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The students' school workload from the perspective of students and parents

Znanstveni članek

UDK 373.3+159.944.4

KLJUČNE BESEDE: obremenitev, preobremenitev, starši, šola, učenci

POVZETEK – Obremenitev učenca s šolo je določena z zasnovo učnih načrtov in programov, z organizacijo pouka, številom učnih predmetov in učbenikov, z obsegom domače naloge in ocenjevanjem. Primerna obremenitev učenca je zaželena, vendar raziskave kažejo na možno preobremenitev, ki nastane, kadar so zahteve neprilagojene učencem in njihovim razvojnim možnostim. Prispevek je osredotočen na raziskavo odnosa učencev in staršev do obremenitve s šolskim delom, ki je povezana z učnimi predmeti, učbeniki in domačo nalogo kot enim od najpomembnejših dejavnikov, z zadovoljstvom s šolo, uspehom in sodelovanjem, kot tudi ocenjevanjem, slednje pa smo raziskali kot posledico njihove preobremenitve. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 1012 udeležencev iz petih osnovnih šol (Pulj, Zagreb, Osijek, Vukovar in Otok), od katerih je 538 učencev, 474 pa njihovih staršev. Rezultati kažejo, da število učnih predmetov in učbenikov veliko prispeva k pojavu preobremenitve učencev. Domača naloga prispeva k še večji obremenitvi učencev, kar se odraža v odnosu do nje ter v nezadovoljstvu z ocenjevanjem. Še zmeraj pa tako učenci kot starši izražajo zadovoljstvo s šolo, čeprav jih v omenjenih delih preobremenjuje.

Scientific paper

UDC 373.3+159.944.4

KEYWORDS: workload, overload, parents, school, students

ABSTRACT – The students' school workload is determined by the concepts of curricula, teaching arrangements, number of subjects and textbooks, the extent of homework and evaluation. An appropriate workload for students is desirable, but the researches show a possible overload when the demands are not adjusted with students and their personal development. The paper focuses on the examination of the attitudes of students and parents towards the workload of students related to school subjects, textbooks and homework, as one of the most important factors, as well as satisfaction with school, success, cooperation, and assessment, the latter also examined as a result of their overload. The study included 1,012 participants from five elementary schools (Pula, Zagreb, Osijek, Vukovar and Otok), from which 538 were students and 474 were their parents. The results show that the number of subjects and textbooks significantly contributes to the phenomenon of students' overload. Homework contributes to an even greater workload, which is reflected in the attitudes, and students' dissatisfaction with the assessment. Nevertheless, both students and their parents display satisfaction with school, although it overburdens them in the mentioned areas.

1. Introduction

The main objective of every school is the student – the one who learns. Perceiving learning as something exclusively related to students means it is necessary to ensure the optimal conditions in which they could freely deepen their knowledge, develop skills and competencies. (Over)burdening represents a significant problem, because it directly affects the quality of what was learned, as well as its application.

Overload occurs when the demands are not adjusted with students and their personal development. Teacher affects students by shaping the structure of teaching, directing it towards the presumed learning structures (Meyer, 2005).

With school and teaching curriculum, teacher sets the course of realising the set objectives with the help of the planned content. Teacher is expected to demonstrate the educational skills by giving the students their workload in accordance with their intellectual and physical resources (Jurčić, 2006). The intention is to reduce school learning, which mainly came down to memorisation through encouraging the factual knowledge, to a basic level and focus it towards the implicit knowledge; knowledge that includes competencies.

Teacher directs the curriculum towards students, using the provided textbooks, supplementary and additional literature defining the requirements set for students. Although textbooks are only one source of knowledge, their number and frequency of use suggests they are a key didactic medium (Matijević, Rajic & Topolovčan, 2013). Teacher uses textbooks and other additional literature in planning and preparing the classes, during classes and he determines students' further activity after school through assignments that students will complete through the individual work.

From the process of teaching and learning, which mainly takes place in classrooms, comes the homework, with the aim of increasing knowledge and developing students' abilities and skills. Homework objectives represent measurable achievements regarding repetition of what is known (by adjusting the personal understanding), exercise and application of acquired knowledge in a new situation. Homework basis is to ensure the time when the students work through what they have learned in the class, working individually after school. A restraint in assigning homework to students is important (Cooper, Lindsay, & Greathouse Nye, 1998; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2006; Cooper, 2008; Peko, Dubovicki & Munjiza, 2014).

Tas, Sungur-Vural and Öztekin (2014) report in their research, that teachers consider assigning homework to be a very important part of teaching, because thus they further develop students' knowledge and skills, but more often communicate with parents by monitoring their progress through homework.

Evaluation has an impact on learning methods, students' progress and attitudes and beliefs. Patterns that solely promote reproduction including the remembered as a key basis for the evaluation and assessment were shown as harmful (Ristić Dedić & Jokić, 2014). Also important is the mere expectation of the results of monitoring and evaluation that cannot be easily interpreted and can represent a particular load.

As a consequence of school's workload or overload with school and obligations arising from it, there is the students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Satisfaction and the feeling of happiness are extremely important for all participants of the educational process. Researches (Chida & Steptoe, 2008; Huppert, 2009) show that satisfaction affects greater success in learning and developing social relations, but also in encouraging and developing creativity.

