

## THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

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### Abstract

Today, in modern society, great attention is paid to children's or pupils' rights, so the questions of whether one should go to extremes, and what occurs to pupils' obligations and duties rightly arise. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine the assessments of pupils and teachers on the representation of pupils' rights and obligations in primary school. The study is based on non-experimental research, and the techniques of survey and scaling were used. The research sample consists of two parts. The first part consists of 700 pupils of the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grade of primary school, while the second part of the sample consists of 101 primary school course teachers. The obtained research findings show that there are differences in the assessments of pupils and teachers on the representation of pupils' rights and obligations in primary school. Differences were registered in pupils' assessments in relation to gender, level of achievement in school, age and educational level of fathers, while the difference did not prove significant in relation to the variable *educational level of mothers*. The registered differences in teachers' assessments of pupils' rights and obligations were shown with regard to the teacher's work experience and the teaching area. The obtained data can be useful for the development of theoretical and conceptual settings in this area, and their practical implications, i.e. recommendations and guidelines for the actors of the educational institution in implementing pupils' rights and obligations, are even more important.

**Key words:** pupils' rights, pupils' obligations, primary school, principle of balance

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## СОЦИО-ДЕМОГРАФСКЕ ДЕТЕРМИНАНТЕ УЧЕНИЧКИХ ПРАВА И ОБАВЕЗА У ОСНОВНОЈ ШКОЛИ

### Апстракт

Данас, у савременом друштву, велика пажња се придаје дечијим, односно ученичким правима, па се с разлогом поставља питање да ли се иде у крајност и шта је са ученичким обавезама и дужностима. Стога је циљ овог истраживања да испита процене ученика и наставника о заступљености ученичких права и обавеза у основним школама. Коришћена су емпиријска неекспериментална метода, и технике анкетања и скалирања. Узорак истраживања се састоји из два дела. Први део чини 700 ученика шестог, седмог, осмог и деветог разреда основне школе, док други део узорка чини 101 наставник предметне наставе у основним школама. Добијени истраживачки налази показују да постоје разлике у проценама ученика и наставника о заступљености ученичких права и обавеза у основним школама. Разлике су регистроване у проценама ученика у зависности од пола, школског успеха, узраста и образовног нивоа очева, док разлика није показала значајност при третирању варијабле образовног нивоа мајки. Регистроване разлике у проценама наставника о ученичким правима и обавезама показале су се и у односу на радни стаж наставника и наставну област коју предају. Добијени подаци могу бити корисни за развијање теоријско-концептуалних поставки у овој области, а још већи значај имају у практичним импликацијама, односно препорукама и смерницама за актере васпитно-образовних установа који имплементирају ученичка права и обавезе.

**Кључне речи:** права ученика, обавезе ученика, основна школа, принцип уравнотежености

### INTRODUCTION

When we talk about the basic characteristics of education, the social conditionality of education is always mentioned. Education is always directly dependent on social relations, the structure of a given society, and the value system that exists in that society. The presence of certain phenomena in the educational system is a reflection of the value system, and a kind of ideology that has been permeating our society for the last twenty years, without a critical reflection on the same.

Some authors call the phenomenon of the common features of educational reforms *global educational policies* (Verger et al., 2012, according to Kanić, & Kovač, 2017), which introduce their reforms by implementing mechanisms such as the digitalisation of learning, virtual school, privatisation, and accelerated teacher training programmes. All these changes can be viewed within the political-economic context of neoliberalism. The principles of neoliberalism, i.e. market mechanisms and principles: the possibility of choice, competition, the enactment of more lenient laws, the distribution of responsibilities, equality, individualism, efficiency, freedom, minority rights and so on, are at the heart of most global reforms (Kanić, & Kovač, 2017). Many countries have introduced public-

private partnerships, enrolment-based school funding, school competitiveness, evaluation criteria and external evaluations of effectiveness. The idea of lifelong learning also has its foundations in neoliberalism, as some authors point out, because it does not serve to acquire wisdom, but to acquire market and technical innovations, and to prepare one to be 'fit for the job' (Lizeman, 2008, according to Kozlovački Damjanov, 2014). Thus arise the questions of why we do not deal with examples of the rights of workers, and the distribution of social goods, and why some are so rich and others are on the brink of poverty. Can it be said that neoliberalism shifts the attention from essential problems to secondary, peripheral problems, or those that do not damage big capital? The authors' intention is not a critique or a deeper dive into neoliberal ideology, but a systematic review of the research idea that was initiated by thinking about the themes and dilemmas of the neoliberal ideology in education, and by observing practice. The justification of the intention and the somewhat narrative style of writing is a reflection of education as a pedagogical activity, and the task of pedagogues is to continuously monitor educational practice in different contexts.

