; the

share of parents selected was directly proportionate with school size, while also taking into consideration the number of schools for each layer (for more details on sampling methodology, see <http://www.see-educoop.net/aeiq/outputs.htm>).

In the end, results from parent samples were representative for each of the countries included in our research. The dimensions of samples for each country included in our analysis are presented below.

*Table 1. The sample size in each country included in analysis*

Country	Number of parents in the samples
Albania	1,123
Montenegro	1,156
Serbia	1,153
Croatia	1,122
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1,143
Romania	951
Moldova	1,128
Total	7,776

The research was performed by using the binomial logistic regression method (Agresti, 1996) because dependent variables were re-coded as categorical items. While carrying out the analysis, the recommendations provided by Fan & Chen (2001) on the basis of a meta-analysis which targeted the relationship between parental involvement and student attainment were taken into account. These included: operationalization of variable parental involvement on several dimensions of analysis; not summing up the relevant dimensions into a general composite; and controlling for the effect of several variables describing the parents' social and economic status. Another recommendation was to use both a global indicator and a subject-specific indicator of academic attainment. Unfortunately, the data only allowed the use of the first type of indicator to unveil the academic attainment of pupils.

Thus, within the analysis, four logistic regression models were carried out. In the first case, the relationship between pupils' attainment in school and the level of parental involvement was tested. School attainment was operationalized while using a questionnaire item that measured parents' perceptions of the rate of their children's overall achievement: 'How would you rate the overall attainment of your child in school?' The questionnaire supplied possible replies ranging from 'poor' to 'excellent'. The answers were regrouped, generating a new variable dichotomized in two categories: parents who rank their child's attainment from an educational point of view at an average or below average level (variants 1, 2 or 3), and parents who estimate their children's attainment to be better than the school average. Unfortunately, there was no variable in the data to measure (in a standardized manner) the educational attainment of those pupils whose parents were interviewed. Parents' assessment of their own children's attainment in school has,



without any doubt, a high degree of subjectivity. This variable mirrors parents' opinions as regards the rank their child holds in the school hierarchy from an educational attainment point of view (and examining whether they are above or below an average position). Obviously, and in principle, children's educational levels can be objectively assessed as excellent in one particular school, but average or under-average in another. From this point of view, the measure employed did not ensure an objective assessment of pupils' educational attainment. Moreover, there may be a bias present due to the parents' tendency to subjectively over-rank their child (it being considered shameful to have a child with a poor level of school education). At the same time, it may be the case that parents are either not properly informed or misinformed as to their child's educational attainment – this leads to an inappropriate assessment. As the data did not contain a more proper assessment tool of pupils' educational attainments (for instance, standardized tests or the class grades), we decided to use the existing one, while raising awareness of the potential sources of error in the results thus obtained. The subsequent interpretations take these limits into account. Eventually, parental involvement was operationalized within the analysis while following the following three distinct variables.

The first dimension – *parental participation in meetings organized by the school* – was operationalized using items which addressed the frequency of invitations launched by school to attend these meetings, and parents' participation in these meetings. The analysis encompassed those cases where parents had been invited by the school to attend at least one such meeting. On this basis, a new dichotomized variable of parents was recreated with two categories: parents who declared that they did not participate in school meetings; and parents who declared that they always did. In order to mitigate the number of missing cases, another item was added to the questionnaire on parental participation in individual meetings, having been invited by the school. Thus, respondents who did not provide an answer to the item addressing the regular school meetings, but said they did go to individual meetings, were relocated in a different category.

The second dimension of parental involvement targeted the *parents' perception of their duties as regards helping their children with homework*. The item used in the dataset was regrouped. Thus, parents who provided a categorical 'yes' as an answer (to the question of whether it was their duty to assist their children with homework) formed one category: those most likely to provide stronger support to children. The other category comprised parents who provided a tentative or negative answer as to whether they supported their children with homework (i.e. answering 'probably', 'probably not' and 'no').

The third dimension of parental involvement was operationalized using the questionnaire item which addressed the *education level which parents hoped their children would reach*. This created a new dichotomized variable composed of two categories: parents who planned / expected that their children would reach a

tertiary/degree-level education or beyond; and those who planned / expected that their children would not reach this level of education, or had no plans / expectations for their children's education. In this latter category were included those parents who did not know or had no plans for their children's education level, while assessing that this was an approach which implied rather weak support for their child's attainment.

Independent variables were assessed on the ordinal or nominal scale, and were coded as dummy variables in order to be included in the analysis. We aimed at creating (as far as possible) a uniform, homogenous distribution between the categories included in the regression method in order to prevent possible errors that might occur due to cells with fewer or no cases. A limit of the analysis was that we could not control for the effect of variations in children's cognitive abilities because our data did not have this variable – this fact would have shown more accurately the relation between the dependent and independent variables, keeping the effect of family/environment on pupils' educational attainment (starting with the pre-school period) more constant.

In order to make a comparative analysis, dummy variables were included in the regression model for each country researched. Montenegro was the referential category chosen in the analysis.

## **Results**

### ***Children's academic attainment and parental involvement***

The results show that parental involvement as regards parents' expectations of their child's future education level is strongly correlated with the child's academic attainment. Parental involvement as regards participation in meetings organized by the school or parents' self-perceived duty to provide support to their children with homework both proved to be insignificant in a correlation with children's academic attainment.

Thus, while taking the entire sample into account, parents' low expectations of their children's future education results in a lower level of their children's educational attainment. The value of the Wald test is 71.264, one of the three highest values reported by the regression model out of all variables included. Technically speaking, the probability rate for a child's school performance to be above average as a result of parents expecting them to reach at most a secondary level of education (or do not have any such plans) is 1.8 times lower than in the case of parents who expect their children to reach at least tertiary education, keeping constant the effect of other variables included in the statistics model (i.e. indicators of a child's social and economic status, etc.) - The odds ratio = 1.88 ( $1/0.531=1.88$ ); B = -0.633 (sig. <0.001). See Table 2.

Table 2. Logistic regression model used in assessing the relationship between the academic attainment of the child and types of parental involvement.

(Model: independent variables related to the academic attainment of the child)

0 = Lower academic attainment; 1 = higher academic attainment	B	Wald	Exp (B)
Child's gender is male	-0.558	78.704	0.572**
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.715	42.59	2.044**
School level (grade) of the child: three	0.723	49.784	2.061**
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.645	38.608	1.906**
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.36	12.582	1.434**
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.254	6.499	1.289**
Child's feelings about going to school: hates or dislikes	-2.215	213.125	0.109**
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	-1.124	266.481	0.325**
Children facing difficulties at school	-0.918	111.657	0.399**
Number of books at home: there are no books	-1.432	88.41	0.239**
Number of books at home: 1–10 books	-0.914	53.794	0.401**
Number of books at home: 11–50 books	-0.459	16.113	0.632**
Number of books at home: 51–100 books	-0.317	6.664	0.728**
Mother's educational level: elementary	-0.786	39.139	0.456**
Mother's educational level: secondary	-0.274	7.799	0.76**
Size of school: small	-0.056	0.404	0.945
Area of residence: urban	-0.131	3.349	0.877*
Family's level of participation in classes, groups or individual school–parent meetings: lower capability	-0.035	0.128	0.966
Family's perception of the duty of attending classes, groups or individual school–parent meetings: lower duty	-0.176	2.415	0.839
Family's perceptions of the usefulness of attending classes, groups or individual school–parent meetings: lower usefulness	0.042	0.144	1.043
Number of household members: four	0.016	0.028	1.016
Number of household members: five	-0.159	2.353	0.853
Number of household members: six or more	-0.199	3.521	0.82*
Estimated time spent doing homework daily: less than 60 minutes	-0.229	5.293	0.795*
Estimated time spent doing homework daily: 60–90 minutes	-0.111	1.357	0.895
Estimated time spent doing homework daily: 90–120 minutes	0.024	0.078	1.025
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: father	0.124	1.241	1.132
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: nobody	0.262	7.473	1.299**
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: someone else (nor father neither mother)	-0.221	3.805	0.801*
Amount of time parents have to keep up with school issues: a lot of time	0.118	2.317	1.125
Amount of time parents have to keep up with school issues: limited time	0.05	0.429	1.051
Estimation of parent–teacher relationship: good	-0.007	0.009	0.993
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	-0.107	1.453	0.898
Estimation of time spent by one family member in school: normal	-0.094	1.532	0.91
Estimation of family ability in helping with homework: lower competency	-0.239	7.755	0.787**

