

**PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMPROVING STUDENT'S
BEHAVIOR THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN NON-FORMAL
ACTIVITIES.
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS.**

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Abstract: *Social competence is the ability to effectively manage social interactions and refers to the behavior of getting along well with others, being able to form and maintain close relationships, and responding adaptively to the social environment. Given the complexity of social interactions, social competence is the product of a wide range of cognitive skills, affective processes, behavioral skills, social awareness, and personal and cultural values related to interpersonal relationships. In the present research, we want to highlight the relational side of social skills, and in this sense, we developed a program of non-formal activities, wanting to highlight whether the behavior of the participant's registers changes from the parents' perspective. Thus, we developed a questionnaire for parents, made up of 14 items, structured into two categories: items aimed at the child's activity (activities carried out by the student outside of class hours, his schedule, areas of interest, group of friends), and the second part items designed to collect data about the parent's perception of non-formal activities, his consent to allow the child to participate in non-formal activities in the formal space, and the willingness to get involved in the*

design, organization and conduct of these activities). The subjects of the present experiment are primary school students, two classes of students, a total of 53 students forming the experimental sample and two classes forming the control sample, forming 49 students. As a result of the students' participation in the program of non-formal activities organized and carried out in the formal space, we observe an improvement in the behavior of the children who are part of the experimental sample, behavior perceived by their parents.

Keynote: *student's; social skills; parent's perception; non-formal activities.*

Theoretical perspectives

The key features of the concept of competence can be described as follows: it is not directly manifest, it is inseparable from the activity of the subject, it can be structured, it has a constructive and evolutionary component, a metacognitive and individual and collective dimension. abilities.

A person's social skill is determined by the quality of his social skills. Therefore, the quality of social skills is important in all areas of human activity, and therefore social skills can be considered one of the main measures of social competence. Social skills extend to all areas of social functioning, including not only interpersonal skills, communication skills, and cooperative skills, but also self-management skills or problem-solving skills. Social competence is related to personal characteristics (Vaughn & Hogan, 1990). It manifests itself through social knowledge, effective communication and the ability to build positive relationships with others.

Social skills that play a role in non-verbal and verbal communication are expressed through: body language - eye contact, gestures, imitation; voice quality - tone and pitch, speed, clarity and interaction skills: conversation - greetings, entering names, starting a conversation; express goodwill, kindness, friendship - when others are hurt or sad, offer help, invite, ask to join, express tenderness, complement each other, sympathize; self-confidence - protect their rights, ask for information, express their needs, rejection, confronting anger, aggression and more (Lappy, 2000).

The methods and styles in which students communicate with others are primarily learned responses. They are learned through imitation, modeling and reinforcement, primarily in childhood. Students receive feedback from parents, peers and more. This can be both positive and negative. Social skills behaviors are learned behaviors.

Students develop social "skills" as they learn when to use certain recognized social behaviors. Hargie (2021) identified four key stages in the process of learning social skills: observation (students pay attention to the behaviors of other peers), simulation (students are able to perform skills or behaviors similar to those observed), and self-control failure begins mastery of the skill) and self-regulation (the student learns to use the skill appropriately in different contexts and with different people).

Several cognitive skills are important for improving social skills:

- (1) Problem solving - identifying problems and proposed objectives, finding solutions, anticipating the possible consequences of actions, accepting the consequences of one's actions, selecting solutions and evaluating the solutions for the initiative to see if it helps achieve the desired objectives;
- (2) Understanding the relationship between beliefs, emotions, and behavior—recognizes the impact of beliefs on emotions and emotions on behavior, and identifies and changes beliefs that lead to undesirable outcomes;
- (3) Ability to implement a variety of conflict management strategies, such as making excuses, avoiding or ignoring situations, and problem solving.

The main social skills, present in varying degrees in individuals, are: assertiveness, gratification and support, non-verbal communication, verbal communication, empathy, cooperation and attention to others, knowledge and problem solving, respectively self-presentation. These components are identified based on the analogy between social skills and motor skills (Argyle & Furnham, 1983).

The seven social components essential to successful interpersonal relationships are (Argyle, 1998):

Assertiveness: refusing requests, making requests and favors, expressing positive or negative feelings, respectively initiating, continuing and ending a conversation.

Assertiveness is the basis of effective communication, being the one that allows the expression of feelings about events, without having to evaluate the other party as an opponent (Helena & Soshana, 1996). The act of behavior performed in an assertive manner demonstrates self-esteem and respect for others, promoting self-control and positive self-esteem. The assertive way is the most effective way to solve interpersonal problems, because it is based on direct, open and honest communication, so that messages are not distorted when they are received (Constantinescu, 2004).