We often hear from educators that pupils' rights are being abused and turned into their opposite, and that they believe that a lot of 'dust' would be raised if they did not take into account the pupil's opinion, or if they proposed another way of working contrary to the pupils' wishes. Research conducted by UNICEF and the Yugoslav Center for Children's Rights (2001) shows that pupils feel that their personality is not respected, and that there are unjustified differences between students. On the contrary, there are results that show that pupil's estimate that their personality and opinions are respected (Juričević et al., 2017). On the other hand, if students do not do their homework, or if they do not do their homework on time, it will go unnoticed, or an appropriate justification will be found for the lack or tardiness of the work, which motivated the authors to pose a question to all those involved in educational work: can the roots of a peculiar hypertrophy of children's rights be found in some deeper movements of modern society. Along with these reflections, the following research questions arose: do the rights and obligations of pupils form a coherent whole in basic educational work; and what are the (pupils' and teachers') assessments of important school factors regarding the issue of student rights and obligations.

#### *The Legal Framework of Pupils' Rights and Obligations, and Their Origin*

Namely, in order to achieve the goal and tasks of primary education, which is an activity of general social interest, the rights and obligations of students, understood as mediators towards achieving the ultimate goal, must be fulfilled. The principle of harmony and equality, or the principle of balance, must prevail between pupils' rights and pupils' obli-

gations. The absence of one or the other disrupts the functioning of the educational institution, as well its basic tasks. Ilić et al. (2012) point out that a pupil is a person who attends primary or secondary school, systematically studies, acquires knowledge or perfects certain skills. By starting school, the child acquires rights and duties and the status of a student.

The Law on Primary Education of the Republic of Srpska (BiH) prescribes the rights and duties, i.e. obligations of pupils. The pupil has the right to: attend classes and perform school obligations; receive respect for his/her personality and opinion; get advice and assistance in solving problems; get information on all issues related to him/her; participate in the work of pupil councils; be protected from all forms of discrimination; be protected from all forms of violence, neglect and abuse; and draft and implement the school house rules and propose improvements to the educational process. In addition to pupils' rights, the duties of pupils are also prescribed. Students are obliged: to attend classes regularly and perform all their school obligations; to respect the school house rules; to respect the personality of other pupils, teachers and all school staff; to take care of school property, textbooks and other teaching aids; to take care of the environment; and to act in accordance with the instructions of teachers, professional associates, principals, and other school employees, in accordance with the school rules (2017, Art. 62, Pa. 1, 2). The functioning of any system implies the harmonisation and functioning of each individual part of that system. For this reason, the research curiosity of the author is directed towards the rights and obligations of elementary school students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ie indirectly Does one part of the system as a whole function adequately?

The twentieth century was also marked by several achievements, among which is the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although they belong to the legal-political segment, the influence of children's rights is still visible in other practices, so we can and should approach the rights of the child from the perspective of the pedagogical relationship. There are studies that link school success with children's rights, as well as the socio-humanistic orientation of teachers (Širanović, 2016). As a starting point for the rights and obligations of pupils in primary school, we can consider the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adapted to the context of an educational institution such as the school. The envisaged rights of the Convention, with minor deviations, are mainly grouped into rights to survival, the right to development, the right to protection, personal rights and participatory rights (Pejić, 2010), the basis of which we find in student rights and obligations.

Studying the available literature, we noticed that human rights, children's rights, citizens' responsibilities and civic education in general are often discussed in terms of the implementation and evaluation of civic education programmes developed by some NGOs, but student rights and

school obligations are not discussed (Ignjatović et al., 2019; Ilić & Jorgić, 2016; Kotri et al., 2007; Piršl et al., 2007). There are certain skills, attitudes and values which can be linked, and which correspond to the rights and obligations of a responsible citizen and pupil. Some of them are: self-respect and respect for others, equality of opportunities, intellectual freedom, cooperation, critical thinking, co-responsibility, inclusion, democratic dialogue and non-violent communication. Would it not be inappropriate to consider democratic dialogue and non-violent communication to be values of civic education and, for example, fail to consider respect for the personality of other students a student's duty?

There are authors who point out that pupils in school, whether they are learning math, creating rules or planning a field trip, must feel like their voice is heard, must experience respect for themselves and others, and must know what being an active member of society really means and which principles must become a part of everyday life in the classroom (Piršl, et al., 2007). The same authors come to the conclusion that male students have a greater perception of freedom of decision and expression. Indeed, some civic education competencies largely coincide with the rights and obligations of pupils in school. There are authors who believe that the concept of children's rights, or the postulates of civic education in general have numerous implicit and explicit implications in the field of upbringing and education, i.e. in the field of school, and research findings show a non-practice of democratic orientation (Marojević, 2014). We will mention only some of them, and they are: the issue of the pupils' participation in school life and learning, the issue of school discipline and non-discrimination, the democratisation of the educational process, and, broadly speaking, the issue of the educational function of the school. For this reason, although the rights and obligations of pupils are clearly operationalized in the Law on Primary Education of the Republic of Srpska, we are of the opinion that the rights and obligations of pupils have roots and bases in civic education.

