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The Contribution of Family Factors to Dropping Out of School in Greece

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Abstract

The current study was aimed at addressing the problem of dropping out of school in Greece and at finding out the specific social-family factors that have a significant impact on Greek students' decision to leave school early. Furthermore, the particular students' characteristics that potentially put them at risk and lead to their dropping out of school were drawn up through the present study. To that end, quantitative research through the use of a student questionnaire was carried out among one thousand five hundred twenty-eight (1528) students (799 boys and 729 girls) in various schools in Greece. The research results showed the presence of certain family factors that contributed towards Secondary School dropping out, the major ones being parental professional encouragement, parental school help, parental support in low school performance, parental encouragement for optimal effort, parental knowledge of children's social life and the frequency of parents' visits to school and their corresponding informing by teachers.

Keywords

School, Dropping Out, Factors, Family

1. Introduction

Dropping out of school is a multi-factorial and multi-leveled phenomenon, which has been the subject of and associated with decades of much research, speculation and controversy. Early leaving is characterized as a long-term process of disengagement from school and school life in general, which can be traced back even in the first grades of primary school (Finn, 1989). A student's decision to drop out of school is explained not only by one and only factor but by a combination of convergent and divergent causes which are put forward, including individual, family, school and social parameters (Arum & Velez, 2012;

Houssemand & Meyers, 2013; Kotok, Ikoma, & Bodovski, 2016).

Two groups of contributing factors to the phenomenon of dropping out are acknowledged in global literature (Allaire, Michaud, Boissonneault, Cote, & Diallo, 2005; Coyle, 2009; Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Senecal, 2007; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Rumberger, 2011):

1) Factors that are associated with the student's family and are referred to as Social/Family Factors: family's socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, siblings' poor academic performance, family mobility, lack of parental support and educational expectations, negative parental attitude or even ignorance on their part, absence of stability in family environment, single-parenting, job pursue, personal or social problems.

2) Factors that are associated with school, the student's individual characteristics and experiences and are referred to as School Factors: poor academic performance, truancy, absenteeism, discipline problems, involvement in fighting with schoolmates or teachers, prior poor academic performance, frequent changing of schools, lack of interest, negative school climate.

However, the focus of the present study is on the first group of factors and more specifically, on some of those family variables that are of pivotal importance in a student's decision to drop out of school.

Family constitutes the most influential agent among the different social factors, which affect the growth and development of a child (Chenge, Chenge, & Maunganidze, 2017). According to Baldwin (2000), family is a powerful agent of a child's socialization and the importance of the quality of the parent-child bonding process has been widely acknowledged. Parents' economic and educational status, family structure, their cultural and ecological profile, the relationship and the interaction among its members, their values and beliefs are some of the variables that render family environment as an agent of education and influence on a child's academic performance (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Banks, 2006; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Rumberger, 2011; Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Ngaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum, 2012; Bloom & Unterman, 2014). Both statistical and empirical research have concluded that the children who come from better family environments do not run the risk of leaving school early as much as those coming from poorer—in all aspects-family environments (Hunt, 2008).

The variables that comprise a child's family environment (D'Agostino, 2000; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010) are parents' professional and educational characteristics, which make up a family's general socio-economic status, as well as their place in the stratification system, family structure, parent-child interaction and family cultural status.

The phenomenon of dropping out of school is rather new in Greek educational reality and researchers, teachers and parents have recently reflected on it, especially with the advent of the severe financial crisis Greece has been experiencing. Thus, the present study comes to fill in the gap in the existing Greek literature on the interaction of the aforementioned familial factors with specific stu-

dents' characteristics, such as, their gender, nationality, school grade, and area of their school (urban, semi-urban, rural). Moreover, such a deep field research can be of great assistance to both students and teachers, so as to be more effective in their school performance and teaching respectively.

2. Family Factors

2.1. Family Socio-Economic Status

The social status and the inequalities created among the families, students come from, result in them also being unequal as far as their school performance is regarded. Families with low economic status have limited access to public and social benefits, including the benefit of education. Consequently, they are excluded both socially and educationally (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; Rumberger, 2011).

According to global literature (Ingels, Scott, Lindmark, Frankel, & Myers, 1992; Perreira, Harris, & Lee, 2006; Rumberger, 1995; Croninger & Lee, 2001; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010), there are many ways to measure a family's social and financial status, with the most reliable one being Socioeconomic Status or SES (Rumberger, 2011: p. 190), which is a complex index, based on the various measures of a family's financial and human resources, such as parents' occupational status, education and income (Dalton, Gennie, & Ingels, 2009; Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010; Rumberger, 2011; Tenbusch, 2016). Thus, research shows that students coming from families with high SES are less likely to leave school early (Davies & Geoff, 1983; Ingels, Scott, Lindmark, Frankel, & Myers, 1992; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; Rumberger, 2011). Poverty is considered to be one of the most important causes of early school leaving (Bruneforth, 2006; Cardoso & Verner, 2007, cited in Srivastava, 2012). High parental income makes it more possible for a family to provide more resources to support children's education, including access to better quality schools, private tuitions and more support for learning within home (Demaine, 1989; Coelho, 1998; Corson, 1998; Cardoso & Verner, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Chenge et al., 2017).

Further, a lot of researchers have pointed out the correlation between a family's social status and origin and their children's gender, as well as the effect of these variables on school performance (Murphy, 1981; Chapman, 1986; Roser, Hoffman, & Farest, 1990; Jimerson, 1999; Ball, Davies, David, & Reay, 2002; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Tenbusch, 2016). In particular, girls coming from families of all social classes outweigh boys as far as their school performance is regarded, while girls coming from poor families are more likely to abandon school, with boys showing very poor school performance, as compared to those coming from families with a higher family income.