Bognar and Dubovicki (2012) emphasise that creative activities emit pleasant emotions during which students feel more satisfied, and thus more successfully deal with the challenges they are faced with. Personal satisfaction as well as a positive atmosphere (support from colleagues) can affect the enjoyment of work a person is engaged in (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005), and it should be the scope and the imperative of school education. For a student to study regularly and effectively, it is important that his/her parents provide the necessary support. Patall, Cooper and Robinson (2008) emphasise the necessity of parental involvement in children's education.

Harris and Goodall (2008) conducted a research on the connection between parental involvement (and support) and the academic success of students. Knollmann and Wild (2007) wrote about the quality of parental support and students' emotions, exploring the connection between parental support, students' motivational orientations and emotions while doing homework. There is a significant correlation between parental educational expectations and actual achievements of children (Jacob, 2010).

Students more often determine themselves according to how they accomplish parents' expectations rather than according to their own standards, success and achievement over time (Kanter Agliata, 2005). Some researchers (Corno, 2000; Tas, Sungur-Vural & Öztekin, 2014) state that homework and orientation of students towards new values represent an important factor for parent-teacher cooperation, which is very important regarding the enabling an optimal development of a student. Positive parental orientation regarding burden factors of students in basic dimensions is extremely important.

Today, when we are on the threshold of a new reform of educational system in the Republic of Croatia (Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, 2013), it is especially important to see the perception of students about the school workload. The conducted researches on teachers', parents' and students' attitudes towards the workload of the young with school obligations determine the most important factors of the school workload: curriculum, didactic and methodological organisation of teaching, teachers, textbooks, and subjective difficulties in learning (Orwell & Ristić Dedić, 2004; Munjiza, Peko & Dubovicki, 2015).

In what aspects the school loads the students, what are the requirements placed in front of students, and whether the school fulfils students' expectations, are the questions students' need to answer. In fact, what students and parents think about the load of school commitments, and is there a consensus among them, were the main research questions.

The research problem is thus focused on questioning the perception of elementary school students and their parents with the school workload and additional assignments that directly arise from it.

2. Methodology

Research on parents' and students' attitudes towards the school workload of students regarding the number of subjects within the curriculum, number of textbooks, volume of homework, and monitoring and assessment was conducted.

2.1. Aim and objectives of the research

The aim of this study was to examine students' and parents' attitudes regarding some factors of students' school workload.

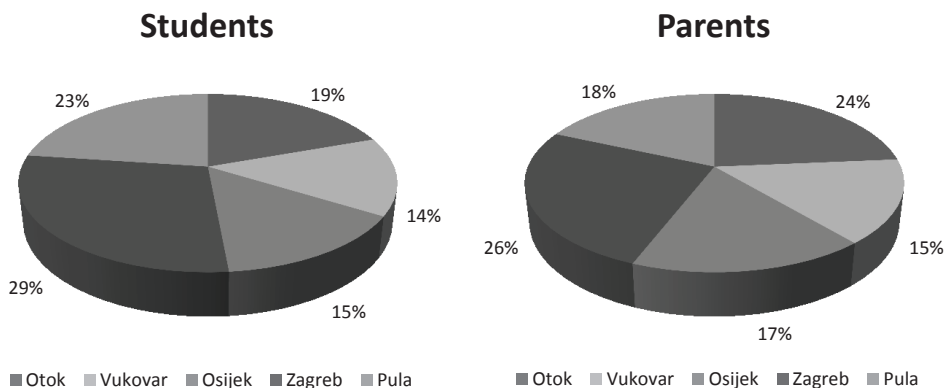
According to the set aim, some tasks were designed and based on the tasks, students' and parents' attitudes were researched, regarding:

- workload with the number of subjects,
- workload with the number of textbooks,
- workload with homework,
- grading students as a possible factor of workload,
- general satisfaction with school, success, cooperation with parents,
- connection of attitudes of 4th and 8th graders and their parents regarding the workload.

2.2. Participants

Research included 1,012 participants from five elementary schools: Otok, Vukovar, Osijek, Zagreb and Pula, out of which 538 were 4th and 8th graders and 474 were their parents.

Figure 1. Sample



From the above chart we can see that the highest percentage of participants is from Zagreb (both students and parents, N = 277). However, the greatest percentage of parents who participated in the study, in relation to the total sample of parents of students, is from the smallest town, Otok (N = 218). This data can be attributed to the fact that in smaller communities, such as Otok, school is still perceived as a place where parents need to demonstrate, for example, the importance of the relationship with school. The highest number of returned questionnaires from parents was exactly from Otok. However, we cannot generalise this kind of explanation, because the research could have been influenced by other dependent factors such as: interesting topics, the time of the questionnaire, cooperation between parents and teachers, parents' attitudes towards the workload of their children and more.

The research was conducted by the class teachers of the grades where the research was conducted. The data were collected during the year 2014.

2.3. Instrument

The data on students' and parents' attitudes towards the workload were collected using a questionnaire designed for the needs of the project, which explored the (over) burdening the students of elementary schools (Munjiza, Peko & Dubovicki, 2015). During 2013, a pilot study was conducted, based on which this questionnaire was validated.