Reward and support are important elements, especially in long-term relationships. Gratitude is a "feeling of attachment, duty of goodwill, towards a person who helped you and did you a lot of good" (Popescu-

Neveanu, 1978, p. 302). Support includes supporting others in a situation or relationship (Argyle, 1998) and can take many forms: verbal support, including appreciation, praise, recognition, acceptance, consent, encouragement, sympathy.

Gratification and support are special social skills, which are necessary in the education of children (Constantinescu, 2004), in the optimization of family relationships, couples and relationships established at the workplace (Caluschi, 2001).

Nonverbal communication has implications on the development of other skills (Constantinescu, 2004). In interaction, the partner pays more attention to non-verbal behavior, through which he can observe certain aspects of the other's perception, his intentions and his personality. In social interaction, the body is a basic dimension because it is the mediator of self-knowledge and the acquisition of other knowledge (Argyle & Kendon, 1967). Social gestures and signs, related to the social skills model, are mainly non-verbal. Assertiveness and gratification require a specific non-verbal communication time in voice, face and attitude. Common factors of non-verbal communication are: facial expressions, especially smiles, strong expressions, intense gaze, strident, clear, or explosive voice, gestures directed more towards others than towards oneself (Argyle, 1998).

Verbal communication is the core of performance and social skill because it is the main way of transmitting information. It involves sending a message that includes structural elements, topical elements, audience interest and motivation, clarity, feedback, internal consistency, etc. (Constantinescu, 2004). These skills must be developed, perfected continuously, from childhood to adulthood (Caluschi, 2001).

Empathy, cooperation and consideration for others. Empathy is the act of restoring one's own state, thought and behavior, through a process of substitutional transposition (Marcus, 1997). Empathetic people are generous, tend to help those around them, have clear pro-social behaviors, good social adaptability, and are usually a little anxious. (Constantinescu, 2004) Collaboration is closely related to empathy. Collaboration involves considering the goals of others as well as our own goals and adopting behaviors that encourage us to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves (Argyle, 1998).

Cooperation means interaction between team members, which creates a sense of acceptance and compassion. Builds good understanding and drives behavior to promote the success of others. It also helps to increase self-esteem, self-confidence and can have the effect of reducing anxiety. Many shortcomings related to personal social skills are due to lack of cooperation (Constantinescu, 2004).

Self-presentation is another component of social competence. It involves three postures: self-image, self-esteem, and self-presentation (Argyle, 1998). The formation and evolution of self-image is a continuous process, which is based on the identity of a person, the emergence and crystallization of unity and continuity. Self-image is a comprehensive expression between self-perception and the perception of others (Constantinescu, 2004).

Self-presentation, or self-presentation, is the behavioral component of self-concept. People are interested in the images they convey to others about themselves. In social interaction, the essence of self-expression is to create a fair impression on our peers.

Knowing and solving problems is a component of the impetuous social competence necessary for social and professional adjustment. Solving problems and situations that transfer real-life events is a method that can be used to understand how social realities between individuals are established and developed (Caluschi, 2001; Dughi, 2011).

Social relations are extended into reciprocity-dependent relations, those relations in which the participants increasingly rely on each other. These actions emphasize similarity in attitudes, needs, and values, based on social interactions involving an exchange of information or goods, not just on the possibility of two individuals interacting (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

The family environment is important because it affects the relationships between children in schools in several ways. One of them is the degree to which shy and withdrawn children participate in social activities. Several studies have shown that welcoming greetings from peers and teachers influence the extent to which shy and withdrawn children continue to withdraw or increase their social engagement.

In social psychology we note a distinction between two forms of social relations (Clark & Mills, 1979): common relations, which describe affiliations with friends, colleagues and family members, and exchange relations, which include all the others. In a joint relationship, the student's behavior is oriented towards the well-being of the partner.

In an exchange relationship, the learner's behavior is guided by the reciprocity of the benefits received or anticipated. Participants have no obligation to each other other than to ensure the partner's well-being, which results from their social interactions. Thus, social exchange means social interaction.

The term reciprocity is not used in describing social relations, although it represents a social interaction that involves giving and returning or repaying what one of the interlocutors has received.

Research methodology

The assessment of the child's social behavior from the parent's perspective is a tool designed by us. In the pre-experimental stage, it was applied to parents of children who are part of both the control and experimental samples.