Level of parents' perception regarding the usefulness of helping children with homework: lower usefulness	-0.003	0.001	0.997
Family wealth: lower wealth	0.25	6.568	1.284**
Family wealth: higher wealth	0.503	19.524	1.654**
Family wealth: highest wealth	0.762	31.85	2.143**
Parents' perception regarding the duty of the family in helping children with homework: strong	-0.003	0.001	0.997
Lower parental participation in class meetings	-0.048	0.342	0.953
Parental expectations of the child reaching a certain level of education: at most secondary	-0.633	71.264	0.531**
Country: Albania	0.443	10.842	1.557**
Country: Serbia	-0.382	10.15	0.683**
Country: Croatia	0.289	5.195	1.335**
Country: Romania	0.122	0.781	1.129
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.411	10.97	1.509**
Country: Moldova	0.229	2.546	1.257
Constant	2.331	83.822	10.287

R2 (Cox&Snell) = 28.5%

R2 (Nagelkerke) = 38.9%

sig. $\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000

sig. $\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.872

15.9% represented non-answers

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases

\* p<0.1

\*\* p<0.05

What is the significance of this result? Why do parental expectations (rather than parents' formal involvement in school meetings or their children's homework) function rather as a means to improving educational attainment?

First of all, these results show that the family remains a key factor in the pupil's educational attainment level. Parental expectations towards a pupil's education express a general attitude and behavior towards the child's education, correlated with an assessment of the child's potential – every single parent assesses his/her child from the point of view of potential, and assesses a certain track for the child's academic career. This assessment is based on the child's educational attainment – the parents observe their child's grades and teachers' assessment, and make from these elements a career plan for their child. One of the possible explanations is that parent's decisions as regard investing in a child's education is biased by their own perception of their child's potential. If this is the case, then child attainment is the cause of parental expectations.

The significant relationship between parental expectations and child attainment may have a reversed causal direction. High parental expectations may generate

higher educational attainment overall, and see the child reaching higher than a secondary school level. Looking at the evidence, this possibility seems to be plausible. As is well known, pre-school formation and training are vital for the later educational and social success of pupils; this fact is added to by the development of children's cognitive skills. In fact, these cognitive skills, expressed through the capacity to manipulate information and to extract conclusions, may release the pupil's fuller potential. Sometimes grades do not properly reflect a pupil's cognitive skills, and this is because of several reasons (i.e. a pupil's lack of motivation to activate their natural abilities; a lack of motivation coming from the family environment; teachers' subjective assessment; or teaching quality). In this framework, educational attainment does not mirror any efforts parents might make, but rather parents' general behavior and attitudes from the pre-school period onwards. One could use the term 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau, 2003) – a parental educational style which emphasizes the child's cultural socialization through participation in cultural events, developing cognitive skills by using long phrases and sophisticated language at an early age, as opposed to a style which focuses mainly on ensuring the child's basic needs, using a limited linguistic range, without any significant cultural perspective, etc. Parental expectations are, from this point of view, a reflection of a parental style towards the development of the child's cognitive skills since early childhood. Thus, we may consider a pupil's educational career projection, which is set in place from early childhood, not only during school age. One may also clarify the relationship between child attainment and parental participation in school meetings, and the support given to children with homework. These variables reflect an intervention in cross-cutting education, somehow *ad hoc* in child evolution, but gaining momentum during the school years. However, if at the start, the child did not enter school with cognitive skills at a minimum level; subsequent intervention would be belated and useless. The child who is endowed with cognitive skills may perform better without his/her parents' participation in school meetings or without being assisted with homework. Conversely, training the child to manage homework by him/herself would provide increased chances for his/her educational and social attainment in the future. However, the role of parental involvement in school meetings or homework support should not be minimized, as these interventions may redress a child's lack of motivation, any negative impact of the school environment, a child's ineffectiveness as regards the time they can spend studying, etc. These parental interventions aim to ensure that pupils perform to their best potential, which has already been set out and defined, especially from his/her pre-school years.

The variable which correlates most profoundly with children's educational attainments is the way in which they perceive school attendance (the act of 'going to school'), in the parents' opinion. We reached this conclusion on the basis of a Wald test and an odds ratio. Naturally, children who hate going to school or at least dislike doing so are the ones who are predisposed to lower educational

performances. In the same way, those children whose parents reported that they faced difficulties in school (concerning learning, behaviour, communication with teachers or other pupils) are more predisposed to lower attainment in school. One may admit, on the basis of this evidence, that low attainment in school may be correlated closely with the parental educational style shown during the child's early years. Low attainment may also be a result of a pupil placing him/herself in opposition to the school environment, or showing dysfunctional behaviour or attitudes. It is hard to pinpoint the causes and effects in this case – low attainment leads to integration difficulties and vice versa – but it is a topic that deserves further and more detailed research. It is worth mentioning the fact that, within this framework, the child's gender correlates with attainment in school: boys have a lower attainment in school than girls, according to parents' estimations – controlling for the other variable effects in the analysis.

The cultural capital theory as a predictor of children's attainment in school was confirmed by empirical studies which showed that the number of books in a household is a factor correlating positively with a child's educational attainment (de Graaf, 1988, Esping-Andersen, 2007). The data allowed the testing of this hypothesis in the case of the countries covered by this analysis. Indeed, the results show that parents who say that they do not have books in their household, or they have only a few books, mentioned that their children's educational attainment is lower. This contrasts with parents who have more books at home.

In the regression model, the variable concerning a mother's level of education was included. The main reason was to keep constant its effect on the relation between other independent variables and the child's educational attainment. However, as we expected, the mother's educational level proved relevant and directly related with the child's educational attainment. To be more specific, mothers with an elementary or secondary educational level reported lower educational attainment levels for their children as opposed to mothers who had reached tertiary education.

A special comment deserves to be made as regards the relation between the family members who assists the child's educational attainment. An ideal model would have been to compute in the regression model the parent's marital status (married, divorced, widowed) in order to reveal any single-parent family effect on child attainment. Unfortunately, the database did not allow us to control the effect of this variable. However, there was a variable indicating the family member who usually assists the child with homework – the mother, father, somebody else, or nobody. Data show that there is no significant statistical difference between the outcomes of those children assisted with homework by their mothers or by their fathers. However, there is a significant difference (but not to such a large extent) as regards the children assisted by a third person (nor father neither mother) – namely that these children achieve a lower educational attainment than those assisted by their parents. On the other hand, the children who are not assisted by

anyone within their family have the highest educational attainment; this is because those children with a high educational attainment do not need assistance with homework. We recall once again that the results presented were obtained by controlling the effect of the other variables included in the model, including the child's educational level.

A significant factor for child's educational attainment seems to be the amount of spare time the parents have. Parents who have time to keep themselves informed about their child's educational situation reported a higher educational attainment for their children as opposed to those who did not have any or had little time (in this case, there were no differences between parents placed at average or extreme levels). Moreover, data show that parents who admitted they were less competent in helping their children reported a lower educational attainment level for their children as opposed to those who considered themselves competent in assisting their children with homework.

Another variable which proved to be significantly associated with educational attainment is the family wealth level. The data contained a variable which allowed for the creation of a family welfare index depending on the identification of a certain comfort level. Thus, data showed that there was indeed a strong variation in pupil's educational attainment depending on the household wealth level: as much as parents reported a higher wealth level, the higher the pupil's performance was reported as being.<sup>5</sup> We would also like to mention that, in order to reach this result, we kept constant the effect of the family area of residence (urban versus rural). The reason for this is that plans as regards children's future education are dependent upon the family's financial situation, especially in the case of families facing material hardship. The parents who assessed that they could not support long-term studies for their children's further education, due to economic costs, would invest less in their children's early school years. Therefore, there are fewer chances for these children to advance to higher education, as opposed to those children who have the same opportunities at school but come from families with wealthier backgrounds.

A pupil's level of education is also relevant: parents tend to award a higher rank to their children in the school hierarchy when their children are in an early grade. In moving to a higher grade, the differences between pupils probably become more obvious and parents become more accurately aware of how their children are situated within a school or class hierarchy.