Of the 27 particles listed in the scale for parents' attitudes, 23 of them substantially match the scale of students' attitudes. These 23 particles were classified in four areas that relate to *the area of workload at school, area of workload at home as a result of school obligations, area of school assessment and area of general satisfaction with school, success and cooperation with parents*. For the purposes of this research, the particles related to our research questions were isolated.

While completing the questionnaire, students were required to link their assessments to the subjective experience of the load and the obligations arising from it. The variables of the interval type were evaluated. Students were asked to evaluate how often the particular statement applies to them using a Likert-type scale of five categories:

- strongly disagree with the statement (1),
- partially disagree with the statement (2),
- neither disagree nor agree with the statement (3),
- partially agree with the statement (4),
- completely agree with the statement (5).

The research made it possible to compare the responses of parents and students of the 4th and 8th grades to determine the trend of the observed workload.

3. Results and discussion

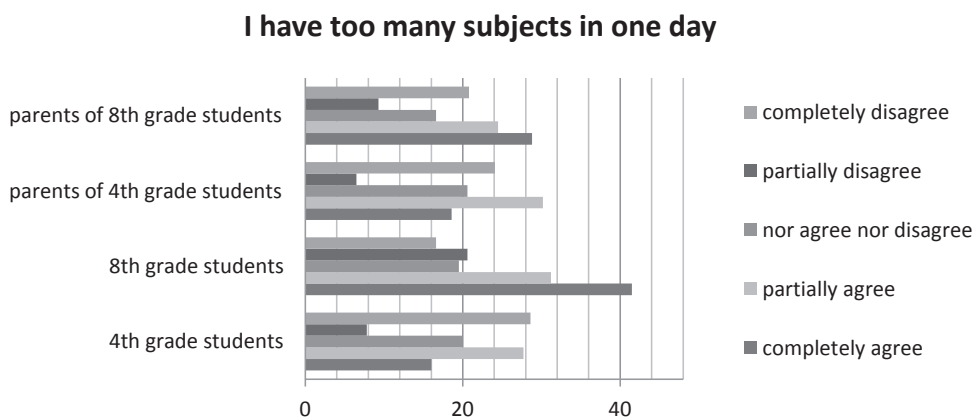
Below are the results of the research in the same order as the research questions. From the mentioned scale, the particles relating to our research questions were isolated and analysed.

3.1. Students' and parents' attitudes towards the workload of students with the number of classes

The workload of students with school is determined by the school curriculum which determines the number and sequence of learning certain subjects, number of regular and elective courses and special programs. Our interest was to analyse the indicators in the area of load regarding the number of subjects.

Figure 2 shows the attitudes of students $N = 538$ and parents $N = 474$ regarding the burden with the number of classes.

Figure 2. Students' and parents' attitudes regarding the burden with the number of classes



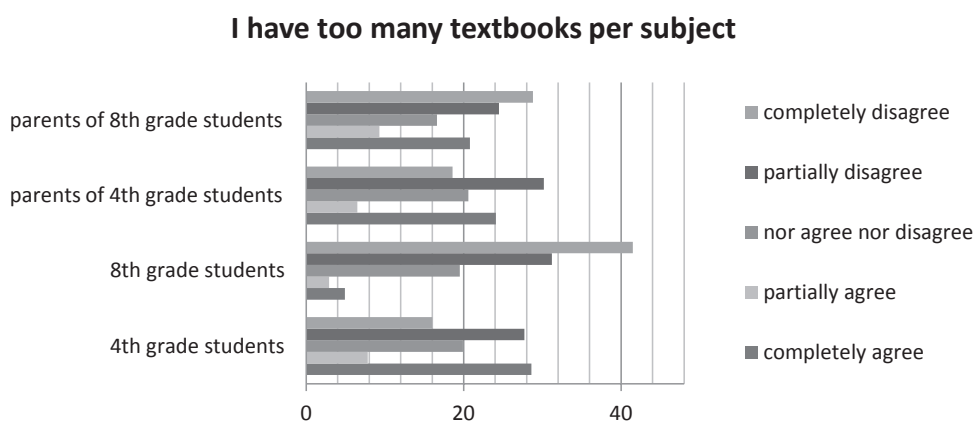
Participants mostly decided on the categories. From Figure 2., we see that 72.7% of 8th graders estimate (strongly agree and partially disagree) that there are too many subjects in one day, while the same was estimated by 43.7% of 4th graders. Parents of 8th graders (53.3%) in comparison with their children agree in a smaller number with the assessment of students being occupied with subjects in one day, however, still more than the parents of 4th graders of whom 48.8% estimate that there are too many subjects in one day. Research results indicate that students give credit for the workload mostly to the lengthy curriculum, or excessive number of subjects in one day (for which they are considered as ready).

3.2. Students' attitudes towards burden with the number of textbooks

In Croatian school culture, the textbook is (amongst other sources) the primary source of knowledge and, due to the above reasons, it is necessary to examine students' and parents' attitudes about their number and the workload they represent. Using the textbook, a student can independently continue to learn, which is expected from him/her. The number of books and mandatory textbooks keeps increasing (Munjiza, Peko & Dubovicki, 2015) so it was necessary to explore (by examining students' and parents' attitudes) if the textbook had become a source of overburdening (Figure 3.).

