

## The family-school relationship in the rural context: the influence of school variables

*La relación familia-escuela en el contexto rural: influencia de la etapa educativa, repetición de curso y rendimiento académico del alumnado*

*A relação família-escola no contexto rural: influência da etapa educativa, repetição de ano e desempenho académico dos alunos*

*农村背景下的家庭与学校关系：教育阶段、留级与学生学业成绩的影响*

*العلاقة بين الأسرة والمدرسة في السياق الريفي: تأثير المرحلة التعليمية، تكرار السنة الدراسية، والأداء الأكاديمي للطلاب*

Hernández-Prados, M.<sup>a</sup> Ángeles , Álvarez-Muñoz, José Santiago 

University of Murcia, Spain

### Abstract

The relevance of democratic, co-responsible and collaborative relationships has been widely acknowledged, but to a lesser extent in rural areas. Educational institutions in this type of context have a special peculiarity that has repercussions on the different parameters of education in the 21st century, among them, the relationship between family and school. From an empirical, descriptive, quantitative approach, the representations of parents with respect to the relationship they maintain with schools in the multicultural rural context of the Region of Murcia are analysed. The questionnaire "Assessment of the involvement of families in their children's education. Questionnaire to families" which was filled in by 1478 families (14.1% parents; 51.5% mothers; 27.5% both) living in rural areas. The results show a significant presence of higher participation in Primary Education which is drastically reduced in Secondary Education; parents with children who have repeated grades are less involved in school life than those whose children have not repeated grades; and higher academic achievement is associated with an increase in parental involvement in the school. Emphasis is placed on the need for family accompaniment in the educational transition from Primary to Secondary Education in order not to reduce their involvement and, in addition, to provide more continuous feedback on the academic status of students in order to emphasize the importance of family participation and involvement in solving the deficiencies in this regard.

**Keywords:** education coordination, rural education, teaching level, parent-school relationship, school performance.

### Resumen

La relevancia de las relaciones democráticas de corresponsabilidad y colaborativas ha sido ampliamente constatada, pero en menor medida en el ámbito rural. Las instituciones educativas en este tipo de contexto guardan una especial peculiaridad que repercute en los diferentes parámetros de la educación del siglo XXI, entre ellos, la relación familia y escuela. Desde un enfoque empírico, descriptivo, cuantitativo, se analiza la participación de las familias en los centros educativos rurales en función de las variables escolares desde la perspectiva de los progenitores. Se utilizó el cuestionario "Valoración de la implicación de las familias en la educación de los hijos/as. Cuestionario a familias" que fue cumplimentado por 1478 familias (14.1% padres; 51.5% madres; 27.5% ambos) residentes en áreas rurales. Los resultados ponen de manifiesto la presencia significativa de una mayor participación en la Educación Primaria que se ve drásticamente reducida en la Educación Secundaria; las familias con hijos/as que han repetido se involucran en menor medida en la vida escolar que aquellos cuyos hijos/as no han repetido; y a mayor rendimiento académico se asocia un incremento de la participación de los progenitores en el centro. Se hace hincapié en la necesidad de realizar un acompañamiento familiar en el tránsito educativo de Educación Primaria a Secundaria para no mermar la implicación de estas y, además, dar un feedback más continuado respecto el estatus académico del alumnado de manera que se subraye la importancia de la participación e implicación de las familias para solventar las deficiencias al respecto.

**Palabras clave:** coordinación de la educación, educación rural, nivel de enseñanza, relación padres-escuela, rendimiento escolar.

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## Resumo

A relevância das relações democráticas de corresponsabilidade e colaborativas tem sido amplamente constatada, mas em menor grau nas zonas rurais. As instituições educativas neste tipo de contexto têm uma particularidade especial que se repercute nos diferentes parâmetros da educação no século XXI, incluindo a relação entre a família e a escola. A partir de uma abordagem empírica, descritiva e quantitativa, a participação das famílias nas escolas de zonas rurais é analisada em termos das variáveis escolares na perspectiva dos pais. Foi utilizado o questionário “Avaliação do envolvimento das famílias na educação dos seus filhos. Questionário a famílias” que foi preenchido por 1478 famílias (14,1% pais; 51,5% mães; 27,5% ambos) residentes em zonas rurais. Os resultados mostram a presença significativa de uma maior participação no Ensino Básico, que é drasticamente reduzida no Ensino Secundário; as famílias com filhos que repetiram de ano estão menos envolvidas na vida escolar do que aquelas cujos filhos não repetiram de ano; e um maior sucesso académico está associado a um aumento da participação dos pais na escola. A ênfase é colocada na necessidade de um acompanhamento familiar na transição do ensino básico para o secundário, a fim de não reduzir o envolvimento das famílias e, além disso, fornecer um feedback mais contínuo quanto ao estado académico dos alunos, para sublinhar a importância da participação e do envolvimento das famílias na resolução de deficiências a este respeito.