Other variables included in the regression model are: the size of the school where the children study; the number of hours dedicated to individual study at home, etc. These did not prove relevant in relation to educational attainment while taking into account the whole sample.

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<sup>5</sup> It would have been useful in our analysis to have tested the effect of income levels on educational attainment, but we did not have data addressing this variable.

One of the most interesting dimensions in our research was the comparative assessment of the variation of analytical model we used across the countries. We shall not attempt here to make estimates of the differentiated quality of pupils' school attainment in the countries included in our analysis; instead we should bear in mind the limits to the measuring of school attainment which we have already mentioned. Conclusions can be drawn on the basis of, for instance, PISA research outcomes. What deserves to be discussed is the varying relationship between educational attainment and the remaining variables included in the model, within the countries submitted for analysis. In order to highlight this, we included interaction terms in our analysis between dummy variables for countries, taking into account the dimensions of parental involvement – see table 3.

Results clearly show that the relationship between the level of parents' expectations as regards the educational level attained by children (as an expression of parental involvement) on the one hand, and children's actual attainment in school, vary significantly among the analyzed countries. Thus, in Montenegro and Albania, the level of parental expectations is insignificant in relation to attainment levels, as opposed to the remaining countries included in our analysis, where this relationship is very high. In Romania, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, there is a very strong association. At this stage, it is very difficult to explain the grounds for these differences. Which are those social and systemic characteristics which make the difference in this matter between Albania and Montenegro, or the remaining countries in the region? It is a question that deserves further research.

The relation between parents' perception as regards their duty to support their children with homework and the children's attainment in schools is not significant in the sample as a whole, but there is some variation at the country level. For instance, in Moldova, children whose parents feel more responsible for providing homework support have a higher school attainment level. In Serbia, the relation is also significant but high performance is reported in the case of those children whose parents feel less responsible to assist with homework. In the remaining countries, the results show no significance.

Parental involvement which manifests itself as participation in school meetings did not prove to be significant over the entire sample, nor at the country level. This suggests that the relevance of parental participation in formal school meetings has a rather lower level of importance regarding pupils' attainment levels.

The variables which proved strongly significant over the whole sample remained so – with some variations – at the country level. Thus, the way children in each country feel about going to school correlates strongly with their educational attainment; this is also the case for whether or not pupils face difficulties in adapting to school life. The number of books existing in children's homes is strongly significant in each assessed country except Bosnia-Herzegovina; the mother's educational level is relevant for each country except Albania.



Table 3. The second logistic regression model used in assessing the relationship between the academic attainment of the child and types of parental involvement; this model includes control for the effect of the interactions term of types of parental involvement depending on country.

(Model: independent variables related to the academic attainment of the child, plus the interactions term of types of parental involvement depending on country)<sup>6</sup>

0 = Lower academic attainment; 1 = higher academic attainment.	B	Wald	Exp(B)
Child's gender is male	-0.54	73.512	0.58**
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.719	42.354	2.053**
School level (grade) of the child: three	0.715	47.489	2.044**
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.624	35.567	1.866**
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.353	11.807	1.423**
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.236	5.493	1.266**
Child's feelings about going to school: hates or dislikes	-2.26	216.42	0.104**
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	-1.16	275.16	0.314**
Children facing difficulties at school	-0.95	117.34	0.386**
Number of books at home: there are no books	-1.44	86.602	0.238**
Number of books at home: 1–10 books	-0.9	50.649	0.407**
Number of books at home: 11–50 books	-0.45	15.016	0.639**
Number of books at home: 51–100 books	-0.31	6.43	0.73**
Mother's educational level: elementary	-0.77	36.616	0.464**
Mother's educational level: secondary	-0.28	8.316	0.752**
Size of school: small	-0.03	0.13	0.968
Area of residence: urban	-0.13	2.974	0.882*
Family's level of participation in classes, groups or individual school–parent meetings: lower capability	-0.04	0.136	0.965
Family's perception of the duty of attending classes, groups or individual school–parent meetings: lower duty	-0.19	2.912	0.824*
Family's perceptions of the usefulness of attending classes, groups or individual school–parent meetings: lower usefulness	0.065	0.335	1.067

<sup>6</sup> B is the slope from our logistic regression equation.

The Wald Chi-Square statistic is used to test the unique contribution of each predictor (coefficient B) in the model, in the context of the other predictors – that is, holding constant the other predictors, eliminating any overlap between predictors. A Wald Test calculates a Z statistic:  $Z=B/SE$  (standard error).

Exp (B) is also known as the odds ratio predicted by the model. This odds ratio can be computed by raising the base of the natural log to the power of b, where b is the slope from our logistic regression equation.

The Cox & Snell R2 and the Nagelkerke R2 can be interpreted as R2 in a multiple regression; the Cox & Snell R2 cannot reach a maximum value of 1 whereas the Nagelkerke R2 can. R2 is the proportion of variation explained by the model or the proportion of variance explained.

The Hosmer & Lemeshow test examines the null hypothesis that there is a linear relationship between the predictor variables and the log odds of the criterion variable. A non-significant chi-square indicates that the data fit the model well.

*REALITIES IS A KALEIDOSCOPE*

Number of household members: four	0.036	0.137	1.036
Number of household members: five	-0.15	2.052	0.861
Number of household members: six or more	-0.19	2.997	0.831*
Estimated time spent doing homework daily: less than 60 minutes	-0.27	7.201	0.762**
Estimated time spent doing homework daily: 60–90 minutes	-0.13	1.831	0.878
Estimated time spent doing homework daily: 90–120 minutes	0.007	0.006	1.007
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: father	0.132	1.368	1.141
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: nobody	0.26	7.104	1.297**
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: someone else (nor father neither mother)	-0.2	2.949	0.82*
Amount of time parents have to keep up with school issues: a lot of time	0.139	3.139	1.149*
Amount of time parents have to keep up with school issues: limited time	0.048	0.379	1.049
Estimation of parent–teacher relationship: good	-0.01	0.036	0.986
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	-0.12	1.733	0.888
Estimation of time spent by one family member in school: normal	-0.12	2.574	0.884
Estimation of family ability in helping with homework: lower competency	-0.2	5.333	0.817**
Level of parents' perception regarding the usefulness of helping children with homework: lower usefulness	0.012	0.015	1.012
Family wealth: lower wealth	0.247	6.157	1.28**
Family wealth: higher wealth	0.504	18.908	1.656**
Family wealth: highest wealth	0.808	34.717	2.243**
Parents' perception regarding the duty of the family in helping children with homework: strong	0.211	1.393	1.234
Lower parental participation in class meetings	0.247	1.494	1.28
Parental expectations of the child reaching a certain level of education: at most secondary	0.241	1.798	1.272
Country: Albania	1.196	27.995	3.305**
Country: Serbia	0.345	3.131	1.412*
Country: Croatia	1.323	32.485	3.754**
Country: Romania	0.514	4.011	1.671**
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.629	10.285	1.877**
Country: Moldova	0.471	1.493	1.601
Interaction terms of the perceived duty of helping children with homework (Albania)	-0.65	6.548	0.525**
Interaction terms of the perceived duty of helping children with homework (Serbia)	-0.61	6.959	0.544**
Interaction terms of the perceived duty of helping children with homework (Croatia)	-0.76	8.924	0.469**
Interaction terms of the perceived duty of helping children with homework (Romania)	0.062	0.051	1.063
Interaction terms of the perceived duty of helping children with homework (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	0.246	1.126	1.279
Interaction terms of the perceived duty of helping children with homework (Moldova)	0.454	2.67	1.574

Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Albania)	-0.4	2.026	0.67
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Serbia)	-0.31	1.029	0.732
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Croatia)	-0.6	3.758	0.551*
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Romania)	-0.58	3.003	0.561*
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	0.089	0.093	1.093
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Moldova)	-0.38	1.828	0.681
Interaction terms of parental expectations that children will reach secondary education at most (Albania)	-0.74	6.525	0.479**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that children will reach secondary education at most (Serbia)	-0.97	14.691	0.38**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that children will reach secondary education at most (Croatia)	-1.21	23.612	0.298**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that children will reach secondary education at most (Romania)	-1.15	19.479	0.317**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that children will reach secondary education at most (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	-1.05	17.627	0.351**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that children will reach secondary education at most (Moldova)	-1.2	11.899	0.3**
Constant	1.853	44.571	6.376

R2 (Cox & Snell) = 29.4%

R2 (Nagelkerke) = 40.1%

$\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000

$\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.708.