The average values display students' and parents' attitudes regarding the workload with the number of textbooks, which is only one of the resources teachers use in preparing for the class and teaching (Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Students' and parents' attitudes regarding the textbook workload



Taking into account the categories *completely agree* and *partially disagree*, we can see that the 4th graders (N = 104) in 36.4% consider themselves to be extremely loaded regarding the number of textbooks per subject, and parents' attitudes (N = 142) which are, over 30%, in favour of the specified load. In this part, we can talk about a certain overload, which is expressed especially with the 4th graders. Out of 286 4th graders, 44.6% of them estimated they have too many textbooks, while out of 252 8th graders, 73.2% of them opted for the same claim. We can say that they have already got used to, in some way, the overload and that they perceive it as a constant in education. We can assume that the workload with different sources would be even more expressive if the research expanded to additional sources.

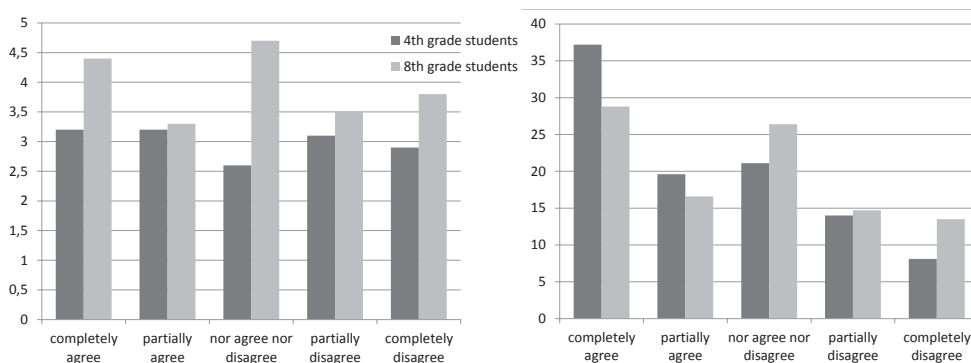
The above analysis of students' and parents' attitudes guides us to the following answers to the set research question: *students' and parents' attitudes regarding the number of subjects and the number of textbooks go in favour of the school overload.*

3.3. Attitudes of workload burden with homework

The following research question was related to the examination of students' and parents' attitudes regarding the workload of homework as a result of obligations that arise from teaching. The guidance of students' activities with homework should lead towards the realisation that homework is a measure of the continuity of learning and the ability to plan independently, to express own ideas and approaches. To determine homework and optimise its dimension, the teachers should start from what their students understand and what they can do on their own.

8th graders express an attitude of a greater load in this area than the 4th graders (Figure 4.).

Figure 4. Students' (left) and parents' (right) attitudes regarding the homework workload



The differences in average values of parents are twice as high compared to students' responses, which is highly evident from the category *completely agree*. Students believe they are significantly loaded with homework, which is opposite of what their parents believe. Also, 8th graders state a greater homework workload than 4th graders, in all scale values. These results can be attributed to students' age, who are, by the end of elementary school, expected to show more individual and independent work as a preparation for future schooling.

Responding to the following research question, we can say that the students' and parents' attitudes go in favour of students' being overloaded with homework.

3.4. Grading students as a possible factor of overload

The following research question referred to the examination of *students' and parent's' attitudes regarding the grading as a possible factor of overload*. Monitoring and verifying achieved level of competence enables students to gain insight into

development of individual skills and abilities, sometimes even lagging behind in mastering the content. It is desirable that a system for monitoring, assessing and grading students takes care of their capabilities and characteristics of their growth and development, and to represent a landmark for further guidance.

Table 1. Comparative indicators of students' load towards attitudes of parents of 4th and 8th graders based on the evaluation

Claims	Reference categories for the area of workload		The sum of the % of reference category for 4 th grade students		The sum of the % of reference category for 8 th grade students		The difference in % between 4 th and 8 th grade students in the reference categories		The rank of claims within four areas ** in 4 th grade students		The rank of claims within four areas ** in 4 th and 8 th grade students	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
Teachers grade based on previous grades	4.5	4.5	18.2	10.5	31.2	32.5	13.0	22.0	5.	5.	4.	4.
While grading, teachers do not take consider the opinions of students	4.5	4.5	29.0	16.0	40.1	42.4	11.1	26.4	1.	3.	3.	2.
Teachers are very demanding while grading	4.5	4.5	24.7	28.1	55.9	44.2	31.2	15.6	3.	1.*	1.	1.*
Teachers are strict while grading	4.5	4.5	26.3	27.6	50.0	37.4	23.7	9.8	2.*	2.	2.*	3.
Teachers are consistent while grading	1.2	4.5	19.9	15.6	28.2	20.8	8.3	5.2	4.	4.	5.	5.