However, Coleman (1988) claimed that it is possible to have children who share the same family socioeconomic characteristics and, nevertheless, manifest differentiated school performance, a fact which is largely explained as being a result of the interaction of some other factors as well. Thus, there was a further

distinction of family environment into three main constituents-family income, human capital (parents' education) and social capital (strong parent presence, parent-child quality time, their interpersonal relationship) (ibid., 1988, pp. 95-120).

Therefore, while family income can equip children with all the necessary resources for a proper education and human capital with a supportive environment which fosters learning, neither of them would be enough if it weren't for social capital, that is, meaningful time spent on parent-child interpersonal relationship, parental interest, support and encouragement. On the contrary, social capital itself can be an agent of learning, even if the other two parameters do not exist (Coleman, 1988; Toomey, 1989; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; Tenbusch, 2016). It is also known that poor families are not supportive of their children carrying on school, while wealthy families encourage them to extend and expand their studies, even if their individual potential is not high (Warren, LePore, & Mare, 2000).

2.2. Educational Background of Parents

Various researchers come to an agreement regarding the direct association of parents' literacy level with children's academic achievement and their decision to leave school early (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Allaire, Michaud, Boissonneault, Cote, & Diallo, 2005; Coyle, 2009; Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Senecal, 2007; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Rumberger, 2011).

It has been supported that a low literacy level leads to a vicious cycle of illiteracy (Chugh, 2011) and children coming from educated families are reported to show high academic achievement and educational attainment in all cognitive fields-writing, reading, Maths, to mention but a few, and tend to follow in the footsteps of their parents, resulting in being actively involved in their studies (Chevalier, Halmon, O'Sullivan, & Walker, 2005; Bjorklund & Salvanes, 2010; Menheere & Edith, 2012). The higher parents' educational level is, the better children perform at school (Corson, 1998; Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2000; Kober, 2001; Worswick, 2001). Better educated parents are claimed to have higher educational aspirations for their children as compared to those with a poor academic background, motivate their children's willingness to learn, guide and counsel them on the best way to successfully perform at school and provide them with the necessary resources needed, thus making a huge contribution to their school outcomes (Feinstein & Symons, 1999; Bynner & Joshi, 2002; Chevalier, Halmon, O'Sullivan, & Walker, 2005; Oreopoulous, Page, & Stevens, 2006; Lund, 2009).

2.3. Family Structure

The type of a family structure a child grows up in affects this child's decision to drop out of school. Home environment and family processes provide a network of physical, social and intellectual forces and factors that affect students' learn-

ing. When referring to family structure, the number and the types of a family's members are pinpointed (Rumberger, 2011). Thus, different family structures include two-parent or nuclear families, single-parent families and foster families (Levin, 2012; Babalis, Xanthacou, & Kaila, 2018). Various changes in a family's structure, such as divorce, separation, a spouse's death, family mobility are all variables that define change in a family structure and turn it from a nuclear family to a single-parent or foster one, while they are considered to be extremely stressful for all the members of a family, a fact that increases dropping-out rates (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Haveman, Wolfe, & Spaulding, 1991; Day, 1993; Alexander, Entwisle & Horsey, 1997; Garnier, Stein, & Jacobs, 1997; Schargel & Smink, 2001; Bohon, Garber, & Horowitz, 2007; Babalis, Tsoli, Nikolopoulos, & Maniatis, 2014).

In global literature, the effects of the changes in the structure of a contemporary family are regarded as detrimental to a child's emotional and social development (Seltzer, 1994). According to Garasky (1995), any changes in family structure taking place before the age of four have a positive effect on a child's likelihood of successful school completion, while changes occurring after the aforementioned age are reported to have negatively influenced the corresponding drop-out rates. Moreover, students who stopped living with both parents at the age of eight and started living with only one of them are more likely to leave school early (Pong & Ju, 2000).

Furthermore, another important variable of a family's structure is its size. Families that consist of many members seem to invest fewer resources on children's education (Hunt, 2008). Researchers (Haveman, Wolfe, & Spaulding, 1991; Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Garnier, Stein, & Jacobs, 1997) that have studied the contribution of the family size as a variable-as this is defined by the number of children or the total number of its members-to dropping out rates, have concluded that children coming from large families are more likely to leave school early as compared to those of a smaller family (Osgood et al., 2010; Snyder & Dillow, 2011). A possible explanation could be that children that belong to a small family are the happy recipients of parental interest and are mostly motivated to successfully complete their studies. On the other hand, in a large family, children are more likely to be forced to abandon their studies so as to take on more family responsibilities (house-keeping, looking after siblings) (Snyder & Dillow, 2011).

2.4. Family Cultural Status

A family's cultural status is described as a compound notion of knowledge, ideas, values and attitudes that are cultivated in a family environment and constitute agents of promoting its members' intellectual growth and development (Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Rumberger, 2011).

Several researchers have manifested the significance of cultural differences in the creation of different learning conditions for children who derive from dif-

ferent socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural groups (D'Agostino, 2000; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; Teklemariam, 2011). The cultural differentiation among families, resulting from their corresponding socioeconomic differentiation, has been used as a vehicle for the interpretation of issues related to the poor school performance of children coming from lower social class families that are reported to have a low cultural status as well.

Lower social class families create an environment deprived of the appropriate stimuli, so that their children's mental abilities and skills are not triggered and developed, since there is lack of their familiarization with culture, that is, music, literature, drama, museums, resulting in the underdevelopment of their cognitive and intellectual skills, which would help them perform better at school (Trang & Van der Velden, 2011; Samal, 2012).