**Palavras-chave:** coordenação da educação, educação rural, nível de ensino, relação pais-escola, desempenho escolar.

## 摘要

民主责任和协作关系在教育中具有重要意义，但在农村地区的研究较为有限。农村教育机构因其特殊性，对21世纪教育的多个参数产生影响，其中包括家庭与学校之间的关系。本研究从实证、描述性和定量的角度，分析了在农村背景下，家庭参与学校教育的情况及其与学校变量的关系，主要基于家长的视角。研究使用了“家庭对子女教育参与的评价问卷”，共有1478个农村家庭参与填写（14.1%为父亲，51.5%为母亲，27.5%为父母双方）。研究结果显示以下趋势：家庭在小学阶段的参与显著较高，但在中学阶段参与度大幅下降。留级学生的家庭在学校生活中的参与度明显低于未留级学生的家庭。学生学业成绩越高，家长对学校的参与度越强。研究强调，在小学向中学过渡的教育阶段中，应通过有效的家庭陪伴减少家长参与的下降。此外，建议对学生学业状况提供更持续的反馈，以突出家庭参与对弥补教育缺陷的重要性。

**关键词:** 教育协调、农村教育、教育阶段、家长与学校关系、学业成绩

## ملخص

أهمية العلاقات الديمقراطية التي تقوم على المسؤولية المشتركة والتعاون تم تأكيدها على نطاق واسع، ولكن بدرجة أقل في السياقات الريفية. تمتاز المؤسسات التعليمية في هذا النوع من السياقات بخصائص خاصة تؤثر على مختلف معايير التعليم في القرن الحادي والعشرين، ومن بينها العلاقة بين الأسرة والمدرسة. من منظور تجريبي وصفي كمي، يتم تحليل مشاركة الأسر في تم استخدام استبيان بعنوان "تقييم مشاركة الأسر". المدارس الريفية بناءً على المتغيرات المدرسية، ومن وجهة نظر أولياء الأمور في تعليم الأبناء/البنات: استبيان للأسر"، والذي تم استكماله من قبل 1478 أسرة (14.1% من الآباء؛ 51.5% من الأمهات؛ 27.5% من كلا الوالدين) يقيمون في المناطق الريفية. كشفت النتائج عن وجود مستوى ملحوظ من المشاركة الأكبر في مرحلة التعليم الابتدائي، والذي ينخفض بشكل حاد في مرحلة التعليم الثانوي. كما تبين أن الأسر التي لديها أبناء/بنات قد أعادوا السنة الدراسية يشاركون بدرجة أقل في الحياة المدرسية مقارنة بأسر الطلاب الذين لم يعيدوا. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، لوحظ ارتباط بين الأداء التأكيد على ضرورة تقديم دعم أسري خلال الانتقال الأكاديمي المرتفع وزيادة مشاركة أولياء الأمور في الأنشطة المدرسية التعليمي من مرحلة التعليم الابتدائي إلى المرحلة الثانوية لضمان عدم تقليل مستوى مشاركة الأسر. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يجب توفير ملاحظات مستمرة حول الوضع الأكاديمي للطلاب، مما يبرز أهمية مشاركة الأسر وانخراطها في معالجة أوجه القصور المتعلقة بهذا الجانب.

الدالة الكلمات: تنسيق التعليم، التعليم الريفي، مستوى التعليم، العلاقة بين الآباء والمدرسة، الأداء الدراسي

## Introduction

Rurality as a non-uniform, complex and diverse reality, the result of globalization and modernization of agricultural areas, is too relevant a feature in education to go unnoticed. The geographical and economic context in

which a school is located (rural/urban) is marked by the population it inhabits, lifestyles, cultural traditions, the number of students and teachers, the resources they receive, etc. (Guardia, 2021; Quílez and Vázquez, 2012), and this is not a trivial matter, since the learning possibilities of the environment vary.

We must question, on the one hand, the concept of family participation, contributing to a delimitation that fits current circumstances, and on the other, consider the roles that parents from different contexts can play in collaborating with teachers (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). In fact, "they do not participate in the same way or have a similar culture of participation in large, medium or rural cities" (Hipólito Ruiz et al., 2024, p.82). However, previous studies recognize the lack of representativeness of this subject in scientific production (Brooks and Voltaire, 2020; García-González & Crespo-Sánchez, 2017; Oyinloye, 2021; Trussell and Shaw, 2009), both in the university preparation of future early childhood and primary education teachers (Abós, 2011) and in the specific continuing education of learning, organization and other peculiarities of this type of centers (Magro-Gutiérrez, 2019).

In the rural school model, despite the urbanization it is experiencing (Abós, 2015), the pedagogical principle of learning to learn nourishes the teaching-learning processes, in addition to inviting the teacher to constant innovation as a response to the multidimensionality of aspects to be addressed (Abós, 2011), thus breaking the myth of the poor educational quality of rural classrooms (Quílez & Vázquez, 2012). Literature reviews on the subject conclude that the rural school is characterized by suffering the same marginalization as the rural environment, by having the need for specific teacher training, a great capacity for teaching innovation and conceiving the community as a pedagogical resource, in addition to constituting an area of social transformation (Santamaría-Cárdaba & Gallego, 2020; Semke & Sheridan, 2012).