According to the modern understanding, the pupil is both an object and a subject in the educational institution, understood as a product of an interconnected, mutual relationship, in which parties relate to each other in the same way. In the context of our work, we could say that, in terms of pupils' rights, the pupil is the subject, and in terms of pupils' duties, the pupil is the object which, through the unity and synthesis of roles, makes the school a democratic community. An neglected subject position, or an insistence on pupils' duties and the neglect of pupils' rights are features of traditional schools and drill schools. As Ilić explains: "Pupils were required to strictly respect school rules of conduct, discipline and obedience in performing school obligations" (Ilić, et al., 2012, p. 33). The question is whether we have gone to the other extreme on the critique of the traditional school, and emphasised their rights while neglecting their

obligations? Have we achieved the principle of harmony and equality? Simply, if there are gender differences, then rights and obligations are not in harmonious unity.

The rights and duties of students can be seen as mediators in the socialisation process, and their roots can be found in two contrasting theories of social learning. Both behavioural and cognitive-developmental principles of social learning can be used to develop a proper attitude towards rights and obligations in the school context. If we start with the family, observational learning is of particular importance because the student always in some way identifies with or imitates the behaviour of his first educators – parents, and later teachers. Respect towards personal belongings, property, the environment, and the personality of others, and non-violent communication are among the first foundations for adequately fulfilling pupils' rights and duties. The other side of the coin are the cognitive developmental theories of socialisation, which take social experience into account, in addition to development. A child at a certain age cannot understand all the demands of the environment, and what kind of behaviour he will form under the influence of social factors depends on whether he understands social stimulation (Rot, 1987). A big role in this is played by teachers who, in accordance with the development of internal processes, need to stimulate an adequate attitude towards rights and obligations. In connection with this is the social transfer, or social transmission that Piaget talks about – it connects the cognitive structure and gives meaning to the received data (Matejić Đurić, 2010).

The Brochure of Rights and Obligations of the nine-year primary school in Montenegro (2004), intended for students, teachers, professional associates and all school employees, emphasises its importance, because it presents a possibility for the school to encourage active participation in school life. On the contrary, there is a dialectical unity between rights and obligations, and it is not possible to popularise only pupils' rights, or to insist exclusively on fulfilling obligations. Petrović (2013) points out:

By respecting our obligations, we respect the rights of others and facilitate their realization, and we make life more beautiful and easier for everyone. Just as we expect others to fulfill their obligations and be accountable to us - others expect the same from us, and if not, they feel betrayed, just like we in similar situations.

(Petrović, 2013, p. 22)

The entire structure of the educational activities of a modern school is permeated with the rights and obligations of pupils, which implies that the principle of harmonious unity includes all organisational forms of educational work.

### *The Determinants of Student Rights and Obligations*

In terms of students' rights and obligations, there are intensive influences for their adequate development and representation. The family is the fundamental and primary institution in the life of every individual. When defining family, we mean, as Ilić (2013) points out, all family unions, regardless of the form in which they are united. From the earliest age, parents are the ones who influence the child's work and hygiene habits, respect for other people, development of empathy, non-violent communication, active, proper monitoring and listening, environmental protection, sense of belonging, respect for the child's personality and so on. Parents achieve all this by acting and showing via personal example, and creating a family community in which everyone has their rights and duties, which are respected. At the beginning of the school year, the school is obliged to acquaint all persons involved in education with the rules of conduct governing behaviour within and outside of the institution. Some authors use the common name of 'rule' (Petrović, 2013), and Croatian authors use the term 'entrepreneurship' (Juričić, 2014), or even 'participation' (Marojević, 2011). Inadequate and disturbed relations between the basic factors of teaching can certainly be determinants of the pupil's disrespect for teachers, and possible situations which arise from this are pupils not listening to advice, disrupting class, not attending class, destroying textbooks, not doing homework, not achieving appropriate success, not suggesting ideas, and not asking for help. Some issues concerning the rights and obligations of pupils are explained in very interesting ways, in which it is not quite obvious whether the student can participate, or have the proposed opportunities and timely information. One of them is evaluating the work and achievements of pupils, and deciding on a grade. Namely, we would say, in layman's terms, that this is a quality of the teacher, because he/she is in charge of assessment, but the instructions on assessment are not only for teachers. The teacher explains to the pupil, in an understandable way, what he/she needs to know for which grade, how he/she can express his/her knowledge and how he/she can improve his/her grade. In this way, the pupil participates in his/her assessment with his/her work and effort, and makes a decision for which grade he/she is actually studying (Petrović, 2013). As a price of balance between students' rights and obligations, the development of the same can be seen as a determinant of free time, and a balance between work and rest.