On the other hand, the children that come from powerful—in all aspects—families carry along the cultural capital, which is essential to their school success, since it is the same as that adopted by the school they attend. Special behavioral patterns, ways of speaking, dressing, inter personal interaction and communication, adopting an appropriate language code and a positive self-image are all parameters comprising the cultural capital that the children from families with low socioeconomic status are deprived of. Moreover, these deprived children seem to have limited access to important notions, issues and ideas that their school curriculum deals with, fail to successfully respond to the needs and requirements posed and finally abandon school (Delpit, 1988; Silva & Kucer, 1997).

2.5. Parent-Child Interaction

It is widely accepted that the role parents perform on their children's educational growth and development is crucial and better academic outcomes are fostered through the fundamental family-school cooperation (Christenson & Conoley, 1992; Chavkin, 1993; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993a; Fan & Chen, 2001; Spera, 2005; Stone, 2006; Jeynes, 2007; Rumberger, 2011; Xanthacou, Babalis, & Stavrou, 2013).

Parents monitor and regulate their children's activities, provide them with emotional support, encourage their independent decision-making and constitute a powerful socializing agent for them, equipping them with all the necessary "tools" for the process of personal change and growth they have to go through and helping them form a socially accepted behaviour as "this is dictated by the norms of the social group they belong in" (Child, 1972: p. 15).

In this framework, all the prerequisites for the formation of a child's social behavior in a given social circle are set (Henecka, 2001; Babalis, 2011) and his/her transition from the first socializing level to the second one, which is school, and his/her adaptation and/or acceptance by the school system are achieved. In particular, basic skills are cultivated in children, such as, conquering specific knowledge and skills (in their mother tongue for instance), the practical application of those skills and the development of emotions and motives (learn-

ing aspirations, high self-esteem, motivation for successful school attainment and performance and completion of their studies).

Various researchers have defined this process using different terms. More specifically, parent-children relationship and interaction has been referred to as social capital by Coleman (1988), while others use the terms parental involvement or parenting style (Fan & Chen, 2001; Spera, 2005; Stone, 2006; Jeynes, 2007). The aforementioned process of socialization is not the same for all families. There are families that promote the cultivation of attitudes, motives and learning skills in their children, while others act in an adverse way, resulting in bringing up children with low academic aspirations and unable to exploit their potential in such a way so as to come to a successful completion of their studies (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007).

The physical absence of parents due to various reasons, the limited amount of time parents and children spend together with the corresponding parental inattention to their children's activities and the lack of instillation of educational values to them have been reported as detrimental to a child's course towards successful school completion (Lichter, Gretchen, Cornwall, & Eggebeen, 1993; Phares, 2010; Babalis & Tsoli, 2017).

Several researchers have claimed that great parental expectations and their positive encounter and attitude minimize the risk of their children dropping out of school (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1997; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000; Jacob, 2001; Stone, 2006; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Rumberger, 2011). According to Sanders and Epstein (2000), teenagers, though needing more independence than younger children, are in a greater need of parental guidance, support and caring. A trusting and supporting family environment, which promotes teenagers' autonomy, wards off any thoughts of dropping out of school (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993b; Deslandes, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lloynd, Mete, & Grant, 2009).

3. Research Design

3.1. Participants

A sample of one thousand five hundred twenty-eight (1528) students (799 boys—52.3%; 729 girls, 47.7% girls) volunteered to participate in this study. Out of the total sample, one thousand three hundred and fifty-eight (1358, 88.9%) were indigenous students, and one hundred seventy (170, 11.1%) were foreign students. The students ranged in age from 13 to 15 years old and they were attending the 1st Grade of Junior High School (575 students, 37.7%), the 2nd Grade of Junior High School (475 students, 31.1%), and the 3rd Grade of Junior High School (478 students, 31.3%). Regarding the area of the schools the students were attending, one thousand one hundred and fifty-four (1154, 75.5%) students' schools were located in an urban area, seventy three (73, 4.8%) in a semi-urban area, and three hundred and one (301, 19.8%) students were attending a school situated in a rural area.

3.2. Instrument

For the purposes of the study under scrutiny, an anonymous student questionnaire was constructed in the Greek language. The questionnaire construction was based on the social-familial factors influencing a child's decision to drop out of school, drawn up from the relevant literature on the phenomenon of early school leaving.

More specifically, the student questionnaire consisted of eight (8) questions, providing their responses in each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 representing "strongly disagree" to 5 referring to "strongly agree", with intermediate points of 2 repressing "disagree", 3 "neither agree or disagree" and 4 "agree".

The aim of the specific questionnaire was to examine the level of encouragement Greek students receive by their parents regarding their personal choice of a future profession and whether their parents enhearten them to pursue optimal performance at school by always doing their best in order to achieve their goals. Further, it was important to find out whether students were assisted in their schoolwork by their parents and supported in the event of low grades or/and a possible school failure. A critical research question was to find out the ways parents' interest in their children's progress is manifested. This could happen not only through frequent visits to school aiming at being informed about students' progress, but also through their awareness of their children's social life, either being negatively influenced by it or not.

3.3. Procedure

In the beginning, the researcher requested for permission to carry out the present study in the Districts of Aitoloakarnania and Attica in Greece and administer herself the questionnaires of the present study to the students of the corresponding schools. The schools were randomly selected based on a list provided by the Greek Ministry of Education, which was stratified based on gender and socioeconomic group (high, medium, low), in order to be representative of the demographic characteristics and status of the population. A parental consent was also required for the children to participate in the study.