The questionnaire addressed to parents, self-designed, includes 14 items, and is structured into two categories: in the first part, the items refer to the child's activity (activities carried out by the student outside of class hours, his schedule, areas of interest, group of friends), and the second part, the items are designed in such a way as to collect data on the parent's perception of some relational behaviors of the children.

Regarding the interpretation of the results, the experimental sample, we conclude:

The item referring to the identification of a new, observable thing in the child's behavior in the last month, from the parent's perspective, their answers were concluded as follows:

Loses patience with younger siblings;

They don't complete their homework;

He gets bored quickly with any activity;

Prefers to be alone;

It is the same, nothing has changed;

Gets agitated if someone walks him around with his favorite toy;

Does not keep his room clean;

Spend more and more time in front of the computer;

It's just as hectic;

He prefers to give in, just so as not to upset his friends;

Sometimes he rages hysterically;

He avoids telling if someone has hurt his feelings.

The answers of the parents who are part of the control sample, we conclude the following:

He quarrels with his older brothers;

He does not like to get involved in the affairs of the house;

He is more concerned with music than school;

He gets bored quickly;

She doesn't really want to play with children her age;

He began to lie;

It's just as messy;

The assessment of the child's behavior in the last 2 weeks is shown in the graph below:

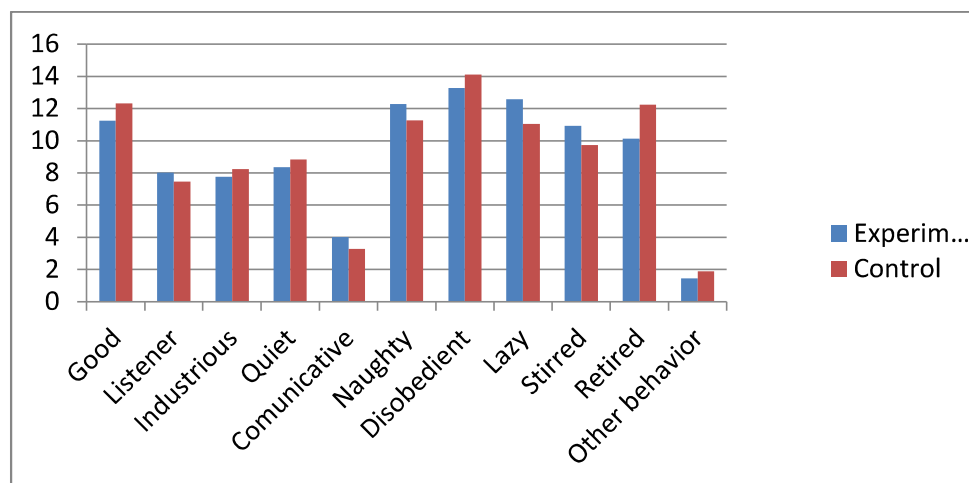


Figure No. 1. Assessment of children's behavior by parents

From the comparative analysis of the assessment of the child's behavior from the parent's perspective, behavior observed by them in the last two weeks, we conclude that there are no significant differences between the parents of the experimental sample and the parents of the control sample. We note that the negative behavioral characteristics (naughty, lazy, disobedient, agitated, withdrawn) present high values in both samples.

Regarding the item "He/she easily accepts decisions about him/her that are not in accordance with his/her will", we observe a difference in the perception of the parents of the control and the experimental sample. Thus, 28% of the parents of the students in the experimental sample believe that occasionally, their children easily accept decisions about themselves, decisions that are not in accordance with their will, compared to the parents of the control sample, who 19% have the same opinion about their own child.

Another item where we notice a major difference between the parents' answers is the one regarding "He asks for forgiveness easily". In this situation, 51% of the parents of the students of the experimental sample believe that this statement is very rarely appropriate for their own child, while 36% of the parents of the control sample believe that the statement is very rarely appropriate for their children.