Among the particularities of rural schooling, it is worth mentioning the relationship that teachers maintain with the students' families. Parents are aware of the need for their participation, but demand that schools be more empowered, with better communication, clarity in school ideology and in expectations towards families, in order to know what is expected of them (Myende &

Nhlumayo, 2020). In fact, promoting shared responsibilities between these two educational agents has positive effects on the academic and socioemotional aspects of their students (Fernández-Vega & Cárcamo, 2021). Some of the advantages attributed to this relationship in rural areas are: it is a predictor of student academic success (Ortega and Cárcamo, 2018), better attention to the maturational and emotional development of the child (Fernández-Freire et al., 2020) and provides important support for family counseling and guidance for the development of positive parenting (Marugán, 2016). Hence, the scientific-academic interest in this subject has increased recently, since generally, and as Semke & Sheridan (2012) state, research on family-school has been limited almost exclusively to urban reality.

Participation is a citizen apprenticeship that can be acquired from the call to act as active agents. It is a right, but beyond the obligation, it is a family duty that is rooted in the ethical-moral dimension of participation. The community acts moved by the sense of responsibility, the feeling of solidarity and belonging that prevents turning its back on the educational vulnerability of the other, in need of an accompaniment that avoids instrumentalization and favors respect and welcome as an unavoidable fact in the co-responsibility of the agents involved and for the benefit of the students (Booth & Ainscow, 2012; Gomaríz et al., 2017). It is a complex, multifaceted and multidimensional, nuanced construct that includes many parental behaviors aimed at promoting and improving children's educational outcomes (Boyle & Benner, 2020), in which various aspects of the geographic-cultural context have an impact as has been exposed in the theoretical model of Epstein (2019) which consists of six dimensions (Parenting, Communication, Volunteering, Learning at home, Decision making, Collaboration with the community); Volgels (2002) who determines four parental profiles according to the relationship they have with the school (consumers, clients, participants and partners); Garbacz et al.

(2019) who establish five dimensions (home-school communication, home expectations and monitoring, educational support, school and community participation, and school attendance) or the Integral Model of Family Participation in Educational Centers (IMFIS) that we adopted in this study by the Compartimos Educación team of the University of Murcia (Gomariz et al., 2020), which covers a total of seven categories of family participation. Recently, with the aim of clarifying and avoiding an indiscriminate use, in scientific production it is differentiated according to the context where the activity is mainly developed, using the term involvement for the home and participation for collaboration in the educational center (Castro et al. 2015; Consejo Escolar del Estado, 2014; Gomariz et al., 2020).

Openness to the community on the part of the school center, feeling welcomed by teachers, positive communication between both educational agents, are indispensable minimums to be able to establish the co-responsible collaborative relationship. According to Semke & Sheridan (2012), the difference between family participation and educational community lies in the fact that the former is mainly concerned with the participatory role of families, while the latter goes a step further and focuses on promoting connections and constructive relationships, recognizing complementary roles between the systems. But the scarcity of resources, limited educational projects and even, a weak real felt need for family participation in schools, contribute to the fact that it is not considered a priority element in rural areas (Hipólito Ruiz et al., 2024). Other studies show that the teacher-family relationship in rural areas is not idyllic, as there is a need to communicate to parents the positive aspects of children's learning and to improve positive reinforcement towards parental involvement, in order to develop stronger mutual relationships and interactions (Erlendsdóttir et al., 2022).

Solidarity and community life is an idyllic hallmark of rural contexts, supposedly compensating for the lack of services. It seems

that "having educational institutions organized in simple structures, neither overcrowded nor bureaucratized, enables good relations between the local community and the educational center" (Quílez & Vázquez, 2012, p.10). From school democratization, the center becomes an extension of the community with a collegial community culture that allows adapting school organization and methodology to the needs and reality of the students and the environment (Bustos, 2011). In this sense, community participation, understood beyond joint decision-making, implies recognizing the need to break hermeticism, privacy and exclusivity, since "the educational task of teachers and families should not be trapped within the walls of the school or home" (Gomariz et al., 2020, p.73), seems to reach its splendor in the rural school. Perhaps school exclusivity, as the only center of the environment, promotes proximity and closeness between teachers and families, in addition to making it a true reference not only for the lives of schoolchildren but also for the entire population (Ortega & Cárcamo, 2018; Tahull and Montero, 2018), except in those cases where the distance from home to the center is so great that it is difficult to meet with the teacher (Fernández-Freire et al., 2020) or in contexts where there are strong conflicts between families (Marugán, 2016). Even so, despite the difficulties of participation, studies on indigenous populations show the positive impact of schooling on the community's way of life, as well as on the strengthening of family welfare and economy (Zapata-Esteves & Centurión-Cárdenas, 2023).

The role of teachers as facilitators of participation, which has been claimed on previous occasions (Galian, 2021; Gomariz et al., 2017), acquires a special role in rural areas. While relationships between teacher-principals and families are usually diverse, affective and include mainly their commitment of resources such as time, energy and money, they are also conditioned by cultural-religious aspects and stability in school leadership (Oyinloye, 2021). The resident teacher with a strong cultural identity and attachment to the

environment gradually disappears giving way to instability and constant mobilization of teachers, unattractive to the rural and eager to move to metropolitan areas (Álvarez-Álvarez & Vejo-Sainz, 2020), and generally with little work experience (Abós and Lorenzo, 2019). If we add to this the fact that rural schools are geographically isolated and the fact that services are inaccessible, the emerging panorama is bleak for the family-school relationship. Generally, rural teachers must fulfill functions beyond academics and do not feel prepared to meet some demands, so families can act as partners, inside and outside the school, although hermeticism and family fears of being judged make it a difficult task (Semke & Sheridan, 2012).