### *RESEARCH METHODOLOGY*

The research was conducted with the aim of examining students' students' and teachers' assessments of elementary school pupils' rights and obligations. The conducted research includes the following specific goals:

1. examine the differences among elementary school pupils regarding the assessment of their rights and obligations depending on the socio-demographic characteristics of the pupils, namely: gender, school success, pupil's grade, and professional qualifications of their parents; and
2. Examine the differences among primary school teachers in the assessment of student rights and obligations depending on the socio-demographic characteristics of teachers, namely: years of work experience and area of teaching.

According to our specific research goals, the following hypotheses were set:

1. We assume that there are differences among elementary school students in the assessment of their rights and obligations depending on their socio-demographic characteristics; and
2. We assume that there are differences among elementary school teachers in their assessment of student rights and obligations depending on their socio-demographic characteristics.

#### *Sample, Variables and Instruments*

The study involved 700 primary school pupils and 101 teachers, third triad, from the Sarajevo-Zvornik and Trebinje-Foča regions. Research work in the field was carried out by the authors themselves, between October and December 2021. The socio-demographic characteristics of pupils (gender; grade; school success; parental education) and teachers (years of work experience; teaching area) were treated as independent variables in the research, while the assessments of pupils' rights and obligations were treated as dependent variables. Tables 1 and 2 show the structure of the sample according to social characteristics.

#### *The Structure of the Instrument*

Constructed for the purposes of this research, consists of a survey questionnaire aimed at collecting data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, and an assessment scale with two subscales (examples of items on the rights subscale: *My personality and opinion are appreciated and respected at school; Some students are separated from others, placed in a position of inequality, or being ignored; Girls have a better position at school than boys; I propose and implement ideas for the implementation of the school's house rules;* examples of items on the obligations subscale: *I study regularly; I do my homework regularly; It happens that I mislead or hurt my friends from school; I happen to damage a school desk; I throw waste in the school yard*), and the starting point was the *Law on Primary Education* in which the rights and duties of students are clearly defined. Pupils and teachers



*Table 1. Student sample structure*

		N	%
Gender	male	322	46,0
	female	378	54,0
	total	700	100,0
Grade	VI	248	35,4
	VII	149	21,3
	VIII	146	20,9
	IX	157	22,4
	total	700	100,0
School success	insufficient	3	0,4
	sufficient	16	2,3
	good	99	14,1
	very good	202	28,9
	excellent	380	54,3
	total	700	100,0
Parental education (mother)	elementary school	8	1,1
	secondary school	403	57,6
	college or faculty	289	41,3
	total	700	100,0
Parental education (father)	elementary school	10	1,4
	secondary school	451	64,4
	college or faculty	239	34,1
	total	700	100,0

*Table 2. Teacher sample structure*

		N	%
Years of work exp.	Less than 5	22	21,8
	5 - 10	17	16,8
	More than 10	62	61,4
	total	101	100,0
Teaching area	natural sciences	49	48,5
	social sciences	29	28,7
	languages	23	22,8
	total	101	100,0

had the task of marking the degree to which they agreed with or assessed certain statements on a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 - never, to 5 always). Cronbach's alpha for the subscale on rights was 0.74, and 0.74 for the subscale on obligations. The agreement of the obtained distributions with the normal ones was checked by the Smirnov-Kolmogorov test. The obtained value for the subscale on rights was 0.050, with a significance level of  $p = 0,000$ , which means that our distribution of pupils' rights deviates significantly from the normal one. The obtained value of the Smirnov-Kolmogorov test for the subscale on obligation was 0.126, with  $p = 0,000$ , which means that our distribution of pupils' obligations

deviates significantly from the normal one. In accordance with the obtained values, the data was processed in the statistical package SPSS 21, and non-parametric tests were used.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

We started the first task of the research with the assumption that there are differences among primary school pupils in the assessment of the representation of their rights and obligations, depending on the characteristics of the pupils' social status. Table 3 shows the results of the pupils' assessments of their rights and obligations in relation to their gender.

*Table 3. Mann Whitney's test of differences in assessments of pupils' rights and obligations depending on gender*

	Gender	N	Middle rank	z	p
Rights of pupils	male	322	330,66	-2.399	0,016
	female	378	367,40		
	total	700			
Obligations of pupils	male	322	291,27	-7.170	0,000
	female	378	400,96		
	total	700			

There is a statistically significant difference among pupils in the representation of rights and obligations in primary school depending on the pupils' gender. The obtained difference shows that female pupils estimate a higher representation of both rights and obligations in relation to male pupils.

*Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in assessments of representation of pupils' rights and obligations depending on school success in learning*

	School success	N	Middle rank	$\chi^2$	df	p
Rights of pupils	insufficient	3	479,33	23.973	4	0,000
	sufficient	16	286,34			
	good	99	308,79			
	very good	202	312,83			
	excellent	380	383,07			
	total	700				
Obligations of pupils	insufficient	3	208,00	72.084	4	0,000
	sufficient	16	203,94			
	good	99	244,72			
	very good	202	313,08			
	excellent	380	405,24			
	total	700				

We conclude that the registered data shows that pupils with lower levels of school achievement estimate a lower representation of their obligations. Pupils who achieve excellent success estimate that their rights are as highly represented as their obligations. Table 5 shows the estimates in relation to the variable class of pupils.

*Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in assessments of representation of pupils' rights and obligations depending on school grade*

		N	Middle rank	$\chi^2$	df	p
Rights of pupils	VI	248	378.61	16.814	3	0,001
	VII	149	327.50			
	VIII	146	375.00			
	IX	157	305.13			
	total	700				
Obligations of pupils	VI	248	388.78	19.832	3	0,000
	VII	149	358.70			
	VIII	146	329.09			
	IX	157	302.16			
	total	700				

A significant difference was found in the pupils' assessments of the representation of rights and obligations in relation to the pupils' grade. Pupils of different school grades assess the representation of their rights and obligations in primary school differently. Significant differences were registered between the sixth and seventh grade pupils, seventh and eighth grade pupils, as well as eighth and ninth grade pupils. The sixth and eighth grade pupils estimate that their rights are more represented compared with the assessments of the seventh and ninth grade pupils. The obtained data shows that pupils' obligations decrease with age.

*Table 6. Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in assessments of representation of pupils' rights and obligations depending on the educational level of parents*

	Father's education	N	Middle rank	$\chi^2$	df	p
Rights of pupils	elementary school	11	514,80	7.052	2	0,029
	secondary school	450	344,67			
	college or faculty	239	353,15			
	total	700				
Obligations of pupils	elementary school	11	433,90	9.103	2	0,011
	secondary school	450	333,62			
	college or faculty	239	377,32			
	total	700				

The obtained data did not show a significant difference in the pupils' assessments in relation to the educational level of mothers, so we did not show this data for that reason. A significant difference was registered in the assessments of the representation of the rights and obligations of pupils in relation to the educational level of fathers. Pupils whose fathers' educational level is lower estimate that their rights are greater, that is, pupils whose fathers' educational level is higher estimate that their rights are less represented in primary school. On the other hand, pupils whose fathers' educational level is lower estimate higher student obligations, and vice versa.

We started the second research task with the assumption that there are differences in the school teachers' assessments of the representation of pupils' rights and obligations, depending on the characteristics of the teacher's social status. Table 7 shows the results of the differences in assessments of pupils' rights and obligations depending on the teacher's seniority.

*Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in teacher assessments of pupils' rights and obligations, depending on years of service*

	Years of service	N	Middle rank	$\chi^2$	df	p
Rights of pupils	less than 5	30	40,74	6.368	2	0,041
	5 - 10	16	46,25			
	more than 10	55	56,88			
	total	101				
Obligations of pupils	less than 5	30	41,55	5.864	2	0,053
	5 - 10	16	46,69			
	more than 10	55	57,13			
	total	101				

Based on the results shown in Table 7, we can conclude that the less considerable the work experience of teachers, the lower the estimates of the representation of pupils' rights and obligations, and vice versa. As the work experience of teachers becomes more considerable, the estimates in their representation of pupils' rights and obligations also grow.

There is a statistically significant difference in teacher's assessments of the representation of pupils' rights depending on the teaching area, but no differences were registered in teachers' assessments of the representation of pupils' obligations. The biggest registered difference is between the evaluations of teachers who teach natural sciences and languages.

*Table 8. Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in teacher assessments of pupils' rights and obligations, depending on the teaching area*

	Teaching area	N	Middle rank	$\chi^2$	df	p
Rights of pupils	natural sciences	48	45,17	7.631	2	0,022
	social sciences	30	47,90			
	languages	23	64,91			
	total	101				
Obligations of pupils	natural sciences	48	48,12	1.029	2	0,598
	social sciences	30	54,86			
	languages	23	52,26			
	total	101				

### DISCUSSION

The basis for the operationaliation of instruments for researching pupils' rights is adapted and specific to each research, and it is usually about the envisaged grouped rights of the Convention, or the postulates of civic education implemented in the field of school. The elucidation of democratic values in the classroom, the rights of the Convention, or the postulates of civic education in schools are the starting points of pupils' rights and obligations, so it is quite justified to link them. Theoretical analysis of the available literature shows that research on pupils' rights and obligations is rather scarce, and studies involving pupils' rights in school rarely link the concept of pupils' responsibility/obligation as a concept complementary to pupils' rights. Also, let us note that research usually relies on the descriptive method and the presentation of percentages (Amadeo, et al., 2002; Juričević et al., 2007; Marojević, 2014; Unicef, 2001).