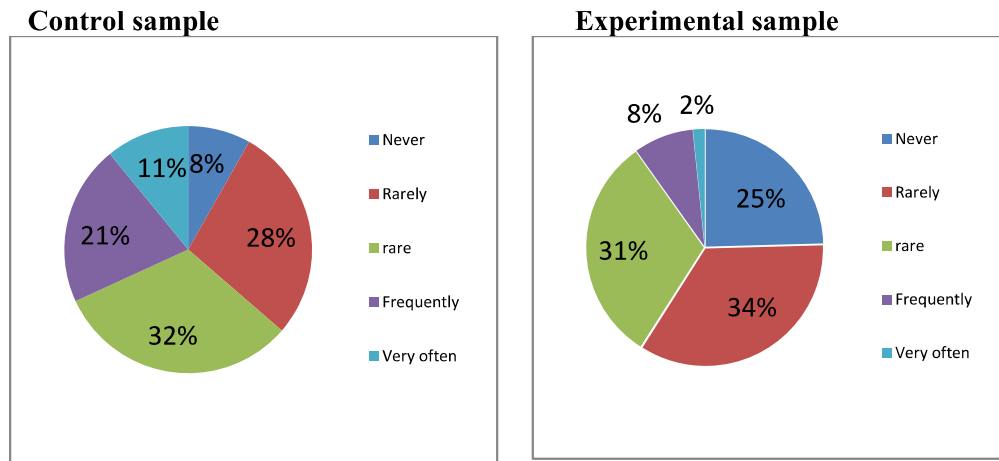


Figure No. 2. Comparative analysis of the assessment of the child's behavior from the parent's perspective

This item does not show significant differences in the answers of the parents; however, we emphasize the fact that of the total number of parents of the students that make up the experimental sample, 4% consider that they appreciate that their child never does exactly what they are told to do, 35, 4% believe that it rarely happens that their child does exactly what they are told, and 6.5% find that their child does exactly what they are told to do.

Regarding the request of parental advice from the child, in certain school matters, the answers of the parents of the experimental and the control sample, the answers are similar. Thus we can conclude that the students of the content sample are less communicative with their parents about what is happening in the school institution.

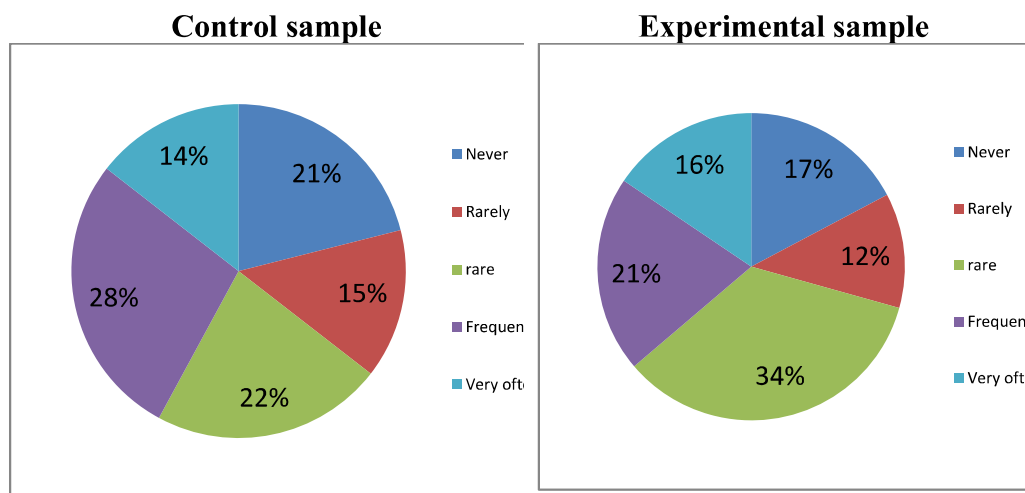


Figure No. 3. Comparative analysis of parental advice from the child, in certain school matters

Regarding the item He shares his toys with other children, the parents of the experimental sample consider the statement appropriate for their children occasionally, in proportion of 29% compared to the parents of the control sample, who consider the statement appropriate for their children occasionally in proportion of 39%. Another discrepancy regarding the same item is observed in the answer option never, thus 6% of the parents of the children of the experimental sample appreciate that their child never shares toys with the other children, while 16% of the parents of the students who are part of the control sample appreciate that their child never shares toys with other children.