A look from the rural setting at variables classically related to family participation allows us to verify the existence of a poorer academic and cultural background that hinders accompaniment and expectations of school success. Although the feminization of school attendance in family contexts is a trait shared with urban contexts, the division of roles is intensified in rural contexts (Hernández-Prados & Álvarez-Muñoz, 2022). Regarding the educational stage, parental involvement experiences a detriment as one ascends in schooling (García-Sanz et al., 2010; Rodríguez-Ruiz et al., 2016). Specifically in rural areas, the estrangement between families and teachers in the transition from Primary to Secondary is recognized (Bereziartua et al., 2017), although it is addressed in a general way and not attending to the different modalities of participation.

Regarding family involvement and school performance, it has been shown to be a positive factor (Epstein, 2019; Semke & Sheridan, 2012), although its effects are more important in the higher stages than in the basic stages (Muller, 2018), and vary depending on the cultural level, with involvement being more necessary when there is a lower level of parental education (Bæck, 2016) or depending on the work occupation, with students of parents who perform work occupations typical of rural areas being those who obtain worse

academic performance (Belmonte et al., 2022). Despite being one of the most researched variables, there are few occasions in which it is studied in relation to family participation in rural contexts, in which, according to Turner (2018), the ease of entering the world of work prematurely constitutes a serious threat to the continuity of studies.

Closely linked to academic performance is the decision whether or not to promote, although it is more common in Secondary Education, since it is not applied in Pre-school and in Primary Education it is an extraordinary measure. Grade repetition is also a turning point for assessing the degree of parental involvement. The review of studies by Suárez et al. (2011) shows that non-promotion, for the most part, has positive effects on parental involvement and participation, while Díez-Gutiérrez & Gajardo Espinosa (2022) do not find it to be a solution to the problem of family involvement. In rural areas, the promotion of family involvement reduces the repetition rate (Bustos, 2011). Therefore, the relationship between both variables is bidirectional, so that family participation prevents repetition and, in turn, this in turn influences the increase or reduction of parental participation.

In all of the above, the reality of the family-educational center relationship deserves special consideration in rural contexts, because too often, as Landini (2015) pointed out, they are limited to transferring decontextualized theoretical models sustained and created taking into account the urban rather than the rural reality, and to the comparative between both realities (Yulianti et al., 2019), as if the rural by itself will not enjoy sufficient identity or interest for socio-educational research. Therefore, the general objective of the present study is to determine to what extent school variables can condition family participation in the particularity of these contexts from the perspective of parents. Specifically, the analysis of family participation is based on a multidimensional theoretical model (Epstein et al., 2019; Gomariz et al., 2020; Vogels, 2002) that delimits family participation in the following ways: communication, school

activities, feeling of belonging, involvement at home, AMPA, School Council, community participation and training. This general objective, in turn, is articulated in a series of specific objectives that qualify the research procedure of the present study, these are:

- To identify whether or not there is a minimum degree of significance between the educational stage and the dimensions of the family-school relationship in schools in rural areas (SO1).

- To find out if there are significant differences in the dimensions of participation of rural families in the school depending on whether or not the students repeat the same grade (SO2).

- To find out if the academic performance of students in rural areas is a significant variable in the dimensions of family-school participation (SO3).

## Method

### *Participants*

A simple random probability sampling technique with a significance level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% was applied to form the participating sample. To establish the minimum sample, the data for the 2021-22 academic year provided by the statistical service of the Regional Ministry of the Region of Murcia were taken into consideration, calculating the total number of students enrolled in the basic education system (Pre-school, Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education) who reside in rural areas, with a total of 2,130 students. Although the sample is made up of families, the students are taken as a reference for two reasons, due to the lack of data on families and also because there are more students than families, given that more than one student comes from the same family nucleus. For this procedure, the descriptor used is that provided by Molinero Hernando (2019), determining as a rural area those municipalities with a population of less than 20,000 inhabitants. Thus, according to the statistical parameters set out above, the

minimum sample size should be 379 rural families.

The final sample of participants was made up of 1478 families with students belonging to five public pre-schools and primary schools and two secondary schools located in the rural context of the Campo de Cartagena region, in the autonomous community of the Region of Murcia. The only criterion for inclusion was to be the father, mother or legal guardian of a pupil in Infant, Primary or Compulsory Secondary Education residing in a rural area of the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia. In more than half of the cases (51.5%) the questionnaire was completed by the mothers, 27.5% were completed by both parents and, finally, only 14.1% were completed by the fathers. Of the participating families, those with children in primary education predominated (53.1%), followed by those in O.S.E. (22.2%) and those in pre-school education (19.9%). Regarding sociodemographic data, more than half of the fathers and mothers are of foreign origin, more than 60% of the fathers do not have more than compulsory education and 52.6% of the mothers do not have an active work profile.