15.9% represented non-answers.

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases.

\* p<0.1

\*\* p<0.05

### Class meetings as a dimension of parental involvement

Participation in school meetings organized in a formal framework is a dimension of parental involvement which is correlated, according to the collected data, to the following topics:

1. the child's gender – in the case of the parents with boys, it seems that the rate of participation in class meetings is higher;
2. the number of books in a household – parents who do not have any books at all at home tend to participate less in class meetings;
3. how children perceive school – the parents of those children who 'love' going to school are more inclined to participate in class meetings than those whose children are less attracted by school;

4. parents' level of education – it is interesting that parents with an average level of education seem to participate more often in class meetings than those who have reached a tertiary education level;

5. school size – smaller schools enjoy a higher level of participation in class meetings;

6. parents who observe other parents participating in school activities are associated with a higher participation level in class meetings (see Table 4).

*Table 4. Logistic regression model used in assessing parents' profiles with lower levels of participation in class meetings*

*Model 1: independent variables related to parents' participation in class meetings*

0 = higher participation in class meetings; 1 = lower participation in class meetings	B	Wald	Exp(B)
Child's gender is male	-0.13	3.643	0.875*
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.019	0.024	1.019
School level (grade) of the child: three	-0.11	0.868	0.897
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.141	1.571	1.151
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.165	2.191	1.179
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.106	0.925	1.112
Child's feelings about going to school: hates or doesn't like	-0.01	0.005	0.989
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	0.179	5.158	1.196**
Academic achievement of the child: average or below average	0.099	1.049	1.104
Academic achievement of the child: better than average (not excellent)	0.098	1.007	1.103
Child facing difficulties at school	0.108	1.313	1.114
Number of books at home: there are no books	0.311	3.616	1.365*
Number of books at home: 1–10 books	0.113	0.651	1.12
Number of books at home: 11–50 books	0.187	2.206	1.206
Number of books at home: 51–100 books	0.101	0.559	1.106
Mother's highest educational level: elementary	-0.16	1.311	0.856
Mother's highest educational level: secondary	-0.19	3.268	0.828*
Size of school: small	-0.26	7.613	0.775**
Area of residence: urban	0.009	0.013	1.009
Family's ability to participate in class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower capability	0.237	5.801	1.267**
Family's perception of the duty to attend class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower duty	0.434	14.57	1.544**
Family's perception of the usefulness of attending class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower utility	-0.12	1.052	0.89
Number of household members: four	0.127	1.351	1.135
Number of household members: five	0.058	0.242	1.06
Number of household members: six or more	0.21	3.15	1.234*
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: less than 60 minutes	0.308	7.821	1.36**
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 60–90 minutes	0.177	2.737	1.193*
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 90–120 minutes	0.036	0.133	1.037

Member of family who normally helps children with homework: father	0.306	6.849	1.358**
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: nobody	0.078	0.599	1.081
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: someone else (neither father nor mother)	0.212	3.081	1.236*
Amount of time parents' spend keeping up with school issues: a lot of time	-0.31	12.81	0.735**
Amount of time parents' spend keeping up with school issues: limited of time	-0.19	5.497	0.825**
Estimation of the parent-teacher relationship: good	-0.1	1.623	0.907
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	0.747	62.37	2.11**
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: normal	0.597	51.08	1.816**
Estimation of family ability in helping with homework: lower competency	0.226	6.223	1.253**
Level of parents' perception regarding the usefulness of helping children with homework: lower usefulness	-0.03	0.077	0.972
Family wealth: low	-0.02	0.047	0.977
Family wealth: high	-0.07	0.269	0.937
Family wealth: highest	-0.53	12.3	0.587**
Parents' perception of the family's duty to help with homework: strong	0.035	0.12	1.036
Parental expectations regarding the level of education the child will reach: at most secondary	0.292	11.85	1.34**
Country: Albania	0.249	3.552	1.283*
Country: Serbia	-0.63	21.33	0.535**
Country: Croatia	-0.24	3.096	0.785*
Country: Moldova	-0.54	12.03	0.585**
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	-0.37	8.349	0.69**
Country: Romania	-0.61	15.01	0.544**
Constant	-1.87	46.46	0.154

R2 (Cox & Snell) = 7.9%

R2 (Nagelkerke) = 12.9%

sig.  $\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000

sig.  $\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.740

15.9% represented non-answers.

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases.

\* p<0.1

\*\* p<0.05

*Model 2: independent variables related to parents' participation in class meetings and interaction terms of types of parental involvement (by country)*

0 = higher participation in class meetings; 1 = lower participation in class meetings	B	Wald	Exp(B)
Child's gender is male	-0.141	4.044	0.868**
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.017	0.019	1.017
School level (grade) of the child: three	-0.098	0.697	0.907
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.147	1.702	1.158
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.173	2.391	1.189
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.12	1.176	1.128
Child's feelings about going to school: hates or doesn't like	0	0	1
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	0.193	5.904	1.213**
Academic achievement of the child: average or below average	0.073	0.558	1.075
Academic achievement of the child: better than average (not excellent)	0.085	0.749	1.089
Child is facing difficulties at school	0.103	1.18	1.109
Number of books at home: there are no books	0.305	3.43	1.356*
Number of books at home: 1–10 books	0.083	0.349	1.087
Number of books at home: 11–50 books	0.159	1.565	1.172
Number of books at home: 51–100	0.085	0.393	1.089
Mother's highest educational level: elementary	-0.165	1.457	0.848
Mother's highest educational level: secondary	-0.178	2.895	0.837*
Size of school: small	-0.278	8.965	0.757**
Area of residence: urban	0.005	0.005	1.006
Family's ability to participate in class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower capability	0.231	5.48	1.26**
Family's perception of the duty to attend class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower duty	0.44	14.797	1.553**
Family's perception of the usefulness of attending class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower usefulness	-0.127	1.232	0.881
Number of household members: four	0.117	1.145	1.124
Number of household members: five	0.065	0.3	1.067
Number of household members: six or more	0.228	3.669	1.256*
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: less than 60 minutes	0.323	8.314	1.381**
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 60–90 minutes	0.191	3.103	1.21*
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 90–120 minutes	0.05	0.249	1.052
Family member who normally helps with homework: father	0.303	6.636	1.354**
Family member who normally helps with homework: no one	0.072	0.495	1.075
Family member who normally helps with homework: someone else (neither mother nor father)	0.19	2.459	1.209
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: a lot of time	-0.32	13.608	0.726**
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: limited time	-0.204	6.128	0.815**
Estimation of the parent–teacher relationship: good	-0.103	1.791	0.902
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	0.748	61.24	2.113**

Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: normal	0.606	51.945	1.833**
Estimation of family's ability to help with homework: lower competency	0.215	5.597	1.24**
Parents' perception regarding the usefulness of helping children with homework: lower usefulness	-0.041	0.155	0.96
Family wealth: low	-0.054	0.257	0.947
Family wealth: high	-0.11	0.75	0.896
Family wealth: highest	-0.575	14.196	0.562**
Parents' perception regarding the family's duty to help with homework: strong	-0.387	4.226	0.679**
Parental expectations regarding the level of education the child will reach: at most secondary	0.249	1.868	1.283
Country: Albania	-0.391	3.243	0.677*
Country: Serbia	-0.991	21.022	0.371**
Country: Croatia	-0.459	3.879	0.632*
Country: Moldova	-0.743	3.08	0.476*
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	-0.415	4.564	0.66**
Country: Romania	-0.642	5.03	0.526**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Albania)	0.094	0.122	1.099
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Serbia)	0.483	3.23	1.622*
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Croatia)	-0.03	0.013	0.97
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Moldova)	0.001	0	1.001
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	-0.11	0.186	0.896
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Romania)	-0.073	0.035	0.929
Interaction terms of there being a strongly perceived duty of helping children with homework (Albania)	1.084	18.877	2.958**
Interaction terms of there being a strongly perceived duty of helping children with homework (Serbia)	0.356	1.813	1.427
Interaction terms of there being a strongly perceived duty of helping children with homework (Croatia)	0.486	3.335	1.626*
Interaction terms of there being a strongly perceived duty of helping children with homework (Moldova)	0.2	0.426	1.221
Interaction terms of there being a strongly perceived duty of helping children with homework (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	0.188	0.601	1.207
Interaction terms of there being a strongly perceived duty of helping children with homework (Romania)	0.54	3.471	1.716*
Constant	-1.583	28.968	0.205

R2 (Cox & Snell) = 8.3%

R2 (Nagelkerke) = 13.6%

sig.  $\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000

sig.  $\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.154

15.9% represented non-answers.