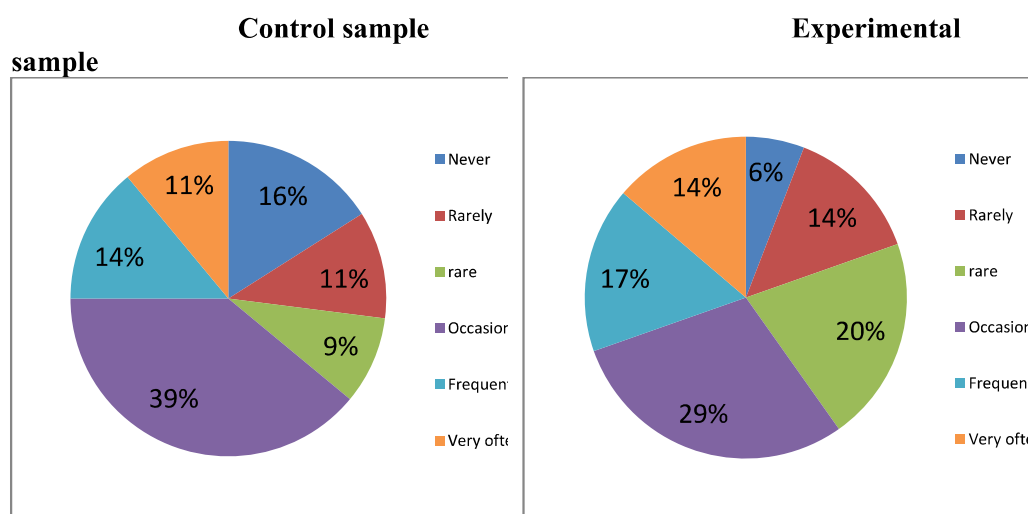


Figure No. 4. Comparative analysis about shares his toys with other children

Another comparatively analyzed item is the one related to "He says nice things about his classmates". We notice the most significant difference in the variant to be answered very rarely. Thus, 32% of the parents of the students who are part of the experimental sample claim that their child very rarely says nice, likeable things about their classmates, in relation to the assessment of the parents of the students of the control sample, who in the proportion of 26% appreciate that very rarely does their child say nice things about classmates.

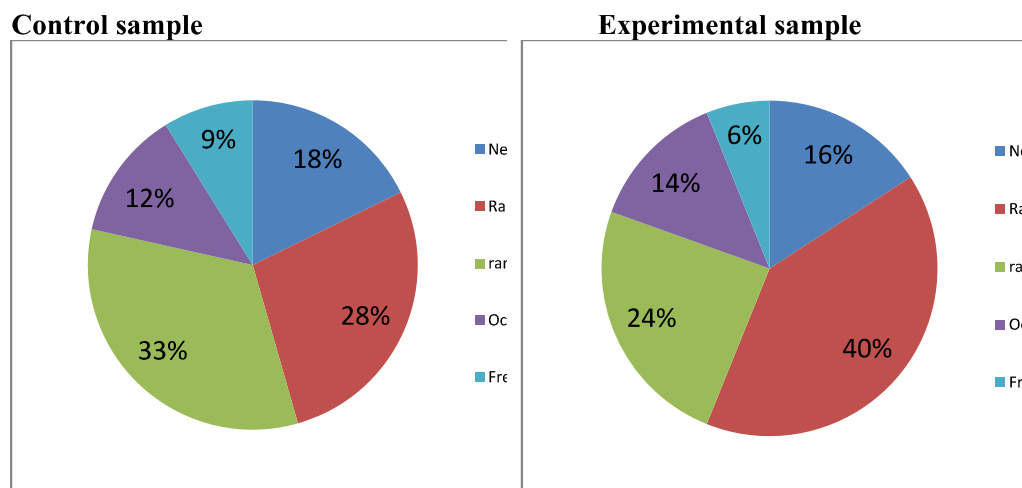


Figure No. 5. Comparative analysis about saying nice things about his classmates

Reported to the last item of the questionnaire, which wants to identify the level of satisfaction of the parent regarding the child's behavior in the last month, no significant differences are noted between the two samples.

The non-formal activities program was designed to stimulate a collaborative environment between students-parents-teachers by facilitating, designing, organizing and carrying out non-formal activities in the formal space, with the aim of acquiring and developing the social skills of the participating students. By participating in the non-formal activities program, students are encouraged by teachers to identify and adopt positive behavioral models, but at the same time build collegial relationships based on mutual respect.

Each activity designed within the non-formal program aims at specific aspects of managing one's own behaviors, of communication and inter-relationship, ways of acquiring a prosocial behavior.

The 13 activities proposed within the program are derived from the specific skills identified, and can be capitalized by monitoring some examples of behavior in order to develop the students' social competence.

By identifying and encouraging behaviors that stimulate the development of social competence, students will be held responsible for developing self-regulated behavior that coincides with the social norms accepted by the student group community.

Regarding the interpretation of the results we conclude:

The item referring to the identification of a new, observable thing in the child's behavior in the last month, from the parent's perspective, their answers were concluded. Below is a summary of their answers.