Remarks: U – students, R – parents, * – matching of the ranks of 4th and 8th graders; ** – areas are described in the chapter Instrument

Research results show that students, in the analysed part of the research, confirmed a strong sense of load, in a whole as well as in the individual components. In Table1, students' attitude towards the load of grading is confirmed by the reference categories (4 and 5) in which the surveyed students, based on the asked claims, confirmed the phenomenon of being overloaded. Attitudes of 4th graders range from 18.2% to 29% in the reference categories, while that range moves from 28.2% to 55.9% with the 8th graders. Students' and parent's' attitudes mostly overlap, but the largest deviations are still present in the part assessing the claim teachers, *when evaluating*,

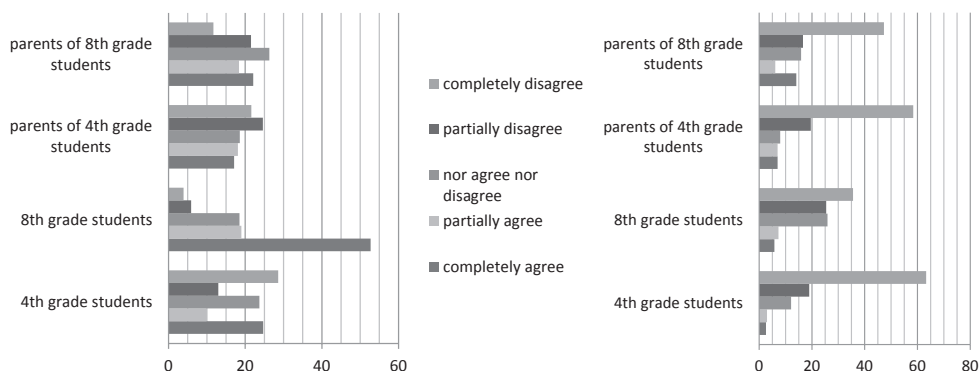
do not consider the opinion of students. 4th graders believe their opinion is not respected enough, 13% more than their parents.

The research results favour the validating of students' and parents' attitudes about overburdening when it comes to grading, which answers the set research question.

3.5. Attitudes regarding the satisfaction with school, success and cooperation with parents

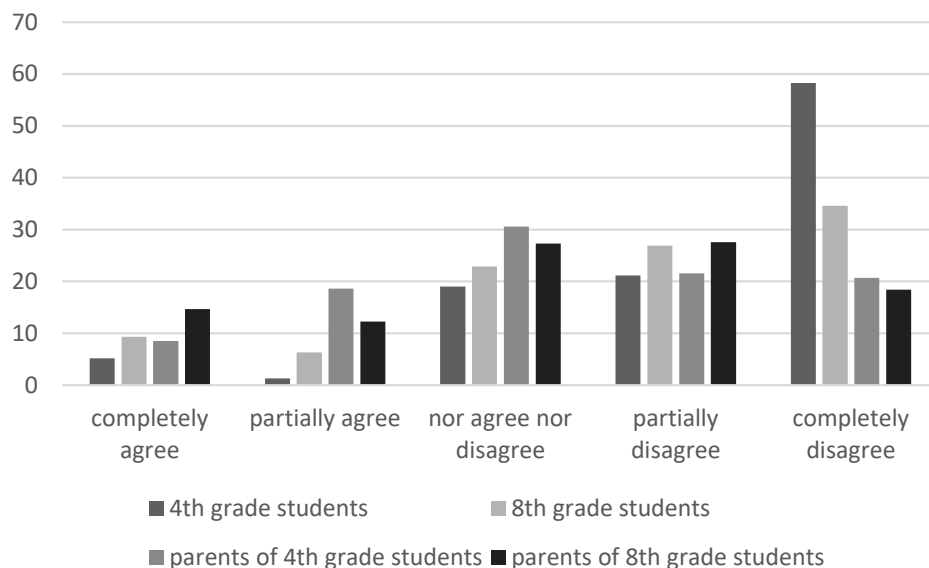
School workload can also be monitored through general *satisfaction with education, success, and cooperation with parents*. Figure 5 shows a comparative analysis of students' and parents' attitudes regarding satisfaction with school and school success.

Figure 5. Students' and parents' attitudes regarding general satisfaction with school (left) and satisfaction with school success (right)



A comparative analysis of attitudes of 4th and 8th graders and their parents regarding *overall satisfaction* shows the greatest divergence so far. Taking into account the categories *completely agree* and *partially disagree*, we notice that 4th graders (41.6%) are generally satisfied with school in comparison with 8th graders (9.8%) while attitudes of parents of 4th (46.2%) and 8th graders (33.2%) show minor deviations. Figure 5 (left) shows that 4th graders (82.3%) and their parents (78%) are satisfied with *school success* more than 8th graders (61%) and their parents (63.9%), which can be also attributed to the importance of evaluation related to further education. Figure shows participants' views regarding satisfaction with *school's cooperation*. Taking into account the categories *completely agree* and *partially disagree*, 4th graders (79.5%) are almost twice as satisfied with the cooperation than their parents (42.3%). Differences in results were less highlighted with 8th graders (61.5%) and their parents (56%), which can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Students' and parents' attitudes regarding the cooperation with school



Results of such an analysis provide us with answers to our research question in which of the above mentioned loads of *both 4th and 8th graders, parents and students are generally satisfied with school, the success, and cooperation between school and parents*. We can say that the latest research results might clash with the previous, but we can also interpret this in a way that students, and especially parents, consider the elementary education important in continuing their children's education. While trying to do so, they have the support of teachers, which is evident from the cooperation between parents and schools.