Before the main data collection of the study, a pilot study was conducted to examine possible misunderstandings by the students. The researcher had to administer questionnaires to 20 students, who were randomly selected from various backgrounds—either personal or academic ones—and run a pilot study of the questionnaires, so as to be given the chance to make any alterations emerged as necessary.

After proceeding with any changes in the questionnaires based on the pilot study, the main research took place and the researcher entered the classrooms herself explaining the purpose of the study to the students willing to participate in it. The participants were given a time-span of ten (10') minutes to fill in the questionnaires. Any questions raised were answered by the researcher and, as a

whole, the procedure was carried out as expected. The completion of the questionnaires was followed by the statistical analysis of the data as follows.

3.4. Statistical Analysis

Based on the purpose and the hypotheses of the study, univariate and multivariate statistical analyses were conducted to address the purposes of the present study. In order to examine the differences among the participants in the study based on their gender, nationality, school grade, and area of their school, a series of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were conducted. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs were performed on the subscales of significant MANOVA effects (Scheffe test). In addition, Bonferroni adjustment was applied to control for the inflation of Type I error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006).

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

As far as the social-family factors are concerned, the results indicate that students are highly encouraged by their families to follow the profession they wish (M = 4.31, SD = 0.90), with a high percentage of them agreeing (32.7%) or strongly agreeing (52.3%) on the aforementioned issue, reaching a total rate of 85%. Moreover, students' answers, regarding the amount of encouragement they receive by their parents to do their best, reached a high percentage, by agreeing at a percentage of 20.8% and totally agreeing at a percentage of 73.3%. On the other hand, based on the students' answers, it seems that they are helped with their schoolwork by their families less (M = 3.23, SD = 1.19), and they are supported in the occasion of low grades in a similar way (M = 3.35, SD = 1.125). Further, parents are more than aware of the friends and acquaintances their children have, showing a high percentage on that (M = 4.07, SD = 1.02). Finally, judging from the answers of the students of our sample, the members of their families visit schools quite often, so as to be informed by their children's teachers about their academic progress (M = 3.86, SD = 1.06) (Figure 1).

4.2. Differences among the Groups

The differences in the social-family factors based on the examined independent factors (gender, nationality, school area, school grade, number of friends) are presented in Tables 1-5. In more detail, multiple analysis of variance was applied to examine the differences among the independent variables, as well as, the means (M), the standard deviations (SD), the statistical significance indices [Wilk's Λ, F-value, degrees of freedom (df), statistical significance level (p-value) and effect size (η_p^2)].

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the social-family factors in boys and girls are presented in Table 1. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results indicated significant differences between boys and girls in the social-family factors (Wilks' Λ = .982, $F_{1,1508}$ = 4.488, p < .001, η_p^2 = .02). Fol-

low-up analysis in each dependent factor, applying Bonferroni adjustment, indicated significant differences in the following factors: 1) parental professional encouragement ($F_{1,1508} = 7.424$, $p < .01$, $\eta_P^2 = .01$), 2) parental knowledge about
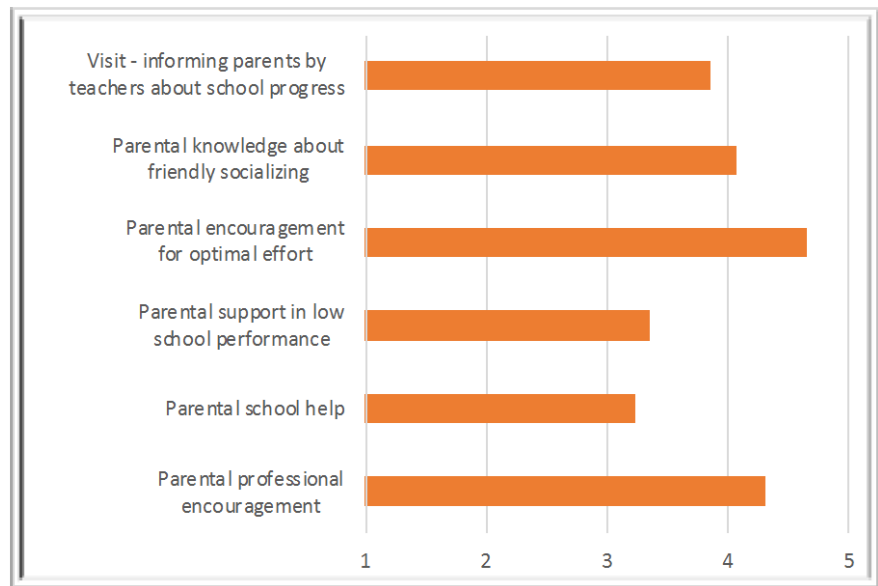
Figure 1. Social-family factors.

Table 1. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the social-family factors in boys and girls in the total sample.

Social/Family Factors	Boys	Girls
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$
Parental professional encouragement	4.25 (0.92)	4.38 (0.85)
Parental school help	3.21 (1.20)	3.25 (1.17)
Parental support in low school performance	3.34 (1.25)	3.37 (1.26)
Parental encouragement for optimal effort	4.61 (0.73)	4.68 (0.68)
Parental knowledge about friendly socializing	3.98 (1.05)	4.18 (0.97)
Visit-parents' informing by teachers about school progress	3.76 (1.09)	3.96 (1.00)

Table 2. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the social-family factors of the indigenous and foreign students in the total sample.