The answers of the parents who are part of the experimental sample, we conclude the following:

Pay more attention to school projects;

He is receptive to those already around him;

He has more patience;

Sometimes he gets bored, but he seeks your concern;

He talks a lot about his colleagues;

I didn't notice it changed;

It is very easy to animate;

It's messy;

He is more attentive to maintaining friendships;

Sometimes it rages;

He is delighted that I participate with him in school activities;

It doesn't tell much about what happens at school;

The answers of the parents who are part of the control sample, we conclude the following:

He is bored;

He doesn't like doing his homework;

He is more concerned with play than with school;

He has few friends;

She doesn't really want to play with children her age;

It's just as messy;

The assessment of the child's behavior in the last 2 weeks is shown in the graph below:

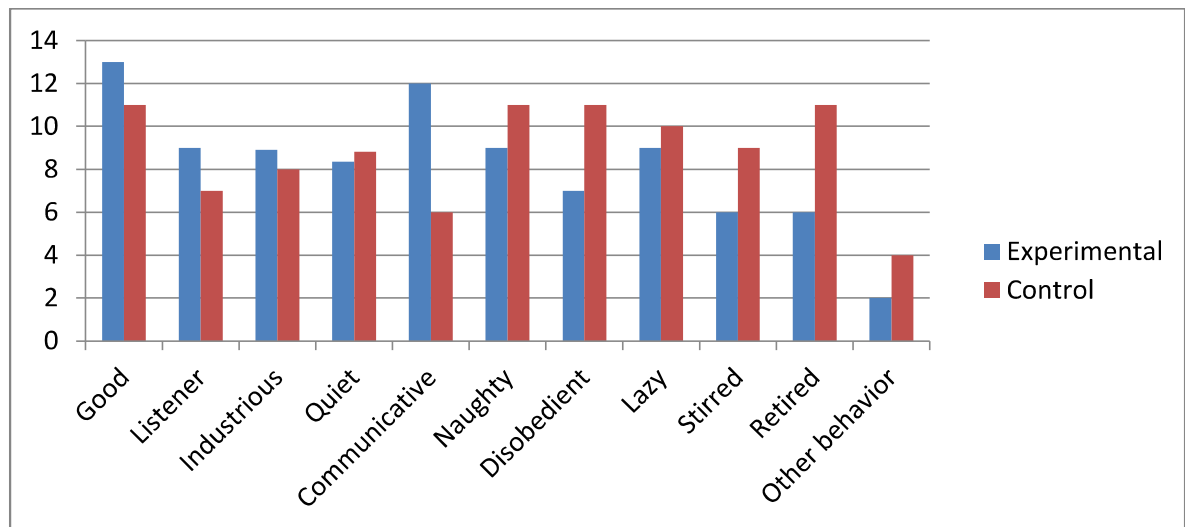


Figure No. 5 Assessment of children's behavior by parents

From the comparative analysis of the appreciation of the child's behavior from the parent's perspective, behavior observed by them in the last two weeks, we conclude that there are significant differences between the answers of the parents of the experimental sample and the

parents of the control sample. The most significant difference is perceived in the case of the item that refers to how communicative the child is. Thus, a radical improvement is observed in the case of the experimental sample.

In order to highlight the differences and/or similarities between the responses of the parents of the control and experimental samples, we reproduce the graphic form below:

As a result of the students' participation in the program of non-formal activities organized and carried out in the formal space, we observe an improvement in the behavior of the children who are part of the experimental sample, behavior perceived by their parents.

Regarding the items Before starting a contradictory discussion, he thinks about the consequences that may arise after it, we observe a significant improvement in the case of the experimental group, so that 52% of the respondent parents believe that their child rarely thinks about the consequences that he can had following a contradictory discussion, 19% often, 14% very rarely, 10% very often and 5% never think about such consequences.

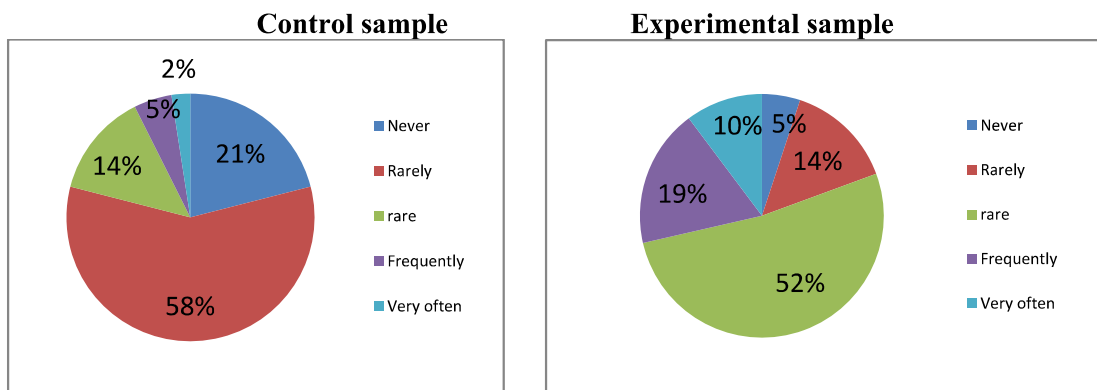


Figure No. 5. Comparative analysis about student's starting a contradictory discussion, he thinks about the consequences