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases.

\*  $p < 0.1$

\*\*  $p < 0.05$

It is relevant to mention the fact that parents who have a limited amount of spare time participate less in class meetings, and families with six or more members reported a lower level of participation in class meetings; resources of time are relevant for the support given to children's education.

In the case of fathers who help with children's homework, participation in meetings is lower than mothers. The explanation for this fact may be twofold. Families where the father is the one who helps children may, at the same time, be single-parent families or families where the mother is missing; therefore, the single parent's duties limits the time it is possible to spend attending meetings (we could not include the effect of single-parent families in the regression model). Alternatively, there may be a different method or approach to education between mothers or fathers.

Those parents whose children study for fewer hours at home also participate less in school meetings. The explanation in this case could be attributed to a certain family style towards education and child supervision. Our analysis shows that those parents who believe that family members have less of a duty to participate in class meetings, or who feel less capable of doing so, attend less often (Albania is an exception).

It is worth pointing out that household wealth is a variable which can be associated with parental participation in class meetings. The higher the household wealth, the higher the participation rate (while controlling the effects of other variables such as parents' educational level, spare time, cultural capital revealed by the number of books at home, etc.). One of the possible explanations for this is the possibility that households which enjoy a higher level of wealth are located nearer schools (further research into the effect of school proximity on parental participation in class meetings would be desirable).

Results showed a variation in participation in class meetings among the countries included in analysis. Montenegro and Albania present the lowest rate of parental participation to class meetings, followed at an intermediary level by Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The highest participation rates are recorded in Romania, Moldova and, most of all, Serbia.

In the case of Albania, parents who perceive a stronger duty to support their children with homework are less present in class meetings. This is the opposite of Montenegro or Serbia where parents with a lesser sense of duty participate less often in class meetings. As for the rest of the countries included in analysis – Croatia, Romania, Moldova, and Bosnia-Herzegovina – the relationship between these two variables is not statistically significant.



## Homework support as a dimension of parental involvement

Supporting children with their homework is perceived strongly as a duty to adhere to among those parents whose children are in the first or second educational grades. It should be common sense that there are certain difficulties for children as they adapt themselves to school life, and that is why parental support is welcomed. The results of our analysis are presented in Table 5.

Data also show that the attitude as regards supporting children with homework is reflected in the parents' behaviour in the matter. Parents who declare that nobody in the family helps children with homework are also those who support the idea that it is not the parent's role to assist the child with homework.

There is no relevant statistical difference as regards homework support between those parents whose children dislike going to school and those who 'love' doing so. However, a certain difference can be perceived between the parents of those children who moderately enjoy going to school and those at either extreme (i.e. parents whose children love or hate going to school more often believe that it is their duty to assist with homework).

Table 5. Logistic regression model used in assessing parents' profiles with a weak perceived duty to help children with homework

Model 1: independent variables related to parents' perception of the duty to help children with homework

	B	Wald	Exp(B)
0 = weak sense of duty to help children with homework; 1 = strong sense of duty			
Child's gender is male	-0.057	0.543	0.944
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.558	16.301	1.746**
School level (grade) of the child: three	0.195	2.524	1.215
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.415	10.553	1.515**
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.12	0.94	1.127
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.211	3.023	1.235*
Child's feelings about going to school: hate or doesn't like	-0.143	0.651	0.867
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	-0.157	3.362	0.855*
Academic achievement of the child: average or below average	0.079	0.553	1.082
Academic achievement of child: better than average (not excellent)	0.186	3.088	1.204*
Children facing difficulties at school	-0.029	0.066	0.971
Number of books at home: there are no books	0.133	0.525	1.142
Number of books at home: 1-10 books	0.286	3.985	1.331**
Number of books at home: 11-50 books	0.29	5.557	1.336**
Number of books at home: 51-100	0.24	3.418	1.271*
Mother's highest educational level: elementary	0.347	5.066	1.415**
Mother's highest educational level: secondary	0.041	0.152	1.042
Size of school: small	-0.054	0.286	0.948
Area of residence: urban	-0.104	1.378	0.902
Family's ability to participate in class, group or individual school-parent meetings: lower capability	0.132	1.289	1.141
Family's perception of the duty to attend class, group or individual school-parent meetings: lower duty	-0.401	8.918	0.669**

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Family's perception of the usefulness of attending class, group or individual school-parent meetings: lower usefulness	-0.104	0.583	0.902
Number of household members: four	-0.049	0.183	0.952
Number of household members: five	-0.073	0.332	0.93
Number of household members: six or more	0.063	0.232	1.065
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: less than 60 minutes	-0.167	1.878	0.846
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 60-90 minutes	-0.164	1.927	0.849
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 90-120	-0.144	1.707	0.866
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: father	-0.057	0.176	0.945
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: nobody	-0.361	10.435	0.697**
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: someone else (neither father nor mother)	-0.173	1.443	0.842
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: a lot of time	0.154	2.655	1.166
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: limited time	-0.002	0.001	0.998
Estimation of parent-teacher relationship: good	0.295	10.646	1.343**
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	-0.17	2.456	0.844
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: normal	-0.017	0.032	0.983
Estimation of family ability in helping with homework: lower competency	-1.796	360.278	0.166**
Parents' perception regarding usefulness of helping with homework: lower utility	-3.207	1216.05	0.04**
Family wealth: low	0.039	0.082	1.039
Family wealth: high	0.011	0.006	1.011
Family wealth: highest	-0.271	2.561	0.762
Parents' perception regarding the duty of the family to help with homework: strong perceived duty	0.022	0.048	1.023
Parental expectations of the education level the child will reach: at most secondary	0.048	0.24	1.049
Country: Albania	0.3	3.708	1.349*
Country: Serbia	-0.286	4.477	0.751**
Country: Croatia	0.369	6.463	1.446**
Country: Moldova	1.448	57.822	4.256**
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.464	10.097	1.59**
Country: Romania	0.702	17.458	2.017**
Constant	1.34	22.012	3.82**

R2 (Cox & Snell) = 43.6%

R2 (Nagelkerke) = 60.1%

sig.  $\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000;

sig.  $\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.307

15.9% represented non-answers.

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases.

\*\* p<0.05

\* p<0.1

*Model 2: independent variables related to parents' perception of the duty to help children with homework plus interaction terms of types of parental involvement (by country)*

0 = weak sense of duty to help children with homework; 1 = strong sense of duty	B	Wald	Exp(B)
Child's gender is male	-0.048	0.385	0.953
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.554	15.904	1.74**
School level (grade) of the child: three	0.195	2.516	1.216
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.416	10.531	1.516**
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.125	1.029	1.134
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.212	3.042	1.237*
Child's feelings about going to school: hates or doesn't like	-0.131	0.543	0.877
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	-0.172	4.017	0.842**
Academic achievement of the child: average or below average	0.074	0.483	1.077
Academic achievement of the child: better than average (not excellent)	0.18	2.88	1.197*
Child facing difficulties at school	-0.012	0.011	0.988
Number of books at home: there are no books	0.164	0.795	1.179
Number of books at home: 1–10 books	0.312	4.668	1.366**
Number of books at home: 11–50 books	0.293	5.605	1.34**
Number of books at home: 51–100 books	0.251	3.703	1.285*
Mother's highest educational level: elementary	0.342	4.866	1.407**
Mother's highest educational level: secondary	0.049	0.212	1.05
Size of school: small	-0.041	0.162	0.96
Area of residence: urban	-0.096	1.183	0.908
Family's ability to participate in class, group or individual parent–school meetings: lower capability	0.131	1.248	1.139
Family's perception of the duty to attend class, group or individual parent–school meetings: lower duty	-0.418	9.577	0.659**
Family's perception of the usefulness of attending class, group or individual parent–school meetings: lower usefulness	-0.103	0.57	0.902
Number of household members: four	-0.037	0.104	0.964
Number of household members: five	-0.058	0.207	0.944
Number of household members: six or more	0.072	0.304	1.075
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: less than 60 minutes	-0.172	1.967	0.842
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 60–90 minutes	-0.161	1.831	0.851
Estimated time spent daily doing homework: 90–120 minutes	-0.151	1.847	0.86
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: father	-0.061	0.203	0.941
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: nobody	-0.367	10.674	0.693**
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: someone else (neither father nor mother)	-0.183	1.611	0.832
Time parents' can spend keeping up to date with school issues: a lot of time	0.154	2.643	1.166
Time parents' can spend keeping up to date with school issues: limited time	-0.003	0.001	0.997
Estimation of the parent–teacher relationship: good	0.295	10.588	1.343**