Social/Family Factors	Indigenous students	Foreign students
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$
Parental professional encouragement	4.34 (0.86)	4.07 (1.10)
Parental school help	3.27 (1.18)	2.88 (1.22)
Parental support in low school performance	3.38 (1.25)	3.12 (1.28)
Parental encouragement for optimal effort	4.66 (0.68)	4.52 (0.91)
Parental knowledge about friendly socializing	4.08 (1.01)	4.00 (1.05)
Visit-parents' informing by teachers about school progress	3.90 (1.04)	3.53 (1.11)

Table 3. Means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) of the social-family factors of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Grade Junior High School students in the total sample.

Social/Family Factors	1st Grade High School M (SD)	2nd Grade High School M (SD)	3rd Grade High School M (SD)
Parental professional encouragement	4.26 (0.92)	4.35 (0.86)	4.33 (0.88)
Parental school help	3.34 (1.15)	3.24 (1.22)	3.09 (1.20)
Parental support in low school performance	3.38 (1.26)	3.33 (1.31)	3.33 (1.19)
Parental encouragement for optimal effort	4.66 (0.70)	4.62 (0.68)	4.63 (0.74)
Parental knowledge about friendly socializing	4.05 (1.07)	4.04 (0.98)	4.13 (0.96)
Visit-parents' informing by teachers about school progress	3.94 (1.00)	3.85 (1.07)	3.77 (1.09)

Table 4. Means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) of the social-family factors of the urban, semi-urban, and rural school students in the total sample.

Social/Family Factors	Urban area M (SD)	Semi-circular area M (SD)	Rural area M (SD)
Parental professional encouragement	4.31 (0.87)	4.16 (1.07)	4.35 (0.92)
Parental school help	3.32 (1.15)	3.32 (1.14)	2.86 (1.29)
Parental support in low school performance	3.30 (1.26)	3.62 (1.13)	3.49 (1.23)
Parental encouragement for optimal effort	4.65 (0.70)	4.57 (0.68)	4.64 (0.71)
Parental knowledge about friendly socializing	4.06 (1.01)	4.26 (0.77)	4.08 (1.09)
Visit-parents' informing by teachers about school progress	3.85 (1.04)	3.90 (1.02)	3.90 (1.10)

Table 5. Means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) of the social-family factors of the students with different number of friends in the total sample.

Social/Family Factors	Friends absence M (SD)	Few friends M (SD)	Several friends M (SD)	Many friends M (SD)
Parental professional encouragement	4.17 (1.27)	4.31 (0.85)	4.28 (0.90)	4.33 (0.89)
Parental school help	2.33 (1.09)	3.16 (1.27)	3.26 (1.14)	3.28 (1.17)
Parental support in low school performance	2.54 (1.35)	3.28 (1.27)	3.41 (1.20)	3.38 (1.26)
Parental encouragement for optimal effort	4.08 (1.28)	4.59 (0.80)	4.67 (0.65)	4.67 (0.66)
Parental knowledge about friendly socializing	3.54 (1.38)	4.17 (1.03)	4.12 (0.95)	4.03 (1.02)
Visit-parents' informing by teachers about school progress	2.87 (1.34)	3.90 (1.04)	4.12 (0.95)	4.03 (1.02)

friendly socializing ($F_{1,1508} = 14.810$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$), and 3) Visit-parents' informing by teachers about school progress ($F_{1,1508} = 13.603$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$). More specifically, girls indicated significant higher mean values compared to boys in the three aforementioned factors indicating a greater degree of agree-

ment as to the existence of the specific behavior by their parents and family (Figure 2).

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the social-family factors in the indigenous and foreign students are presented in Table 2. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results indicated significant differences between indigenous and foreign students in the social-family factors (Wilks' Λ = .976, $F_{1,1508}$ = 6.086, p < .001, η_p^2 = .02). Follow-up analysis in each dependent factor, applying Bonferroni adjustment, indicated significant differences in the following factors: 1) parental professional encouragement ($F_{1,1508}$ = 13.488, p < .001, η_p^2 = .01), 2) parental school help ($F_{1,1508}$ = 16.463, p < .001, η_p^2 = .01), 3) parental support in low school performance ($F_{1,1508}$ = 6.483, p < .01, η_p^2 = .01), 4) parental encouragement for optimal effort ($F_{1,1508}$ = 5.628, p < .05, η_p^2 = .01), and 5) visit – parents' informing by teachers about school progress ($F_{1,1508}$ = 18.397, p < .001, η_p^2 = .01). In more detail, indigenous students indicated significant higher mean values compared to foreign students in the five aforementioned factors indicating a greater degree of agreement as to the existence of the specific behavior by their parents and family (Figure 3).