### *Instrument*

An ad hoc questionnaire entitled "Assessment of the involvement of families in the education of their children. Questionnaire to families" composed of 88 items, which was carried out under a validation process that went through five university experts, the management teams of the participating centers and the boards of directors of the AMPAs of these centers. This validation procedure and construction of the questionnaire appears in detail in the article by Hernández-Prados et al. (2023). The items to be completed are classified into eight dimensions: communication (items 1 to 12), participation in activities (items 13 to 22), feeling of belonging (items 23 to 33), involvement at home (items 34 to 48), involvement in the AMPA (items 49 to 61), involvement in the School Council (items 62 to 71), community participation (items 72 to 79) and training (items 80 to 88).

They were completed on a likert-type scale of one to five with the following values: 1. Never / not at all; 2. In addition, before the 88 items, there are a series of sociodemographic questions, in this study we focus attention on the educational stage, academic performance and the repetition or not of the child of the participating families. Finally, according to the psychometric data of the instrument, the Cronbach's alpha parameter, according to DeVellis (2003), obtained a very high generic value (.970) and higher than the minimum acceptable value (.600) for all the dimensions of which it is composed.

### **Procedure**

The research procedure was based on the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the normative principles 4.2. and 8.2 of the APA regulations highlighting the preservation of anonymity and informed consent, among other aspects. In addition, the present study obtained the approval of the ethics committee of the University of Murcia (ID: 1306/2016). This study is part of an R+D+i intervention project, entitled: Compartimos la educación. Programa para el fomento de la participación de las familias en los centros educativos (EDU2016-77035-R) granted to Grupo de Investigación Compartimos Educación de incidir en el proyecto PID2020-113505RB-I00 funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación/Agencia Estatal de Investigación for the design of a web page for ongoing teacher training. This project began with the request for collaboration of the Federation of Parents' Associations of the municipality of Torre Pacheco (FAPAmTP) when it detected a low participation of families in the education of their children. After this, meetings were held with the management teams of these centers, proposing an evaluation and intervention proposal. Thus, the families, through their management team, were asked to complete the online questionnaires through a link sent to the e-mail address of each center. The application of the online questionnaire does not include variables or personal data that allow the identification of the participants, so anonymity is respected. Likewise, as

mentioned above, the sampling was of volunteers, also respecting voluntariness and informed consent.

### **Data analysis**

Once the data were collected, the information was entered into the SPSS version 25 statistical program. Initially, the descriptive parameters (mean and standard deviation) of the overall scores of the eight dimensions of family participation were extracted in general and according to the categories of the following variables: educational stage, grade repetition and academic performance. Subsequently, in order to clarify the type of inferential statistics to be applied, the normality test was performed, which, since there were more than 30 participants, special attention was paid to the p-value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. In this case, a value of less than .050 was obtained, so the hypothesis of normality was rejected and, consequently, nonparametric statistics had to be applied to determine whether or not significant differences existed. Thus, to verify the existence of significant differences, establishing a significance level of .050, the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann Whitney U statistics were applied and, finally, to clarify the strength of association between the differences found, Cohen's d was extracted, establishing .500 as the typical value.

### **Results**

SO1: To identify whether or not there is a minimum degree of significance between the educational stage and the family-school relationship dimensions in schools in rural areas.

Using the Kruskal-Wallis inferential statistic, Table 1 shows the significance data with respect to the dimensions of family participation in school according to the educational stage in which their children are enrolled. A maximum significance value ( $p=.000$ ) is obtained for all dimensions except for education ( $p=.016$ ), although it is also within the minimum significance level ( $p=.050$ ).

Table 1. Contrast statistics (significance) dimensions of family participation as a function of educational stage

Dimension	Categories	S	Average range	H de Kruskal-Wallis	Asymptotic significance
Communication	Early childhood	285	705.02	44.522	.000**
	Primary	776	755.31		
	Secondary	325	584.35		
Activities	Early childhood	285	714.38	79.280	.000**
	Primary	776	755.20		
	Secondary	325	531.19		
Belonging	Early childhood	285	667.74	12.359	.006**
	Primary	776	734.33		
	Secondary	325	653.47		
Home	Early childhood	285	678.49	32.757	.000**
	Primary	776	759.25		
	Secondary	325	610.36		
Parents Association	Early childhood	285	596.82	23.014	.000**
	Primary	776	726.10		
	Secondary	325	715.63		
School Council	Early childhood	285	605.35	21.182	.000**
	Primary	776	732.20		
	Secondary	325	678.75		
Community	Early childhood	285	613.56	16.638	.001**
	Primary	776	716.70		
	Secondary	325	729.27		
Training	Early childhood	285	680.17	10.313	.016*
	Primary	776	709.82		
	Secondary	325	625.62		

Notes: \*  $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$

Subsequently, in order to clarify the crosses of significance, the Bonferroni test of multiple comparisons was applied, which determined that families with children in Secondary Education have less communication and involvement in the activities and in the formation of the center than families with children in Primary Education and Infant Education. Likewise, the role in the home with respect to the education of the children is greater in families in Primary Education compared to those in Secondary Education. However, the latter have a greater sense of community and involvement in the Parents Association than the families of the Infant and Primary Education. Finally, the role of parents in the School Council is greater among parents with children in Primary than in Infants. Regarding the effect size, it is worth mentioning, given that they exceed the typical value established ( $d = .050$ ), the crossover between Secondary and Primary regarding involvement in activities ( $d = .513$ ), showing a moderate strength of association.