Another significant difference is noted next to the item Asks for forgiveness easily, where 37% of the respondent parents appreciate that their children ask for forgiveness easily, 29% rarely, 9% very often, compared to the parents of the students in the control group, where 21% believe that their child asks for forgiveness often, 25% rarely, and also 9% very rarely.

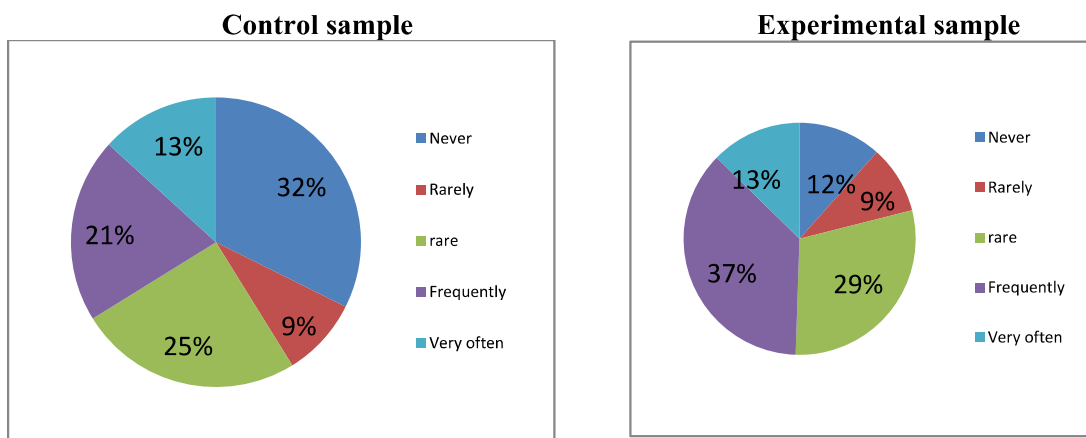


Figure No. 6. Comparative analysis about student's forgiveness behavior

The differences are also significant in the case of the items *In school matters he asks his parents for advice, He expresses his opinions without imposing them, He says nice things about his classmates*, a fact that can confirm the importance and effectiveness of the non-formal activities program.

We also see improvements in the behavior of students in relation to their parents, the item in school matters asks for parents' advice. Thus, both the students in the experimental group turn to their parents 36% more often, compared to 13% of the students in the control group.

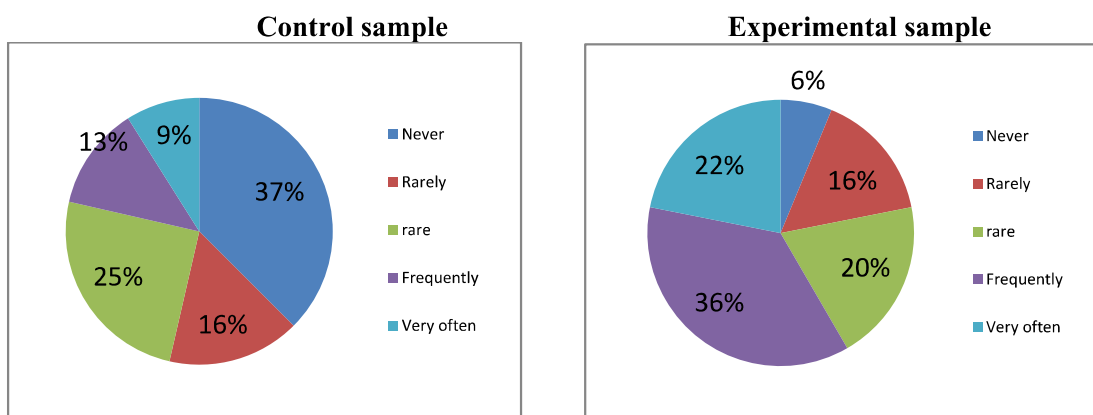


Figure No. 7. Comparative analysis about students asks his parents for advice

Following the students' participation in the program of non-formal activities proposed by us, we appreciate that the parents of the students in the experimental sample, in proportion to 22%, are more satisfied with their child's behavior compared to the parents of the students in the control sample, whose opinion remained unchanged from the pre-

experimental stage, only 12% of the respondent parent's estimate that they are satisfied with their children's behavior.