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the social-family factors in the indigenous and foreign students are presented in Table 3. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results indicated significant differences among the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Grade Junior High School students in the total sample (Wilks' Λ = .983, $F_{2,1507}$ = 2.174, p < .01, η_p^2 = .01). Follow-up ANOVAs (Tukey test) on each dependent factor, applying Bonferroni adjustment, indicated significant differences in the following factors: 1) parental school help ($F_{2,1507}$ = 5.653, p < .01, η_p^2 = .01) and 2) visit – parents' informing by teachers about school progress ($F_{2,1507}$ = 3.093, p < .05, η_p^2 = .01). In more detail, 1st Grade Junior High
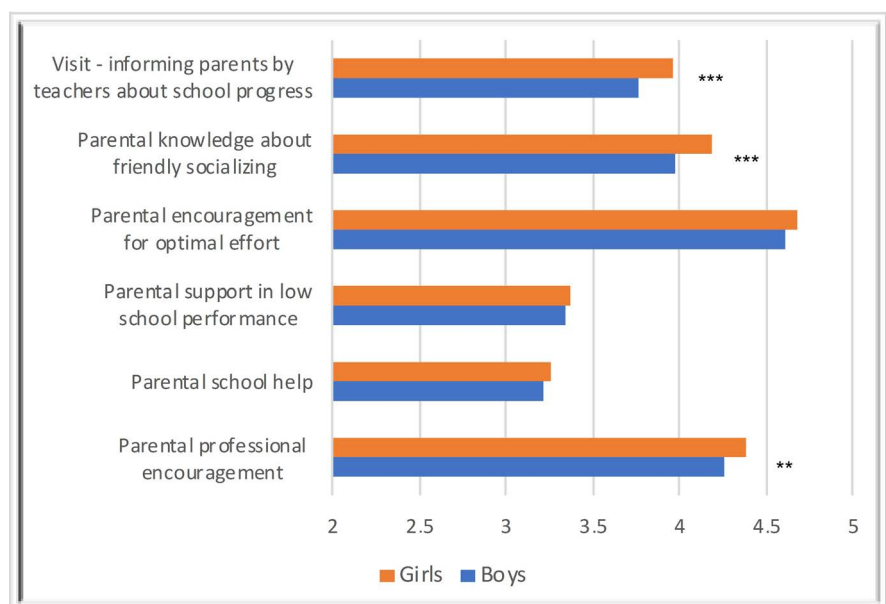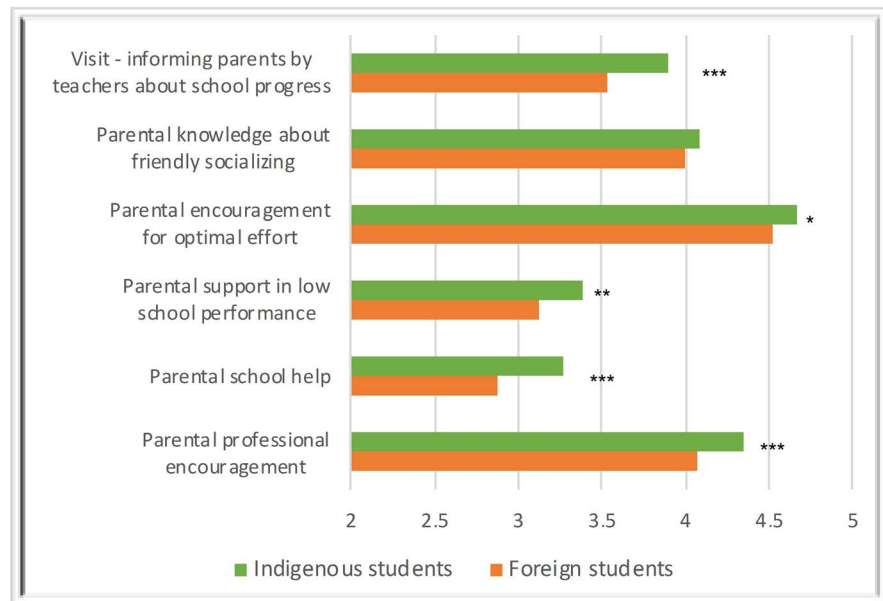

Figure 2. Histogram of students' responses (boys-girls) in the social-family factors.

Figure 3. Histogram of students' responses (nationality) in the social-family factors.

School students revealed significant higher mean values compared to students attending the other two grades of Junior High School, and mainly compared to the 3rd Grade Junior High School students.

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the social-family factors of the urban, semi-urban, and rural school students in the total sample are presented in Table 4. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results indicated significant differences among the urban, semi-urban, and rural school students in the total sample (Wilks' $\Lambda = .959$, $F_{2,1507} = 5.275$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$). Follow-up ANOVAs (Tukey test) on each dependent factor, applying Bonferroni adjustment, indicated significant differences in the following factors: 1) parental school help ($F_{2,1507} = 18.257$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$), and 2) parental support in low school performance ($F_{2,1507} = 4.147$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$). In more detail, the urban and semi-urban area students revealed significant higher mean values compared to the rural students in the parental school help, whereas the urban and semi-urban area students revealed significant lower mean values compared to the rural students regarding parental support in low school performance.

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the social-family factors of students with a different number of friends (not any, few, several, many friends) are presented in Table 5. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results indicated significant differences among the students with a different number of friends (Wilks' $\Lambda = .961$, $F_{3,1506} = 3.331$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$). Follow-up ANOVAs (Tukey test) on each dependent factor, applying Bonferroni adjustment, indicated significant differences in the following factors: 1) parental school help ($F_{3,1506} = 5.464$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$), 2) parental support in low school performance ($F_{3,1506} = 4.167$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$), 3) parental encouragement for optimal effort ($F_{3,1506} = 6.205$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$), 4) parental knowledge about friendly

socializing ($F_{3,1506} = 3.859$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$), and 5) visit – parents' informing by teachers about school progress ($F_{3,1506} = 7.478$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$). In more detail, in the five aforementioned issues raised, the students with no friends at all indicated significant lower mean values compared to the rest of the students, no matter what their number of friends is (Figure 4).

5. Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to outline a range of family factors which can potentially influence dropping out of school. It supports the fact that dropping out of school can rarely be put down to one event or one impact, but rather it is influenced by a range of interacting factors, which are specific to the individual contexts of each child. To this end, early school leaving is seen as a process rather than an event, with individual cases being difficult to replicate. Yet, through literature, patterns emerge which suggest that, in particular contexts, certain children are more prone to dropping out than others and specific measures taken might address some of the risks these children face.