After conducting research on a sample of primary school pupils and teachers, it is possible to determine a number of facts about the representation of pupils' rights and obligations. We began with the initial assumption that there are differences among primary school pupils in relation to their assessment of the representation of their rights and obligations depending on the characteristics of their social status, which showed a statistically significant difference within each treated variable. Namely, treating the gender variable, the results showed that there is a statistically significant difference in pupils' assessments of the representation of their rights and obligations in primary school. Female pupils estimated a higher representation of both rights and obligations compared to male pupils. The question is whether the reason for this lies in gender roles, i.e. the greater sensitivity of the female sex, and the assumption that the female sex is weaker and can have greater rights than the male sex, as well as greater responsibility in duties and actions. Civic education should not be considered an addition to school life, but civic education and democracy are lived in the school, and

we can implement them, in part, through pupils' rights and obligations. One study investigated the perception of the freedom of decision-making in school and the freedom of expression among seventh and eighth grade pupils (Piršl et al., 2007). Boys expressed a greater perception of freedom of decision-making and expression than girls, and the authors explained this data through the notion of traditional femininity and the nurturing quality ascribed to the female sex, despite the fact that the girls who took part in the research were increasingly encouraged to acquire active skills. We can notice that this sensitivity to the female sex is interpreted differently by different authors.

When we talk about the right of students to propose ideas for the improvement of the educational process, the research findings of a study in which 210 elementary school pupils of the Sisak-Moslovak County participated (Jurčević et al., 2017) show that 61.9% of pupils estimated that they rarely or never were in a situation to suggest and choose the way of working in class. Respect for pupils' opinions and attitudes was supported by 71.9% of the pupils, as was the fact that teachers were friendly and often or always (83%) answered the questions of pupils. The same claims were part of the range of pupils' rights in the context of our work. The results of our study showed a significant difference in favour of girls. When analysing the results, we must notice one contradiction. Namely, female students estimate a greater representation of student rights, which further implies that the concept of student rights is violated by gender discrimination.

Although the results of our research are based on differences in relation to certain variables, we can relate them to descriptive data on student rights. A study by UNICEF and the Yugoslav Center for the Rights of the Child (2001), conducted on a sample of 746 children ages 14 through 18 from the territory of Serbia and Montenegro, provided a lot of data in favour of schools being non-democratic communities. Namely, 53% of pupils believed that their personalities were not respected (which is certainly one of the rights of pupils), 1/3 of the pupils perceived school as a neglected environment (which is one of the obligations of pupils), most pupils assessed that the conditions for participation did not exist (which also refers to the right of pupils in school), while in 90% of cases pupils assessed that unjust differences were made between pupils in behaviour and assessment (one of the rights of pupils is protection from all forms of discrimination). We can state that these research findings partially coincide with our data, according to which female students estimate a greater representation of student rights (as well as obligations) in contrast to male pupils, which points towards gender discrimination.

A research conducted in 2016 showed that school success is a variable that influences pupils' better assessments of their rights (Širanović, 2016). Given that our research treated the same variable, we can say that the results of this research cannot be related to ours, taking into account the

fact that pupils who achieve insufficient learning success have the highest middle rank in the representation of their rights, followed by pupils with excellent success. When it comes to pupils' obligations, excellent pupils estimate that their obligations are the most represented, while the average ranking of pupils' obligations is the lowest among students with insufficient and sufficient success.

The obtained data shows us that pupils estimate that their obligations are most represented in the sixth grade. One of the reasons why pupils assess their responsibilities in this way may be the turbulent transition from classroom to subject teaching, the increased number of courses and the requirements of each individual teacher. The larger the pupils' class, the lower the pupils' assessments of the representation of their obligations. This data leads us to the assumption that over time, pupils adapt to school obligations. It is no coincidence that pupils estimate that their rights are least represented in the final grade of primary school, and it is a known fact that pupils' motivation and interest decline as they age. Also, the assessment of the representation of rights increases sharply in the eighth grade because this is the age at which many cognitive, social, emotional, and physical changes occur. As puberty is a period of life between childhood and adolescence, a period of emotional and social instability, as well as a period of difficulties in interpersonal relationships, it is no wonder that pupils at that age assess that their rights are represented. Pupils, therefore, perceive their rights as important.