3.6. Attitudes of 4th and 8th graders and their parents on the topic of burden

In our effort to investigate the trend of student overload, but also to get as objective results as possible, we compared the responses of 4th and 8th graders and their parents regarding the four areas described in the chapter Instrument. Differences in attitudes towards the overload between parents and students was statistically tested with the degree of correlation (Pearson's coefficient) and rank correlation coefficient, and they also represent the answer to our last research question. In the first two areas, 4th graders (N = 286) have, in average, a milder attitude towards all particles (-2.3% and -2.0%), while, for the third and fourth field, they have a stricter attitude compared to the parents (4.6% and 14.4%). Unlike them, 8th graders (N = 252) have a more intense attitude by 8.7% for the first area, while in the other three areas they have a somewhat softer approach to the phenomenon of overload compared to their parents (Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson's coefficient of correlation between students' and parents' attitudes (N = 1012)

Grade	1 st area	2 nd area	3 rd area	4 th area
4 th grade	0.98	0.77	0.92	0.97
8 th grade	0.98	0.84	0.96	0.98

Remark: * areas are described in the chapter Instrument

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), correlation coefficients 0.90–1.00 indicate a very high correlation, 0.70–0.90 a distinct correlation, 0.40–0.70 an important correlation, 0.20–0.40 small correlation, and below 0.20, the correlation barely exists. Research results suggest that *in terms of attitudes about the phenomenon of school workload between students and parents there is a distinct and very high correlation*, indicating that students and parents have significantly different views on the overburdening phenomenon. Also, the rank correlation indicates the same tendency (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation of ranks between students and parents (N = 1012)

Grade	1 st area	2 nd area	3 rd area	4 th area
4 th grade	0.96	0.90	0.80	0.80
8 th grade	0.98	0.70	0.90	0.75

Remark: * areas are described in the chapter Instrument

From Table 3, we can see in which way a *correlation of ranks indicates that there is a strong correlation between students and parents* in the ranks of the analysed particles within certain areas. The connection is higher by the coefficient of rank correlation between students and parents, than the one between the parents of 4th (N = 255) and 8th graders (N = 219). These results suggest that *in terms of the overburdening phenomenon, there is a great consent between students and parents*, which answers the last research question.

The research shows that students are loaded with too many subjects, which therefore includes excessive hourly rate and weekly and daily schedule. An optimal student workload is the most important prerequisite of efficiency of educational activities of elementary school. *Homework* should be reduced to a reasonable level and, in addition to individual tasks, enable students achieve cooperation through joint activities among students and joint activities of students and parents which would enable working on an even greater *cooperation between families and school*. However, it is necessary to

consider the optimal cooperation between families and schools, as any other form (too much or not enough) would bring more harm than good for both students and teachers.

Results also show that assessment still represents an overload for students, because education is still partially aimed at learning facts and numerical grading, while other forms of evaluation are still under-represented or do not have an important place in terms of the overall estimate. *General satisfaction of students and parents with school, and the success of cooperation is satisfactory*, although it would be advisable to work on it more in the future. If the overburdening of students in the areas where this research detected the overload is reduced, we can assume that students' and parents' satisfaction will be even greater.

4. Conclusion

This paper examines whether and to what extent is an optimal school workload present and how it is perceived by elementary school students and their parents. The presented results indicate the perception of 4th (N = 286) and 8th (N = 252) graders and parents of 4th (N = 255) and 8th (N = 219) graders regarding basic factors which condition the overload. The number of classes and textbooks actually presents an overload especially on the 4th graders. All parents (N = 474) support this attitude, but feel that school is extremely important for the continuation of education and they generally do not directly react to the overload of the investigated factors. The 8th-graders express the attitude of increased workload with homework, and reasons can be found in age differences, as well as in the expectations that students of this age should be more independent. In the area *workload in school and at home as the result of schoolwork*, the 4th graders (N = 286) share, on average, a milder attitude (-2.3% and -2.0%), while in the area of *school evaluation and school satisfaction, success and cooperation with parents*, they share a stricter attitude compared to their parents (4.6% and 14.4%). Opposite to them, the 8th graders (N = 252) share a 8.7% more intense attitude in the area of *workload in school*, and in the areas of *workload at home as result of school obligations, school assessment and general satisfaction with school, success and cooperation with parents*, they share a more relaxed view towards the overload phenomenon, compared to their parents.

The conducted research contributes to the knowledge about perception of the school workload of elementary school students in today's school culture. The problem of determining the extent of workload is very important, since it has a diagnostic value in determining the condition of the entire school system. A further comprehensive analysis of the factors which determine the overload, with the consequences arising therefrom, would make possible to determine the plan for stopping the consequences of noticed problems and determining the measures concerning the establishment of more intensive cooperation between teachers and students, as well as teachers and parents, as well as eliminating the cause of the observed phenomenon.