In this vein, the main purpose of the current research was to examine those family factors that place Greek young people at risk of leaving school early. The relevant literature has revealed that those at most risk of dropping out of school are children from socially disadvantaged family environments (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Banks, 2006; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Neuman & Dickinson, 2000; Rumberger, 2011; Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Ngaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum, 2012; Bloom & Unterman, 2014).

Followingly, the differences in the social-family factors based on the examined factors of gender, nationality, school area, grade of attendance and number of friends are analyzed in this study, which has identified six "at risk" indicators
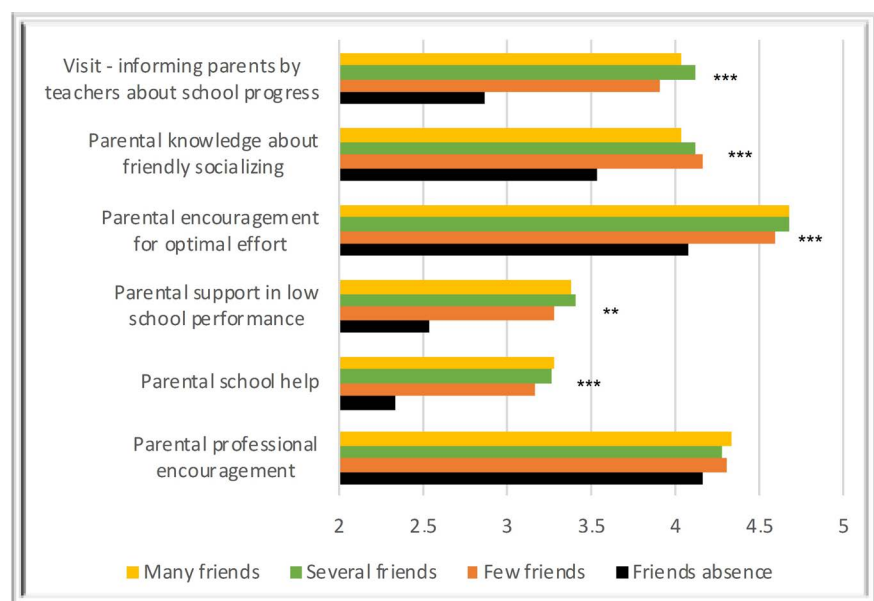
Figure 4. Histogram of students responses (different number of friends) in the social-family factors.

from the literature: parental professional encouragement, parental school help, parental support in low school performance, parental encouragement for optimal effort, parental knowledge of children's social life and the frequency of parents' visits to school and their relevant informing by teachers.

The descriptive analysis showed that although the participants in the study are highly encouraged by their families to follow the profession they wish and do their best so as to achieve their academic goals, they are not adequately helped by them with their schoolwork and are not supported in the event of low grading, which, according to various researchers (Tansel, 2002; Cardoso & Verner, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2013) are considered to be variables of pivotal importance to children's social and academic progress.

More specifically, examining the aforementioned independent factors, significant differences have been aroused. Thus, regarding parental professional encouragement, parental knowledge of children's social life and the frequency of parents' visits to school and their relevant informing by teachers, girls indicated significant higher mean values compared to boys. This finding is compatible with the findings of various researchers (Coley, 2001; Crowder & South, 2003; Davis & Bauman, 2008; Rumberger, 2011), according to which, girls are more supported by their family environments to go along with their studies, to achieve higher goals in their academic course and, in general, they seem to have better school performance than boys (Coley, 2001). Gender stereotypes and differences that used to hold girls back and prepare them only for the role of a wife and a mother no longer exist (UNICEF, 2014; Subrahmanyam, 2016). Further, girls appear to be the recipients not only of more educational resources than boys but of more moral support and encouragement by their families (Furlong, 1986; Weiner, 1986; King, 1987; Acker, 1988; Argyle, 2002; West & Pennell, 2003; Davis & Bauman, 2008; Ryle, 2011). Additionally, the thorough study of the research findings has brought us to the conclusion that the high family support is positively linked to a positive attitude towards the successful completion of school (Johnson & Johnson, 1983; Johnson, Johnson, & Anderson, 1983; Johnson, Johnson, Buckman, & Richards, 1985; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). However, according to the findings under scrutiny, it is claimed that this sense of achievement is differently perceived by families concerning the distinction between boys and girls. Parents should be aware of such a fact, as it is also mentioned in similar studies (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Garton & Pratt, 2001; Fawcett & Garton, 2005).

Furthermore, as far as the nationality of the participants in our study is concerned, significant differences are revealed between students that are of Greek origin and those coming from other countries. In more detail, indigenous students indicated significant higher mean values compared to foreign students in the five aforementioned variables indicating a greater degree of agreement as to the existence of the specific behavior by their parents and family in general. It is widely supported in literature that foreign students tend to fail in school more than native ones and their dropping out rates are higher (Ogbu, 1987; Banks,

2006; Rumberger, 2011; Bloom & Unterman, 2014). The reasons that usually differentiate the nationally, linguistically and culturally different students are various. Namely, it is claimed that their families' cultural differentiation, socio-economic and educational background are prevailing factors of school failure and ultimately, dropping out of school (Edwards, 1998; Banks, 2006; Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Ngaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum, 2012). Additionally, parental support and encouragement for the completion of studies is reported to be less in foreign families, a fact that is confirmed in the present study. This could be explained by the fact that foreign students' parents are not in a position to offer their children help with their schoolwork or initiate a parent-teacher relationship so as to be constantly informed about their children's progress at school, as they are not native speakers of the language spoken and taught at schools. Finally, since there are the aforementioned barriers of culture, language, attitude and expectations on the part of foreign students, they tend to be more prone to absenteeism, truancy and juvenile delinquency-all reported as factors of dropping out of school (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Ou, Mersky, Reynolds, & Kohler, 2007; Finn, Fish, & Scott, 2008; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Glesmann, Krisberg, & Marchionna, 2010; Rumberger, 2011; Bloom & Unterman, 2014), with parents showing less or no interest in getting to know their children's social life, an important finding of our study.