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Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	-0.155	2.039	0.856
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: normal	-0.017	0.034	0.983
Estimation of family ability in helping with homework: lower competency	-1.795	356.547	0.166**
Parents' perception regarding the usefulness of helping children with homework: lower usefulness	-3.219	1209.67	0.04**
Family wealth: low	0.041	0.089	1.042
Family wealth: high	0.015	0.009	1.015
Family wealth: highest	-0.266	2.43	0.766
Parents' perception regarding the family's duty to help with homework: strong duty perception	-0.462	3.937	0.63**
Parental expectations regarding the highest level of education the child will reach: at most secondary	0.348	2.557	1.416
Country: Albania	0.151	0.647	1.163
Country: Serbia	-0.194	1.409	0.823
Country: Croatia	0.276	2.462	1.317
Country: Moldova	1.873	9.492	6.51**
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.454	6.48	1.574**
Country: Romania	0.719	12.742	2.052**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Albania)	-0.285	0.686	0.752
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Serbia)	-0.607	4.261	0.545**
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Croatia)	-0.11	0.129	0.896
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Moldova)	-0.891	1.976	0.41
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	-0.353	1.33	0.703
Interaction terms of parental expectations that the child will reach secondary education (Romania)	-0.217	0.429	0.805
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Albania)	0.994	8.682	2.703**
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Serbia)	0.286	0.681	1.332
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Croatia)	0.593	2.713	1.81
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Moldova)	1.041	7.024	2.831**
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	0.497	2.142	1.643
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Romania)	0.045	0.013	1.046
Constant	1.329	20.408	3.778

R<sup>2</sup> (Cox & Snell) = 43.8%

R<sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke) = 60.4%

sig.  $\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000

sig.  $\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.205.

15.9% represented non-answers.

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases.

\*\* p<0.05

\* p<0.1

Parents whose children have a rather average attainment in school are more likely to judge that it is their duty to support children with homework, as opposed to the ones whose children have gained excellent results in school. There are no differences at the opposite extremes: parents of children who love going to school versus children who hate going to school, or children with excellent educational attainment versus children with very poor attainment.

The number of books in the home is another variable impacting significantly on the parent's perception of their duty to support children with homework. But between those parents who own more than 100 books and those who own none, the difference is basically insignificant. There are, however, significant differences between parents who own books, albeit unexpected ones. While comparing the groups of parents who own more than 100 books, the fewer books they have, the more they perceive it as their duty to support the child with homework. Nevertheless, between the groups placed at either extreme – those owning more than 100 books and those owning none – the difference is not significant. We have controlled in the regression model for the effect of pupil's attainment in school. Thus we can compare parental perceptions as regards the necessity to support children with homework, at the level of parent groups defined by their children's attainment in school. Consequently, the mechanism suggested by the analysis outcomes shows that the shortcomings faced by children at pre-school age (and also later) could be compensated for, to an extent, by parents through extended support, providing assistance with lessons and homework. Between those parents who assess that their own children perform below average in school and those parents who estimate that their children perform excellently, the difference in attitude as regards the support provided to children is insignificant. Obviously, the two groups act in a similar manner due to different reasons and motivations. The parents who encourage a good cognitive basis for their children who go on to perform well in school feel no duty to involve themselves further by supporting their children's education. Parents whose children perform below the average level do not feel compelled to intervene in order to compensate for the underachievement of their children, perhaps because of insufficient knowledge of children's needs or a certain lack of consideration as to the way their children

perform in school. However, there are differences in attitudes towards supporting children between the parents of those children with average or above-average performance levels and those whose children perform very well. The former category feels highly compelled to assist their children with homework, more so than the latter group. One may talk about a 'compensation mechanism' in relation to underachieving children attainment, through the extended involvement of parents. Practically, it could be said that there are three categories of parents: those whose children are performing excellently, involving themselves to a lesser extent in supporting the children in school; parents of children with poor school attainment, who involve themselves less and do not try to compensate for their children's underachievement, thus contributing to unequal opportunities in the long term; and those whose children's performance is average or above, but have more involvement in supporting their children.

It is also interesting that parents with an elementary education of their own tend to consider (to a greater extent than the parents with a tertiary education) that it is their duty to assist children with homework; there are no significant differences in this matter between parents with secondary and tertiary educations. One explanation might be that the level of education is a key factor in biasing a specific value as regards supporting children with homework; parents with a tertiary education may think that their children should have a certain level of autonomy, becoming able to learn on their own.

Another relevant factor for parents' attitudes as regards their duty to support children with homework is the way in which parents perceive the parent-teacher relationship. Those parents who estimate that teachers treat them with respect and feel comfortable discussing the children's problems with them are (to a greater extent) more inclined to believe that it is their task to assist children with homework. The evidence shows that teachers and schools play an important role in encouraging the family to be more involved in the children's education. Differences among teachers in their approach to communicating with parents, irrespective of their educational or cultural circumstances, may lead to less parental involvement. Similarly, one may add that parents who more frequently attend organized formal school meetings are also more tempted to consider it their duty to provide assistance with their children's homework.

However, the variable which best explains parents' view on supporting children with homework is their perception as to its usefulness. Thus, parents who consider it less useful to support children with homework are more tempted to say that it is not their duty to do so. The opposite is true for those parents who consider it useful to assist their children. In fact, parents have proven that their belief in the usefulness of homework support is at the heart of their decision to actually do so. Moreover, those parents who consider themselves less competent in helping with homework also consider that it is, to a lesser extent, their duty to do so, in contrast with parents who are more competent. We can thus identify a fundamental me-

chanism as regards parents' views on the necessity to support their children with homework: those parents who consider themselves less capable to do so, and those who consider such support less useful, are less inclined to see it as one of their duties. Beyond a pupil's school attainment and performance, more important factors are the support they receive from the family, and whether or not the family perceives this to be useful. What is notable is that those parents who most consider helping their children to be useful are the least capable of supporting them in homework. In this regard, it would be beneficial to offer extra-curricula programs for children whose parents were included in this category.

Comparing the countries in the region, the results indicated that in Romania, Moldova, and Bosnia-Herzegovina parents consider to a large extent that it is their duty to support children in homework, in contrast with the parents in Montenegro, Albania, and especially Serbia. Croatia occupies a middle position in this hierarchy.

There is a variation in the report between parental participation in class meetings and parents' self-perceived duty to assist their children with homework, depending on the country. Thus, in countries such as Albania and Montenegro, there a strong and significant report between the parental participation rate in class meetings and the parents' standing as regards their duty to assist their children with homework. In contrast, in Albania a lower participation rate in class meetings organized by the school is connected with a stronger sense of duty to help children with homework, while in Montenegro a larger share of participation in class meetings is connected with a more profound sense of duty to support children with homework. As for the other countries, the report shows rather insignificant results.

The variable regarding parental expectations vis-à-vis the educational level attained by children is only significantly connected with a sharper sense of duty to support children in Serbia; here, there were lower expectations and a lower sense of duty to support children with homework. In the other countries, the correlation between these variables is insignificant.

### **Parental expectations as a dimension of parental involvement**

The results of our analysis clearly indicate that pupils' attainment in school and their degree of comfort with school life are significantly associated with the level of parental expectations of pupils' education (see Table 6). Parents who are aware of children's low school achievement have lower expectations regarding the level of education they will go on to achieve.