In one school study, the assessment of pupils' attitudes on civic education was treated through the variable of primary and secondary school, where it was shown that seventh and eighth grade pupils assessed freedom of decision making and expression (which are certainly part of pupils' rights) higher than secondary school pupils (Piršl et al., 2007). The authors believe that the reason for this lies in better communication between pupils and primary school teachers, and that primary school pupils are more open to the promotion and realisation of their ideas, and communication with teachers in general. We can bring our research into a comparative analysis due to the increase in the eighth grade pupils' assessment of the representation of rights, although our sample does not include secondary school pupils.

Parental education has proven to be a significant variable in the pupils' assessment of rights and obligations. The obtained results showed that there were differences in pupils' assessments of the representation of their rights and obligations in school, depending on the fathers' level of education. The lower the educational level of the fathers, the better the pupils' assessments of fulfilling their rights and obligations. The assumption is that the reason for this lies in the personal dissatisfaction of parents with their education, or in the parents' perceived educational failures, which implies that parents give their children more duties, as well as more opportunities to exercise their rights.

In the *Law on Primary Education of the Republic of Srpska*, there are articles which directly indicate pupil participation through the rights and obligations of pupils (2017, Art. 6, Pa. 2, 4, 9). For this reason, we can refer to the research conducted in Serbia in terms of the pupils' perception of school participation. The findings show that the participation of pupils, and thus the level of the realisation of their rights, is reduced to the possibility of informal expression of attitudes and opinions on course teachers, or participation in school sections. From the perspective of pupils, their participation is present only when administration is required of them. From the expressed attitudes of pupils, it was concluded that pupil participation was not a reality of school life (Pavlović, 2010, according to, Damjanović, Todorović, 2017). The international study *Civic Knowledge and Engagement* (Amadeo et al., 2002) talks about achieving the goals of civic education and democracy in different countries, and provides an overview of research on the possibilities of pupils and their engagement in school and the classroom. Namely, over 85% of pupils perceive the effectiveness of participation in school, 90% fully agree that there is cooperation and partnership, saying that their thoughts and ideas are freely expressed, discussed and debated, and slightly less than half of the pupils think they are encouraged by teachers to exercise freedom of expression. Certainly, the mentioned participation and engagement, as well as the realisation of civic education in the mentioned study, are not separated from the pupils' rights. Research on the practice of democratic orientation of the school was conducted on a sample of 152 pupils in the final grades of primary school in Nicksic. A significant percentage of final grade students expressed negative attitudes regarding the statements that teachers in their school nurture tolerance and respect differences among students (42.4%), 34.5% believed that their school is not a democratic community, while 23.9% of the pupils had no attitude at all about the matter. Pupils' responses were concentrated on the negative pole even regarding the issues of respect for cultural identity, language, national and religious values, non-violent communication, developing cooperation, self-esteem, autonomy of opinion, freedom of choice and other features of democratic school orientation (Marojević, 2014). Based on the presented data of our research, it can be seen that the final grades of primary school estimate the lowest representation of pupils' rights. The causes behind this data may lie in significant changes in the social life of early adolescence, i.e. the need of adolescents to have more agreement, more participation, more decision-making, and more respect in relationships (Brković, 2011).

This coincides with Erickson's fifth developmental stage – psychosocial identity or identity crisis. Adolescence is a period during which one needs to become a special being, find one's place and role in society, and be included in society (Fulgosi, 1997). The attitudes that individuals acquire at each stage of life make them active members of a particular community (in this case, the school context), and allow them to influence its development



themselves. Erickson's theory of social development states that families (i.e. parents) and teachers are important in the life of pupils between the ages of five and eleven, and that children learn to meet the requirements set by the school and complete homework (Berk, 2008, according to Matijević, Bilić, Opić, 2016). Sixth grade pupils are ages 10 through 11, and the obtained results show that sixth grade pupils assess the greatest representation of rights. At that age, they understand the representation of their obligations.

The second hypothesis with which we started the research was accepted, given that a significant difference was registered in the variables: teachers' work experience/years of service and the area of teaching. In their doctoral dissertation (Širanović, 2016), expecting a greater degree of sensibility, the author started from the assumption that pupils whose teachers were from the social-humanistic field would assess that their rights were more often respected. This assumption was proven to be incorrect, and the influence of the teaching field was not a significant variable. In our research, the difference was registered only in terms of pupils' rights, while it was not registered for pupils' obligations. The biggest registered difference is among the assessments of teachers teaching natural sciences and languages, i.e. language teachers estimate that pupils have more rights, compared to social and natural sciences teachers. Teachers of natural sciences have the lowest middle rank (45.17), which would further imply that teachers of a social and linguistic orientation have a greater sensitivity to the issue of pupils' rights, as they assess their higher representation.