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Obremenitev učencev s šolskim delom z vidika učencev in staršev

Problem šolske obremenitve učenca je v direktni povezavi z organizacijo šolskega izobraževanja in vzgoje nasploh, kakor tudi z razumevanjem vlog učencev in učiteljev, izbiro učnih vsebin, koncepcijo učnih načrtov in programov ter vrednotenjem dosežkov. Ugotavljanje primerne obremenitve učencev predstavlja stalen fenomen. Učitelj deluje kot posrednik med učenci in učnimi vsebinami, vzetih iz določene kulture. Na temelju učnih načrtov je obremenitev učencev dimenzionirana s številom učnih predmetov in časovno zasedenostjo v času rednega pouka in ostalih oblik pouka. Sodobne teorije o izbiri učnih vsebin so usmerjene k preseganju enciklopedizma, formalizma in pasivnosti pri pouku, na kar se gleda kot na dejavnike, ki otežujejo učni proces, saj zmanjšujejo njegove rezultate. Učbeniki, ki se danes nahajajo na šolskih klopeh, v nobenem primeru niso edini niti najvažnejši vir za priprave za pouk. Predstavljajo samo enega izmed potencialnih virov za učitelje, ki so odgovorni za načine in številčnost njihove uporabe.

Raziskovanja nakazujejo, da so učitelji bolj nagnjeni k dajanju domačih nalog, če je razred manjši ter je spremljanje napredka vsakega posameznega učenca olajšano tudi na ta način. Pogovor učitelja s starši o domačih nalogah prav tako pospešuje njihovo sodelovanje, kar učencem olajšuje zaključek šolanja. Čeprav je osnovna funkcija vrednotenja regulativna, gre pri vrednotenju za izjemno zapleten proces, ki vključuje celokupne vloge učiteljev in učencev. Ocena pogosto postane tudi glavni smerokaz učenčevega obnašanja. Ocenjevanje preide v določanje stopnje uspešnosti učenja učencev, torej česar so se učenci naučili in do katerega nivoja so sistematizirali določeno znanje in razvili svoje sposobnosti. Izhajajoč iz predpostavke, da je vsak otrok, ki se vpiše v osnovno šolo, sposoben to šolo tudi dokončati, govorimo o pristopu h kurikulumu osnovne šole, ki se v pedagogiki označuje s sintagmo pedagogika uspeha za vse. V kolikor se pri pouku ob sumativni usmerimo tudi na formativno evalvacijo, pridemo do celovitejše podobe vsakega posameznega učenca, ki ga na ta način lahko vrednotimo bolj objektivno. Ocenjevanje učencev naj bi predstavljalo pozitivno sliko učenčevih dosežkov, ki so jih učenci dosegli skupaj s svojimi učitelji in starši, toda to pogosto ni tako.

S sprejemanjem svojega otroka z vsemi lastnostmi in s podpiranjem, starši neposredno vplivajo na obnašanje otrok. Starši usmerjajo otrokovo obnašanje s pomočjo postavljanja določenih vrednosti in načina njihovega doseganja. Različne vrste pomoči in vključevanja staršev v izobraževanje otrok imajo različne vplive na dosežke, prav tako ima tudi vrsta vključevanja vpliv na variacije pri ocenah. Starši se soočajo s številnimi preprekami pri podpiranju svojih otrok. Obstaja jasna razlika med vključevanjem staršev v šolanje otrok in sodelovanjem staršev pri učenju. Sledeč temu lahko razmišljamo o potrebi po vključevanju staršev v individualne naloge učencev, kot tudi o posledicah le-tega. Različni starševski stili v vlogi moderatorja odnosa med postopki staršev in šolskimi dosežki otroka lahko vplivajo na otrokovo sprejemanje starševskega vpliva. Vključevanje staršev v različne šolske aktivnosti prerašča v pomembno družbe-

no funkcijo. Zavzetost staršev pri učenju doma je pomembna za učni uspeh učencev. V nekaterih raziskavah je opaženo, da obstaja prevelika vključenost staršev v reševanje domačih nalog, s čimer njena funkcija postane kontra produktivna. Ni treba poudarjati, da domača naloga postane nekoristna, če naloge rešujejo starši, pišejo sestavke, koncepte domačega branja in drugo. Poudarja se nujnost nove konceptualizacije domačih nalog in zaželeno je, da se vanjo vključujejo pomembna družbena, kulturna in vzgojno-izobraževalna vprašanja. Še posebej je nujna usklajenost staršev in njihovih otrok pri presojanju obremenitve učencev s šolskimi obveznostmi.

Različna dojetanja starševske pomoči pri pisanju domačih nalog lahko vplivajo negativno na učne dosežke, če se pri realizaciji pojavljajo konflikti. Če pa se starševska pomoč sprejme kot dodatna kompetenca in podpora, takrat bo učinek na učni uspeh bolj zadovoljiv in bo vplival na večji učni uspeh. Kar se tiče problema domačih nalog, je nujno natančnejše raziskovanje ciljev, vsebin, spremljanja ostalih dejavnikov ter potrebne- ga časa, da bi dobili kar se da objektivno sliko konteksta domačih nalog. Navedeno je treba opredeliti tudi glede na celokupno obremenitev učencev s poukom in nadaljnjim delom, ki se na temelju le-tega zahteva. Šolsko izobraževanje in vzgoja predstavljata zapleten proces, ki v sebi združuje nasprotujoče si zahteve in strukture. Učitelji naj bi planirali in realizirali aktivnosti, ki z vodenjem omogočajo doseganje zastavljenih ciljev in pri tem naj bi učence podpirali v upravljanju z lastnim učenjem ter v sodelovanju s starši spremljali dosežke. Pomembna naloga učiteljev je uravnoteženost zahtev in optimalne šolske obremenitve učencev.