SO2: To determine whether there are significant differences in the dimensions of

participation of rural families in the school depending on whether or not the student body repeats a grade.

In this case, in relation to the variable of grade repetition, we found a high value of significance in all the dimensions of family participation with the exception of the sense of community ( $p = .148$ ) and education ( $p = .159$ ) where the repetition of the children does not have a significant relationship with parental participation in these dimensions. Significant differences are found, in favor of families with non-repeating children, in the dimensions of communication, activities, belonging, home, Parents Association and school council, being the maximum value of significance in all cases ( $p = .000$ ), demonstrating that families with repeating children have a lower rate of participation, in the dimensions mentioned, than those who do not have repeating children. According to the effect size, involvement in the home ( $d = .578$ ) stands out as the one with the strongest association, being the only dimension that exceeds the typical mean value.



Table 2. Contrast statistics (cohen's significance/d) family involvement dimensions and educational stage categories.

Dimension	Categories	Mean	Standard desviation	p	d
Communication	ESO	2.82	.783	.000**	.236
	E. Infantil	3.00	.740		
	ESO	2.82	.783	.000**	.354
	E. Primaria	3.09	.740		
Activities	ESO	2.08	.812	.000**	.425
	E. Infantil	2.42	.787		
	ESO	2.08	.812	.000**	.513
	E. Primaria	2.49	.784		
Home	ESO	3.86	.768	.000**	.405
	E. Primaria	4.14	.604		
Parents Association	ESO	2.99	1.05	.004**	.293
	E. Infantil	2.68	1.06		
School Council	E. Infantil	2.57	1.19	.000**	.313
	E. Primaria	2.94	1.17		
Community	ESO	2.28	.902	.003**	.227
	E. Infantil	2.07	.944		
	ESO	2.28	.902		
	E. Primaria	2.27	.942	.006**	.023
Training	ESO	2.65	.886	.021*	.191

Notes: \*  $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$

Table 3. Contrast statistics (cohen's significance/d) dimensions of family participation as a function of repetition

Dimension	repetition course	S	Average range	U -Mann Whitney	Asymptotic significance	d
Communication	Yes	244	552.66	103718.000	.000**	.446
	No	1204	750.63			
Activities	Yes	244	588.39	110542.000	.000**	.308
	No	1204	728.92			
Belonging	Yes	244	547.86	103178.500	.000**	.467
	No	1204	753.66			
Home	Yes	244	526.71	98628.000	.000**	.578
	No	1204	764.58			
Parents Association	Yes	244	605.60	115692.000	.000**	.334
	No	1204	735.70			
School Council	Yes	244	596.49	113166.000	.000**	.340
	No	1204	732.18			
Community	Yes	244	678.66	132639.000	.148	-
	No	1204	721.04			
Training	Yes	244	663.71	127812.500	.159	-
	No	1204	704.32			

Notes: \*  $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$

SO3: To find out if the academic achievement of students from rural areas is a significant variable in the dimensions of family-school participation.

Finally, the data obtained in relation to the academic achievement variable are addressed by using the Kruskal-Wallis statistic to verify the inference of this variable in the dimensions

of family participation considered. It is only clear that participation in education ( $p=.079$ ) is not conditioned by the academic performance of the children. On the contrary, in the rest of the dimensions, the maximum significance value ( $p=.000$ ) was obtained in relation to the academic environment, clarifying that it is a variable of consideration with respect to family participation in schools.

Table 4. Contrast statistics (significance) dimensions of family participation as a function of academic performance

Dimension	repetition course	S	Average range	H de Kruskal-Wallis	Asymptotic significance
Communication	suspense	72	517.26	54.193	.000**
	Approved	261	569.45		
	Good	312	600.72		
	Remarkable	395	693.78		
	Outstanding	272	759.22		
Activities	suspense	72	497.14	61.052	.000**
	Approved	261	553.60		
	Good	312	594.29		
	Remarkable	395	673.72		
	Outstanding	272	761.04		
Belonging	suspense	72	487.51	166.089	.000**
	Approved	261	435.13		
	Good	312	615.76		
	Remarkable	395	759.56		
	Outstanding	272	780.30		
Home	suspense	72	490.33	161.739	.000**
	Approved	261	476.30		
	Good	312	583.75		
	Remarkable	395	743.32		
	Outstanding	272	828.99		
Parent Association	suspense	72	451.37	140.512	.000**
	Approved	261	462.63		
	Good	312	614.72		
	Remarkable	395	733.73		
	Outstanding	272	783.75		
School Council	suspense	72	492.60	119.740	.000**
	Approved	261	483.35		
	Good	312	589.40		
	Remarkable	395	721.61		
	Outstanding	272	782.02		
Community	suspense	72	543.31	86.631	.000**
	Approved	261	506.71		
	Good	312	593.24		
	Remarkable	395	726.14		
	Outstanding	272	751.92		
Training	suspense	72	583.48	8.362	.079
	Approved	261	613.01		
	Good	312	609.20		
	Remarkable	395	647.74		
	Outstanding	272	680.56		