Our research confirmed the assumption of different assessments of the representation of pupils' rights by teachers in relation to their years of service. Significant differences were registered in the assessments of teachers. The longer the work experience of teachers, the higher the estimates of the representation of pupils' rights and pupils' obligations. The obtained results can be interpreted from the standpoint of setting demands for students, i.e. teachers with more experience place greater obligations on students and give them more duties (as soon as they evaluate them that way), but, at the same time, they leave room for the exercise of student rights.

### *CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS*

Judging by the obtained data, we accept the general hypothesis with which we started the research and which states that there are differences in the pupils' and teachers' assessments of the representation of pupils' rights and obligations in primary school. The answer to the initial research question would be as follows: the rights and obligations of pupils do not form a coherent whole because significant differences have been registered, and they can be interpreted differently depending on the treated research variables. Differences were registered in pupils' assessments of the representation of their rights and obligations in school depending

on their gender, school success, age/grade and the fathers' level of education. When it comes to teachers' assessments of the representation of pupils' rights and obligations, the difference was registered in the variables of work experience and the area of teaching.

The results of this research can be important for the development of theoretical and conceptual settings in this area, and there are even more bases for presenting practical implications. The presented results can be guidelines, especially for teachers and other actors of the educational institution, in terms of taking into account the equality of both sexes in implementing the rights and obligations of pupils, taking into account development periods and development crises, and understanding and mitigating them in school. Also, cooperation with parents is inevitable, as are examining the educational needs of parents, getting to know the parents, and improving the parents' knowledge on the work of the school, and the rights and obligations of pupils and their joint action. Data on the absence of differences with regard to the gender of teachers in assessing the representation of pupils' rights and obligations indicates a positive trend of consistency in the implementation of pupils' rights and obligations by teaching staff. The obtained data shows that guidelines and recommendations are necessary, as is a self-reflective review of the work of novice teachers in the implementation of pupils' rights and obligations. Possibly, a self-reflective review of the teachers' professional development is needed as well, because the data presented in this research raises the question of why pupils' participation, the respect of their rights, and pupils' rights and obligations are the least represented..

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## СОЦИО-ДЕМОГРАФСКЕ ДЕТЕРМИНАТНЕ УЧЕНИЧКИХ ПРАВА И ОБАВЕЗА У ОСНОВНОЈ ШКОЛИ

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### Резиме

Формирање здраве и оспособљене личности у односу на све њене потенцијале није задатак само породице као примарне људске заједнице. Велику улогу у томе остварује и школа као васпитно-образовна институција у којој деца проводе велики део свог живота, а у којој се имплементирају права и обавезе ученика које уређују живот и рад у њој. Рад је настао једним делом као резултат увида да друштво очекује од васпитно-образовних институција својеврсну хипертрофију права ученика са једне стране, а другим делом кроз увид у незадовољство просветних радника оним што ученици пружају. Свакако, такав јаз може да наруши делатност од општег интереса, и права и обавезе ученика могу само да се посматрају као кохерентна целина у васпитно-образовном раду, јер да би ученик остварио своје обавезе морају му се дати и одређена права, али да би поседовао привилегију права мора да поштује и одговорности. Исходишта ученичких права и обавеза налазе се у Конвенцији права детета као концептима демократије, права и одговорности у образовању. Стога је циљ овог истраживања да испита процене ученика и наставника о ученичким правима и обавезама на основношколском узрасту. Као независне варијабле у истраживању третиране су социјално статусне особине ученика (пол, школски успех, узраст, стручна спрема родитеља) и социјално статусне особине наставника (године радног стажа и област наставног рада). Узорак је обухватио 700 ученика и 101 наставника. Добијени истраживачки налази региструју значајне разлике у проценама заступљености како права, тако и обавеза ученика у корист женског пола. Ученици који постижу одличан успех процењују да су њихова права високо заступљена исто као и обавезе, док при третирању варијабле узраста подаци показују да обавезе ученика опадају што су ученици старији. Образовање родитеља показао се као фактор који делимично утиче на процене ученика о правима и обавезама у школи јер су разлике регистроване само код образовног нивоа очева. Што је радни стаж наставника мањи то су процене наставника о заступљености ученичких права и обавеза мање, и обратно. Када је реч о области наставног рада наставника, показало се да нема разлике у проценама наставника када су у питању обавезе ученика. Разлика је регистрована у проценама ученичких права. Другим речима, најмању заступљеност права процењују наставници природних наука, за разлику од наставника друштвених и језичких наука. Резултати приказаних истраживања поред теоријског имају и посебан практичан значај, и представљају смернице за актере васпитно-образовних установа у имплементацији ученичких права и обавеза, а самим тим и у побољшању квалитета рада. Посебна препорука односи се на саморефлексивни осврт имплементације права и обавеза ученика као најбољи начин побољшања истих.