Also, since the parent believes that the student does not like to go to school, there are lower expectations about future educational development. It is hard to state here what the causal relationship is. A prominent variable, strongly correlated with parental expectations, is also the level of the parents' education. We saw previously that student performance depends very much on the level of the parents' education. It can be argued that equal opportunities in education are still an unattainable goal in this part of the world. Family resources are still a fundamental determinant of a student having a favourable school result.

Another high-impact variable on the level of parental expectations is the level of family wealth. Greater material resources can afford the family the opportunity to invest in the future education of the child without special effort being necessary. The projected development of the child depends on the family's capacity to support any material efforts required. In addition, material resources also provide support for a child's education in private educational institutions: in SEE countries (certainly in Romania's case) gaining access to private universities becomes much easier than to public ones. Bearing in mind the alternative of sending a child to a private university without high admission requirements, parents with more substantial material resources will also be able to see their children through a longer educational process.



Table 6. Logistic regression model used in assessing the profile of parents who expect their children to reach (at most) a secondary level of education

Model 1: independent variables related to parental expectations of the child's education level

0 = High expectations; 1 = Low expectations	B	Wald	Exp(B)
Child's gender is male	0.135	3.929	1.144**
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.223	3.565	1.25*
School level (grade) of the child: three	0.255	5.358	1.291**
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.294	7.121	1.342**
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.238	4.653	1.269**
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.014	0.016	1.014
Child's feelings about going to school: hates or doesn't like	0.839	33.766	2.315**
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	0.446	35.816	1.562**
Academic achievement of the child: average or below average	0.804	85.09	2.234**
Academic achievement of the child: better than average (not excellent)	0.35	13.939	1.419**
Child faces difficulties at school	0.133	1.869	1.143
Number of books at home: there are no books	0.506	10.166	1.658**
Number of books at home: 1–10	0.111	0.698	1.118
Number of books at home: 11–50	0.075	0.394	1.078
Number of books at home: 50–100	0.057	0.19	1.058
Mother's highest educational level: elementary	1.09	58.889	2.974**
Mother's highest educational level: secondary	0.845	54.164	2.327**
Size of school: small	0.074	0.649	1.077
Area of residence: urban	0.067	0.741	1.069
Family's ability to participate in class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower capability	0.262	6.717	1.299**
Family's perception of the duty to attend class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower duty	-0.02	0.038	0.977
Family's perception of the usefulness of attending class, group or individual school–parent meetings: lower utility	0.046	0.156	1.047
Number of household members: four	0.048	0.213	1.049
Number of household members: five	0.153	1.846	1.165
Number of household members: six or more	0.154	1.828	1.167
Estimation of time spent daily doing homework: less than 60 minutes	0.534	25.4	1.706**
Estimation of time spent daily doing homework: 60–90 minutes	0.344	10.738	1.411**
Estimation of time spent daily doing homework: 90–120 minutes	0.083	0.687	1.087
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: father	0.183	2.504	1.201
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: nobody	0.208	4.365	1.231**
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: someone else (neither father nor mother)	0.256	4.151	1.292**
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: a lot of time	-0.05	0.303	0.956
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: limited time	-0.12	2.236	0.884

Estimation of the parent–teacher relationship: good	-0.32	16.32	0.729**
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	0.112	1.345	1.118
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: normal	0.157	3.781	1.17*
Estimation of the family’s capability in helping with homework: lower competency	0.131	2.103	1.14
Parents’ perception regarding the usefulness of helping children with homework: lower usefulness	0.151	2.178	1.163
Family wealth: lower wealth	-0.69	40.454	0.502**
Family wealth: higher wealth	-1.24	99.041	0.289**
Family wealth: highest wealth	-1.37	90.263	0.253**
Parents’ perception of the duty of the family to help children homework: strong duty	-0	0	0.998
Lower parental participation in class meetings	0.298	12.026	1.347**
Country: Albania	-1.26	76.552	0.285**
Country: Serbia	-0.21	2.861	0.814*
Country: Croatia	0.154	1.574	1.167
Country: Moldova	2.785	257.36	16.206**
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	-0.6	23.461	0.549**
Country: Romania	-0.64	20.154	0.526**
Constant	-2.04	53.825	0.13

R2 (Cox & Snell) = 35.3%

R2 (Nagelkerke) = 48.3%

sig.  $\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000

sig.  $\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.06

15.9% represented non-answers.

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases.

\* p<0.1

\*\* p<0.05

*Model 2: independent variables related to parents’ expectations of the level of education the child will reach and interaction terms of the types of parental involvement (by country)<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>7</sup> 0 = higher participation in class meetings; 1 = lower participation

0 = High expectations; 1 = Low expectations	B	Wald	Exp(B)
Child's gender is male	0.139	4.185	1.15**
School level (grade) of the child: one or two	0.222	3.497	1.249*
School level (grade) of the child: three	0.234	4.454	1.263**
School level (grade) of the child: four	0.288	6.783	1.334**
School level (grade) of the child: five	0.23	4.315	1.259**
School level (grade) of the child: six	0.001	0	1.001*
Child's feelings about going to school: hates or doesn't like	0.844	34.02	2.326**
Child's feelings about going to school: likes (not 'loves')	0.444	35.27	1.559**
Academic achievement of the child: average of below average	0.811	85.66	2.25**
Academic achievement of the child: better than average (not excellent)	0.349	13.77	1.417**
Child faces difficulties at school	0.126	1.65	1.134
Number of books at home: there are no books	0.508	10.09	1.661**
Number of books at home: 1–10 books	0.129	0.925	1.138
Number of books at home: 11–50 books	0.094	0.607	1.099
Number of books at home: 51–100	0.062	0.226	1.064
Mother's highest educational level: elementary	1.079	57.26	2.941**
Mother's highest educational level: secondary	0.841	53.43	2.319**
Size of school: small	0.103	1.231	1.109
Area of residence: urban	0.074	0.893	1.077
Family's ability to participate class, group or individual parent–school meetings: lower capability	0.269	7.053	1.309**
Family's perception of the duty to attend class, group or individual parent–school meetings: lower duty	-0.04	0.115	0.959
Family's perception of the usefulness of attending class, group or individual parent–school meetings: lower usefulness	0.056	0.225	1.057
Number of household members: four	0.056	0.286	1.058
Number of household members: five	0.153	1.829	1.165
Number of household members: six or more	0.151	1.741	1.163
Estimation of time spent daily doing homework: less than 60 minutes	0.527	24.41	1.694**
Estimation of time spent daily doing homework: 60–90 minutes	0.346	10.74	1.413**
Estimation of time spent daily doing homework: 90–120 minutes	0.077	0.588	1.08
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: father	0.191	2.686	1.21
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: nobody	0.206	4.26	1.229**
Member of family who normally helps children with homework: someone else (neither father nor mother)	0.262	4.303	1.3**
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: a lot of time	-0.04	0.174	0.966
Time parents can spend keeping up with school issues: limited time	-0.1	1.55	0.902
Estimation of the parent–teacher relationship: good	-0.31	15.8	0.732**

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Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: rare	0.103	1.14	1.109
Estimation of time spent by one family member with other children in school: normal	0.163	4.008	1.177*
Estimation of the family's ability to help with homework: lower competency	0.148	2.592	1.159
Parents' perception regarding the usefulness of helping with homework: lower usefulness	0.159	2.361	1.172
Family wealth: lower wealth	-0.69	39.58	0.504**
Family wealth: higher wealth	-1.23	96.22	0.292**
Family wealth: highest wealth	-1.36	87.31	0.257**
Parents' perception of the family's duty to help children with homework: strong duty	0.476	6.804	1.609**
Lower parental participation in class meetings	0.395	4.153	1.485**
Country: Albania	-0.9	16.43	0.406**
Country: Serbia	0.115	0.384	1.122
Country: Croatia	0.358	3.097	1.43*
Country: Moldova	3.175	53.01	23.929**
Country: Bosnia-Herzegovina	-0.26	1.928	0.772
Country: Romania	-0.23	0.865	0.794
Interaction terms of a strongly perceived duty to help children with homework (Albania)	-0.79	8.834	0.453**
Interaction terms of a strongly perceived duty to help children with homework (Serbia)	-0.67	8.188	0.511**
Interaction terms of a strongly perceived duty to help children with homework (Croatia)	-0.36	2.265	0.698
Interaction terms of a strongly perceived duty to help children with homework (Moldova)	-0.58	1.58	0.561
Interaction terms of a strongly perceived duty to help children with homework (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	-0.54	5.561	0.58**
Interaction terms of a strongly perceived duty to help children with homework (Romania)	-0.61	5.04	0.544**
Interactions term of lower parental participation at class meeting by Albania	0.202	0.488	1.224
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Serbia)	0.244	0.687	1.276
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Croatia)	-0.23	0.652	0.792
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Moldova)	-0.32	0.629	0.725
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	-0.3	1.15	0.743
Interaction terms of lower parental participation in class meetings (Romania)	-0.36	1.337	0.695
Constant	-2.37	62.01	0.094

R<sup>2</sup> (Cox & Snell) = 35.5%

R<sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke) = 48.5%

sig.  $\chi^2$  (omnibus test) = 0.000

sig.  $\chi^2$  (Hosmer & Lemeshow Test) = 0.008

15.9% represented non-answers.