Notes: \*  $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$

Finally, the crosses of significance between the categories of academic performance and the dimensions of family participation show that in all of them an important component of significance is identified between families with students with failing, passing or good grades compared to those with outstanding and outstanding grades ( $p < .050$ ), always in favor of those who have children with better academic performance. There was also a crossover of significance between families with children with good grades and those with

failing grades in the dimensions of belonging, home, Parents Association and School Council, in favor of those with better academic performance. In addition, although with a lower significance component, there is also a difference in means between the children with B and A grades in the dimensions of communication, activities and home, in favor of the latter. In relation to the effect size, a value higher than the typical ( $d = .50$ ) was obtained in the cross between failing and outstanding and between passing and

outstanding in all dimensions, verifying the important magnitude of the significance relationships. A considerable effect size was found between failing and outstanding in the dimensions of belonging (d=.858), home (d=.708), AMPA (d=.792) and School Council (d=.654), as well as between passing and outstanding in the dimensions of belonging (d=1.06), home (d=.724), Parents Association

(d=.765), School Council (d=.682) and community (d=.527). Finally, the relationship between good and outstanding in the dimensions of home (d=.690) and School Council (d=.542) stands out. This shows the important significance of parental involvement, which is significantly higher when the child obtains better school results.

Table 5. Contrast statistics (cohen's significance/d) of family involvement dimensions as a function of academic performance categories.

Dimension	Categories	Suspense	Approved	Good	Remarkable	Outstanding
Communication	suspense					
	Approved	.298				
	Good	.089	.325			
	Remarkable	.000**/.443	.000**/.359	.001**/.224		
	Outstanding	.000**/.621	.000**/.542	.000**/.413	.027*/.220	
Activities	suspense					
	Approved	.258				
	Good	.469	.196			
	Remarkable	.002**/.454	.001**/.284	.050*/.166		
	Outstanding	.000**/.713	.000**/.536	.000**/.431	.029*/.284	
Belonging	suspense					
	Approved	.301				
	Good	.000**/.344	.099			
	Remarkable	.000**/.858	.000**/1.06	.000**/.478		
	Outstanding	.000**/.775	.000**/.976	.000**/.426	.484	
Home	suspense					
	Approved	.780				
	Good	.007**/.239	.590			
	Remarkable	.000**/.708	.000**/.724	.000**/.441		
	Outstanding	.000**/.968	.000**/.960	.000**/.690	.041*/.268	
Parent Association	suspense					
	Approved	.822				
	Good	.009**/.454	.000**/.421			
	Remarkable	.000**/.792	.000**/.765	.000**/.339		
	Outstanding	.000**/.915	.000**/.890	.000**/.478	.904	
School Council	suspense					
	Approved	.853				
	Good	.008**/.272	.480			
	Remarkable	.000**/.654	.000**/.682	.000**/.374		
	Outstanding	.000**/.815	.000**/.842	.000**/.542	.397	
Community	suspense					
	Approved	.465				
	Good	.063	.309			
	Remarkable	.000**/.461	.001**/.527	.000**/.236		
	Outstanding	.000**/.520	.000**/.588	.000**/.381	.382	

Notes: \*  $p < .050$  \*\*  $p < .010$

## Discussion and conclusions

The peculiarities of the family-school relationship described in the results obtained are not circumscribed, coinciding with Abós

(2015), exclusively or strictly to the pedagogical field or to the framework of educational policies, since the complexity of education in rural areas encompasses demographic, ideological, cultural,

socioeconomic aspects, among others. The rural qualifier provides identity and defines the teaching and learning processes in educational centers. They constitute a type of organization with advantages and disadvantages derived from the multiple and endemic deficiencies they face (Quílez & Vázquez, 2012).

The results obtained verify what has been stated in other research (Abós, 2015; Santamaría-Cárdaba & Gallego, 2020) by considering the rural school as a successful educational model that not only personalizes the educational treatment with minors but also becomes visible in the relationship with families. However, this relationship is not impervious to threats of an academic nature: academic performance, educational promotion or educational stage.

With respect to specific objective one, the data expose that the educational stage is a variable of family involvement that is extensible to rural areas, with collaboration being diminished with the upward transit through the educational stages, as previously pointed out by Agger et al. (2018) and Bereziartua et al. (2017). The main challenge is in the transition from Primary to Secondary Education, where students' knowledge gaps increase and family involvement becomes more necessary (Agger et al., 2018). In addition, the increased independence of the secondary student is compounded by the greater geographical distance of high schools from the family nucleus, requiring school transportation and eliminating parental contact with teachers (Fernández-Freire et al., 2020), which is why integrated rural centers that cover all stages are considered as the way to maintain family involvement (Marqués et al., 2020).

More specifically, it is evident in the present study that in secondary school there is little participation of rural families in the activities organized by the center and communication is not very fluid, coinciding with Abós & Boix (2017) who consider that they are more optimal in lower stages. In the infant stage, families are more involved in communication and participation in center activities, moved,

according to Gomariz et al. (2017) by social aspects of participatory culture (school climate, teaching figure, etc.), but also by the perception of childhood as a dependent stage. However, there is a deficient parental involvement in institutional bodies, AMPA and School Council, perhaps due to what was pointed out by Mora-Guerrero et al., (2022) the delegation of educational functions after a time of intensive parenting.