V povezavi z opaženo problematiko smo izvedli raziskavo s ciljem preučevanja odnosa učencev in njihovih staršev do nekaterih dejavnikov šolske obremenitve učencev. Raziskovanje je potekalo med 1012 udeleženci iz petih osnovnih šol: Otok, Vukovar, Osijek, Zagreb in Pulj, pri čemer je 538 bilo učencev četrtnih in osmih razredov in 474 je bilo njihovih staršev. Podatki o mnenjih učencev in staršev o obremenitvi s poukom so zbrani s pomočjo vprašalnika, ki je bil oblikovan za potrebe projekta, s katerim se je raziskovala (pre)obremenitev učencev osnovnih šol in v katerem so poudarjene tiste enote, ki se nanašajo na naša raziskovalna vprašanja. V skladu s postavljenim ciljem o anketiranju odnosa učencev in njihovih staršev do nekaterih dejavnikov šolske obremenitve učencev smo oblikovali raziskovalna vprašanja, ki so se nanašala na: obremenitev učencev s številom učnih predmetov, obremenitev učencev s številom učbenikov, obremenitev z domačimi nalogami, ocenjevanje učencev kot potencialni dejavnik preobremenitve učencev, splošno zadovoljstvo s šolo, z uspehom in sodelovanjem s starši ter povezanost mnenj učencev četrtnih in osmih razredov in njihovih staršev o šolskih obremenitvah.

Z raziskavo smo pridobili rezultate, ki se nagibajo v smer šolske obremenitve učencev v delu preobremenitve s številom predmetov in učbenikov, kot tudi domačih nalog. Več kot 70% učencev osmih razredov ocenjuje, da imajo preveč učnih predmetov na dan, medtem ko enako ocenjuje več kot 40% učencev četrtnih razredov. Glede na naslednji preučevani dejavnik obremenitve, učbenik, jih je od 286 učencev četrtega razreda 44,6% ocenilo, da imajo preveč učbenikov, medtem ko se je od 252 učencev osmega razreda kar 73,2% opredelilo za enako trditev. Učenci osmih razredov izražajo mnenje o

večji obremenitvi z domačimi nalogami, kot pa učenci četrtilih razredov. Kot dodaten dejavnik preobremenitve se je pokazalo tudi ocenjevanje, ki učence še zmeraj ne obravnava kot celovite osebe, katerim znanje ni edina komponenta ocenjevanja. Komparativna analiza mnenj učencev in staršev četrtilih in osmih razredov glede na splošno zadovoljstvo je pokazala največja odstopanja. Upoštevajoč kategorije popolnoma se strinjam in delno se strinjam opažamo, da so učenci četrtilih razredov (41,6%) na splošno bolj zadovoljni s šolo, kot pa učenci osmih razredov (9,8%), medtem ko mnenja staršev učencev četrtilih (46,2%) in osmih razredov (33,2%) kažejo manjša odstopanja. Splošno zadovoljstvo s šolo in uspehom je zadovoljujoče, razloge temu pa lahko poiščemo v poudarjanju pomembnosti osnovnošolskega izobraževanja kot smernice za nadaljnje izobraževanje. Udeleženci raziskave poudarjajo, da je sodelovanje s šolo zadovoljujoče, vendar je v to treba še naprej vlagati. Pri vprašanju glede (pre)obremenitve učencev vlada precej velika skladnost med mnenji učencev in staršev. Raziskava daje skoraj identično sliko, gledano tako iz perspektive učencev kot tudi staršev o šolski obremenitvi učencev glede na proučevane dejavnike, ki dajejo doprinos obremenitvi, tako da v tem delu lahko govorimo o precejšnji šolski preobremenitvi učencev.

Predpostavka za učinkovito in uspešno delovanje šole je skladnost vseh dejavnikov vzgojno-izobraževalnega sistema v doživljanju in tolmačenju opazovanega šolskega fenomena. Razumevanje učencev je v izobraževalnem kontekstu ključno, glede na to, da daje smernice za transformacijo učnega načrta in načinov poučevanja ter za izpopolnjevanje sistema vrednotenja in ocenjevanja šolskih dosežkov. Rešitve, s pomočjo katerih bi učencem olajšali šolanje, naj bi potekale v smeri rekonstrukcije obstoječega obveznega sistema izobraževanja z vsemi spremljajočimi deli, katere vsebuje (šolski kurikulum, učni načrt in program, predmeti, učbeniki, domače naloge, rezultati učenja in različne oblike sodelovanja). Prav je, da učenec v času šolske vzgoje in izobraževanja zadovoljuje svoje interese in potrebe. Če mu je to onemogočeno zaradi resne obremenitve s šolskimi predmeti, učbeniki in domačim delom, lahko rečemo, da šola ni dosegla svojega cilja – razvoja posameznika (učenca) kot celovite osebe.

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