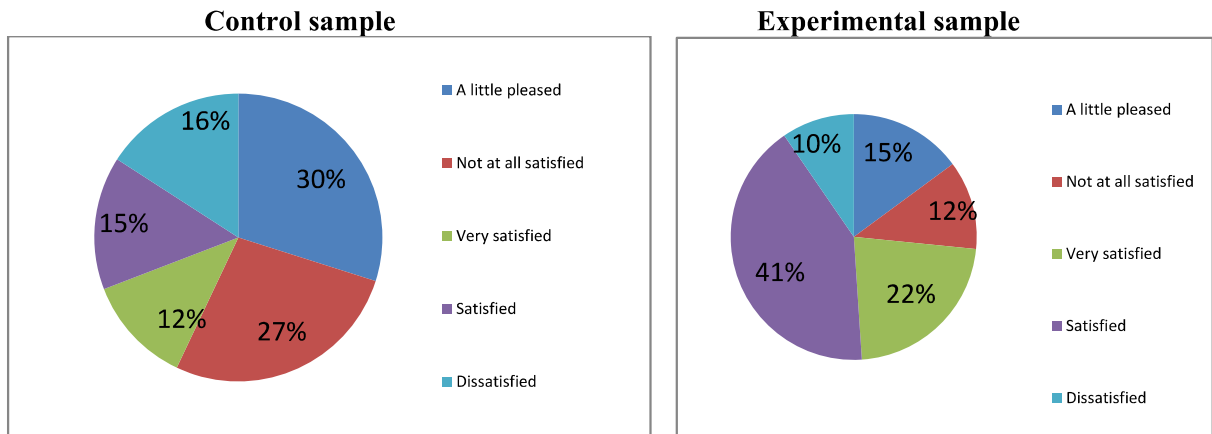


Figure No. 8. Comparative analysis about parent's appreciation about students' participation in the program of non-formal activities

As a result of the students' participation in the program of non-formal activities organized and carried out in the formal space, we observe an improvement in the behavior of the children who are part of the experimental sample, behavior perceived by their parents.

According to the items Before starting a contradictory discussion, one thinks about the consequences that may arise after it, we observe a significant improvement in the case of the experimental group, such that 52% of the respondent parents believe that their child rarely thinks about the consequences that can have them following a contradictory discussion, 19% often, 14% very rarely, 10% very often and 5% never think of such consequences.

Another significant difference is noted next to the item Asks for forgiveness easily, where 37% of the respondent parents appreciate that their children ask for forgiveness easily, 29% rarely, 9% very often, compared to the parents of the students in the control group, where 21% believe that their child asks for forgiveness often, 25% rarely, and also 9% very rarely.

Conclusions:

Children's participation in non-formal activities is often viewed by parents as a valuable opportunity for personal and behavioral development for them. From a parent's perspective, the behavioral benefits of engaging in such activities are multiple and significant.

One of the main aspects observed is the improvement of autonomy and responsibility. Children who participate in extracurricular activities learn to manage their time between school, hobbies and leisure, thereby developing their ability to make independent decisions and take

responsibility for them. This increased autonomy is often accompanied by behavioral maturation, with children becoming more aware of the consequences of their actions.

In addition, non-formal activities provide a conducive environment for the development of social skills. Interactions with peers and adults in diverse contexts teach children how to communicate effectively, collaborate, and resolve conflict constructively. These social skills are essential for forming healthy interpersonal relationships and for success in personal and professional life. The personality of the students is shaped and manifests itself in interdependence with the life of the group of which he is part, with the norms and values that he develops. (Roman, 2020)

Parents also notice an improvement in their children's confidence and self-esteem. Success and recognition in activities such as sports, art, or volunteering help strengthen a sense of personal worth and develop a positive self-image. This can have a profound impact on the child's attitude towards life's challenges, encouraging him to approach new situations with courage and optimism.

Therefore, from the perspective of parents, non-formal activities play an essential role in children's behavioral development, providing them with the necessary tools to successfully navigate life's challenges. These activities contribute not only to the formation of practical skills, but also to the shaping of a strong character and a balanced personality. (Dughi & Cotrău, 2014)

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