Continuing with the information obtained in response to specific objective two, it is possible to determine the inference of the variable of student repetition or not on the degree of involvement and participation of rural families. although non-promotion is conceived as a measure to improve the educational reality of the minor, and enjoys good parental acceptance in rural areas (Díez-Gutiérrez & Gajardo Espinosa, 2022), according to the results obtained, it is seen as a cause for increasing academic disinterest and distancing the family-school relationship. In other words, it is not translated into greater involvement in the school life of minors; on the contrary, disinterest increases (Barrio-Fernández, 2018). The family nuclei of repeating students are characterized by vulnerable environments with less interest in academics, drowned by economic problems and labor instability (Pachay-López & Rodríguez-Gámez, 2021). Although this relationship holds in all dimensions except training and community participation, the most significant according to effect size is involvement at home, so according to Epstein et al. (2019), this constitutes an essential measure to improve educational engagement and avoid repetition.

Finally, from the data related to specific objective three, it was also possible to find that good family involvement is a success factor for the academic performance of rural students, coinciding with previous studies (Agger et al., 2018; Bæck, 2016), except in the dimension corresponding to family training, whose main function is not the improvement of the academic functionality of the minor, despite focusing on topics such as homework, study

techniques, responsible use of ICT or family leisure (Carrete-María & Domingo-Peñañiel, 2021), but that of influencing the improvement of family coexistence and education. In contrast, participation in school activities, from home and in management bodies (AMPA and School Council) are the dimensions that contribute most to improving the academic results of children (Epstein, 2019; Semke & Sheridan, 2012).

In this way, through a reading of the data obtained and contrasted with previous scientific literature, a series of conclusions of important utility for educational and research practice are established. In the first place, the need to articulate educational programs of parental accompaniment in Compulsory Secondary Education is established, so that the transition between this stage and Primary Education does not involve a rupture event that distances the positions between both agents. For this purpose, it is necessary to include initiatives that intensify and maintain the degree of involvement of parents, such as: training talks, family education workshops, learning communities or center activities open to the entire educational community, among others. Secondly, by confirming the important relationship between family participation and involvement with the repetition or not of the child's grade, it is necessary to raise awareness and sensitize families and teachers on the importance of taking care of the relationship between both for the best performance of the protagonist of the whole action: the student. To this end, several of the initiatives proposed by the Compartimos Educación team in its manual for educational centers can be put into practice (Gomariz et al., 2020). Finally, it has also been verified a strong relationship between family participation and involvement with the academic performance of children at home, so it is necessary to open channels of communication and coordination between families and teachers to have a good knowledge of the academic level as well as to motivate and encourage the child in their performance.

In spite of the important findings underlying this study, some limitations are identified to be solved in future research procedures. Although it is recognized that families play a key role in the relationships with teachers (Ortega & Cárcamo, 2018), in this study only their voices are collected, which is a limitation that can be easily overcome in subsequent studies that consider the teacher's perception, now, from the facilitator or promoter approach described by Galian (2021). Obtaining the sample has also been an obstacle, since the rural population is gradually shrinking, especially at school age. Finally, the lack of specificity in rural areas with respect to family participation has been a handicap to deal with for the construction of the theoretical framework and the elaboration of the discussion. The problems encountered coexist with the opening of new lines of research that expand and improve the map of knowledge, these are: carrying out comparative research in the rural setting involving families, teachers and students; inclusion of a mixed approach by means of conducting semi-structured interviews to complete the information obtained quantitatively; and, finally, designing action-research processes to implement and evaluate intervention projects to improve the family-school relationship in the rural setting.

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## **Ethics Committee**

This study was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Murcia (ID: 1306/2016).

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### Authors / Autores

**Hernández-Prados, M.<sup>a</sup> Ángeles** ([mangeles@um.es](mailto:mangeles@um.es))  0000-0002-3617-215X

Degree and PhD in Pedagogy, Professor at the University of Murcia, she teaches in the Department of Theory and History of Education and develops the following lines of research: education for citizenship and improvement of school coexistence, education in values in the family context and ethical-moral perspective of the information society, as well as the relationship between family and schools. Member of the research group "Educación en Valores" and collaborator of the research group "Compartimos Educación".

**Author contribution** (M.<sup>a</sup> ÁHP): • project administration • funding acquisition • conceptualization, methodology • validation • supervision • writing.

**Competing of interests:** M.<sup>a</sup>ÁHP declares that there is no conflict of interest that could have influenced the performance, results or interpretation of this work.

**Álvarez-Muñoz, José Santiago** ([josesantiago.alvarez@um.es](mailto:josesantiago.alvarez@um.es))  0000-0002-9740-6175

Graduate in Early Childhood and Primary Education and Doctor in Education from the University of Murcia. Assistant Professor, he teaches in the Department of Theory and History of Education and develops the following lines of research: emotional education, new methodologies, homework, service learning or family context in formal and non-formal settings. Member of the research group "Compartimos Educación".

**Author contribution** (JSÁM): • conceptualization • methodology • validation • computational resources and analytical tools • software • writing • editing.

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