Analysis was computed based on 6,538 cases.

\* p<0.1

\*\* p<0.05

A family's cultural resources – captured in our study by the number of books kept at home – are significantly associated with parental expectations. Thus, the fewer books there are in a household, the lower the parental expectations of children's education (controlling for the effect of other variables included in the regression model, including material resources, education level etc.).

How much students prepare at home for school is another variable significantly associated with parents' aspirations for student education. Thus, the lower the level of parental aspirations, the less the child prepares for school. It is interesting to point out that there was a significant association between parents' aspiration levels regarding children's education and the family's perceived capability to make good use of formal meetings with teachers. Those parents who feel less competent in this regard have lower aspirations for the child's education. In the same context, we should mention that if the parent reported feeling comfortable talking with a teacher and felt respected, the level of parental expectations towards children's education was higher. Moreover, the higher the rate of parental participation in formal school meetings, the higher the parental expectations. We can estimate in this case that parental expectations function as cause.

We should mention that in families where someone other than a parent supports home education, the level of parental expectations is lower compared with families where the mother takes care of the child.

The highest rate of parental expectations can be found in Albania, the lowest in Moldova. There is a significant difference in the level of parental expectations between Croatia and Montenegro, with the latter country having the highest.

Overall, the association between the level of parental expectations and the perception of parents as to the duty of supporting their children with homework is insignificant. However, this association is significant in the case of Serbia. Parents who feel they have duty to support their child with homework also have a higher level of parental expectations.

Wider participation in formal school meetings is associated with higher parental expectations as to the child's education, but this correlation is only significant for Albania, Montenegro and Serbia.

Some references are required to specify the relevant variables for parental expectations in the case of some individual countries. In Moldova – a country where the share of parents who want higher education for their children is the lowest – the most significant variable associated with parental expectations is about the person who generally helps children with homework. There is a highly significant difference between children who are not helped with homework or who are helped by someone other than the mother or father, or in cases where the mother helps. When the mother is the one who mainly helps the child, there is less probability that parents will expect the student to go on to higher education.

For Romania, parental expectations are completely insignificant in relation to participation in school meetings, or the perceived duty to help children with homework. However, parental expectations have a significant impact on how the child performs the number of books in the household, the mother's education level, or the degree of respect and comfort parents feel when with teachers.

In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, there is a strong association with parental expectations with the mother's level of education. Interestingly, parents in urban areas have a lower level of parental expectations than those in rural areas.

In Serbia, parental expectations are significantly associated with both the frequency of participation in class meetings and a sense of duty towards helping children with homework; the number of books in the household is a significant variable, and also, families where the mother helps the child are more likely to value further education than if someone other than the mother or father helps the child.

### **Conclusions and public policy implications**

In this study, we defined parental involvement in terms of two relevant dimensions: (1) an commitment to children's development, with a relevant educational process starting from the pre-school age, operationalized through the parents' expectations of the child's future education; (2) specific involvement in school education, operationalized through the participation of parents in class meetings and parental support for children with homework.

Only the first dimension has proven relevant for children's educational outcomes: children whose parents expect them to achieve at most a secondary level of education perform less well in school. The other two variables by means of which we have operationalized parental involvement (attendance in class meeting

and parents' perception of their duty to offer support to children with homework) have proven rather insignificant in relation to children's educational achievement. The implications of this result are that policies seeking equalization of opportunities in education should be focused more on parental expectations as a key factor for school performance, and less on intervention at the school level by encouraging parental participation in school meetings or by encouraging parents to provide support with homework. Parental expectations differ from the other two dimensions of parental involvement taken into account here by means of the prolonged duration in which parents can maintain an influence on children's development, starting with the pre-school age. Parental expectations, combined with a specific parental style from early childhood, may foster a more elaborate linguistic range for the child, and a higher level of cognitive development, etc. These cognitive abilities, as they are called in the literature, have a definite impact on the evolution of school and post-school progress. While attendance at class meetings and support for children's homework are mechanisms which start to function after the child's entrance to school, parental expectations can enable the pupil even before the first year of school, during pre-school. From here, there is a huge difference of significance between these two dimensions of parental involvement on school performance. In conclusion, the policies that aim to equalize opportunities in education should offset the effects of varying parental expectations.

Another important conclusion drawn from this research is that equal chances in education are still rather an untouched goal in the seven countries included in the analysis. Pupils' school performance still depends heavily on family resources: mother's level of education; the family's cultural capital (realized in the research by the number of books kept at home); family financial resources; or parental expectations as to the child's future education.

If we were to outline the profile of a child who has the best chance in the region of achieving well in school, this child would have a parent with a higher education, more than 100 books at home, a very high level of material wealth in the household, and the family would be planning for the child to pursue higher education. A contrasting profile would be a child with fewer opportunities and would do less well at school: a mother with an elementary level of schooling, no books in the household, a low level of material wealth, and the family would plan for no more than the child to reach secondary school. In light of these results, efforts should be intensified by the relevant stakeholders in the region (governments, NGOs, universities) in order to increase equality in education.

Another important conclusion is the fact that the countries included in the analysis have specific qualities as regards the significant determinants of pupils' school performance.

In Albania, parental expectations about the child's education are not significant in relation to pupil performance, and nor is the mother's level of education. There remain relevant variables on children's cultural capital (number of books in the household) and family wealth. Note that for Albania, pupil performance depends greatly on the number of hours daily that the child spends preparing for school; in terms of more equal opportunities, a child's school performance depends primarily on the effort put in, and on natural talent. It is, therefore, a positive fact that in Albania, performance depends largely on the efforts made by child to prepare for school. Results from Albania should be treated with some caution because it is in this country that the regression model has recorded the highest number of missing cases (28.4 percent); the share of missing cases across the entire sample was only 15.9 percent.

In Montenegro, variables such as the mother's educational level and the number of books in the household are relevant for school performance, but not household wealth or parental expectations.

In Serbia, parental expectations, the mother's education level, and the number of books in household are significant for a child's school performance. The level of family wealth is not significant, and nor is the effort made by a child in terms of time spent preparing for school.

In Croatia, all four variables describing family resources are significant for a child's performance; daily preparation for school is not. Specifically, those children who are not helped with homework by anybody perform better than those helped in general by their mother.

In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, parental expectations and the level of the mother's education matter; but for pupil performance, family wealth and the number of books at home do not. The number of hours spent preparing for school each day is not significant. There is a higher rate of school success for girls compared with boys, and children who are generally helped with homework by the father perform better than those helped by the mother.

In Romania, the number of books in the household, the mother's education and parental expectations are significant; not so the wealth of the family. Also relevant is the effort made by the child, the child's gender (boys perform less well than girls) and how well children feel at school (children who feel better perform better).

In Moldova's case, good performance is associated with the number of books in the household, parental expectations, the mother's education level (the difference being only between elementary and tertiary levels) and, to some extent, with family wealth. The number of hours pupils spend preparing for school is less relevant, but the gender of the child is highly so – boys performs less well than girls – and how children feel about going to school.



Although there are variations between the countries included in the analysis, there are family resources which are highly relevant for pupil performance in each. The child's education still strongly depends on the family's ability to support education, and only slightly on the pupil's individual efforts. Parental involvement can be operationalized in terms of parental expectations; this is significant to the pupil's educational performance in all the countries included in the analysis except Albania and Montenegro. This provides an argument for considering this aspect in relation to the future development of policies on equal opportunities in education.

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