Another significant finding of the present study is the emergence of differences among the three grades of Junior High School attended by the participants in the research. In particular, the 1st Grade Junior High School students revealed significant higher mean values regarding the variables of the questionnaire administered, compared to the students who attend the other two Junior High School grades, and mainly compared to the 3rd Grade High School students. This finding is compatible with the general consensus researchers have reached (Viadero, 2001; Allaire, Michaud, Boissonneault, Cote, & Diallo, 2005; Coyle, 2009; Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Senecal, 2007; Zimmerman, 2008; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Rumberger, 2011; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; Bloom & Unterman, 2014; Subrahmanyam, 2016), according to which the highest dropping out rates are reported to appear before the completion of the compulsory school cycle, which, generally speaking, is Junior High school, as is the case with the Greek educational system. The specific findings could be explained by the fact that the sense of belonging is higher in students of the first grade of Junior High school, as the bonds that have been created with school as an institution in Primary school are stronger and students' motivation is greater (Rotermund, 2010 in Rumberger, 2011, p. 187). Moreover, parents seem to support and guide children more at a younger age, due to their emotional state as young children, than at a later stage of their studies. Also, students' social life changes as children turn into teenagers, initiating, thus, a different emotional state (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Garnier, Stein, & Jacobs, 1997; Battin-Pearson, 2000; Reynolds, Ou, & Topitzes, 2004; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). The fact that the students feel that they do not receive adequate family and academic support re-

veals that they have a different perception of the school climate prevailing Primary and Junior High school. Such a differentiation is emphasized by the fact that Primary school students feel less alienated and experience feelings of extrinsic motivation, family support and academic self-esteem, compared to Junior High school students. The specific outcomes are congruent with those of the international literature (Samaha & DeLisi, 2000; Underwood, Underwood, & Wood, 2000; Druyan, 2001).

Additionally, as far as the places where the schools our study was conducted in were located, the urban and semi-urban area students revealed significant higher mean values compared to the rural students in the parental school help variable, whereas the urban and semi-urban area students revealed significant lower mean values compared to the rural students regarding parental support in low school performance. The particular fact is actually compatible with the findings of several studies (Goleman, 1995; Lempers & Clark, 1998; Lester & Miller, 1990; Singh & Sinha, 2002), in which it is undisputable that children's ability to successfully recognize and manage the importance of school completion, to develop friendly relationships, to be able to work in groups, to seek for techniques in order to resolve conflicts among the members of the school community, and to really understand themselves and their behaviour, flourish in family environments located in urban areas, with the aid of supportive and emotionally mature parents. Relevant studies (Tomlinson, 1991; Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Arie, 1996; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 2001) reveal that children, whose parents are indifferent and unconcerned, end up being impulsive, with less emotional self-control and unable to form any kind of relationship-factors that are stated as indicative of early school leaving, while those, whose parents are caring, devoting a lot of their time to them, seem to be generally more sociable, adaptable, self-conscious and academically successful. Therefore, it is supported that these social and emotional skills are acquired, cultivated and brought to perfection in such a family environment that is not malfunctioning and where healthy patterns of behaviour are projected by adults with high aspirations for their children's fruitful academic course (Fraser & Walberg, 1991; Pianta, 1999; Matsagouras & Voulgaris, 2006).

In an effort to interpret and comment on the specific findings, it seems that the parents of the students in urban and semi-urban areas, who participated in the present study, are of a high social and economic status, trying to provide them with as much as they can possibly offer, while parents living in rural areas are more absorbed in their daily efforts to make a living and probably get so carried away by this endeavor that they probably neglect issues of paramount importance to their children's upbringing, thus resulting in their deprivation of a full emotional and educational development.

Finally, another important finding of the present study is that the female participants of our sample who stated that they had very few or no friends at all showed significant higher mean values compared to the rest of the students (no matter how many friends they reported), a fact that is totally compatible with the

findings of other researchers (Nunan, 1987; Mitchell, 1988; Lawrence, 1990; Lamb, 1995; Huffman & Speer, 2000; Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Ngaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum, 2012; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). Reading between the lines, it can be inferred that students are not only supported academically on school subjects by their families, but on personal matters as well, a fact that gives ground to the development of friendlier, more effective and personal relationships among students and, ultimately, create a more positive school climate, which is considered to act as a deterrent from dropping out of school (Zullig, Koopman, Patton, & Ubbes, 2010; Simba, Agak, & Kabuka, 2016; Kotok, Ikoma, & Bodovski, 2016).

6. Conclusion

Having concluded, within the limitations of the present study, it is hoped that not only the characteristics of the students at risk of dropping out of school have gained distinction, but also the significance of parental involvement in their children's education and upbringing in general, as well as the awareness of their indispensable role in the improvement of this educational process have been highlighted. Parents' personal educational, economic, social and cultural background, their own educational aspirations, the ambitions, values and hopes they pass on to their children, their support and encouragement in every step their children take are all key determinants of these children's successful academic course and school completion.

"*For most children to succeed in school, their parents' interest in their learning is of paramount importance. But this interest ought to be with what happens on a daily basis, because this is how the child lives, and this is how he understands his life. The essential ingredient in most children's success in school is a positive relation to his parents*" (Bettelheim, 1987: p. 69, cited in Kainuwa & Yusuf, 2019)

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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