

## Health Care Problems in Rural Areas Schools -Parental Point of View

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### Abstract

*The rapid economical and social developments have put the school forward of some different challenges. These changes are reflected in the rural areas, too. The parents nowadays are not interested only on their quotidian duties toward their children, but also in other aspects, and of course one of them is school where they spend most of their time. One of the important things related to school is children's health, even though it is not seen as a direct connection, it affects their life and their future lifestyle. In this study we aim to present some of these problems the parents face in their children's health aspects, seen related to school. The purpose of this study is to identify the problems and the obstacles the parents face in front of school conditions and services they offered to their children. This article aims with the help of the answers of 274 parents of children of 6 rural area schools in Shkodra's county, to reflect some of their point of view about health problems. This is a point survey. To select the sample was used the sampling with stratification, where in each layer was made from a simple random sample. 300 questionnaires were distributed (mostly with closed questions) in six different villages, 50 questionnaires for each village) Shkodra District. The distribution was in rural areas in North and South of Shkodra. The distribution period was December 2013 - January 2014. The data were elaborated with SPSS.20 program.*

**Keywords:** children, health, parents, rural area, school.

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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, parents are more and more interested about the physical, psychological and social development of their children. They are also interested on their progress at school and they do not see the school only as a place where others, (teachers, headmasters and staff) to try the best for the children. The parents try to see the school not only in the educational point of view, but also as a place where their children can find help, support, care and protection, a place where they can learn not about the lessons and at the same time about their life. Parents are becoming very important stakeholders for the schools, by aiming to raise the objectives for a better quality of schools not only in the educational point of view, but also of better conditions, safer places, health care, good feeding, different activities and bigger possibilities for them. Recently, the school is also seen as a place where children will be part of different activities (sport, art, science, acting etc.) not only to see them as part of these activities, but also to construct their identity, their personality, their healthy life and hygienic conditions, lightening, the desks etc. (Gera.R, et al.2012, pg.213-222) So parents tend to be aware of health care, because it can affect the morbidity in the future life of their children as scoliosis, accidents, hearing problems, infection respiratory diseases, gastrointestinal infections, overweight, obesity, poor verbal communication and mental health problems. The road accidents are the main cause of mortality 5-14 year of children old in the low economics incomes countries of European region. Noise pollution effects on human health are a matter of

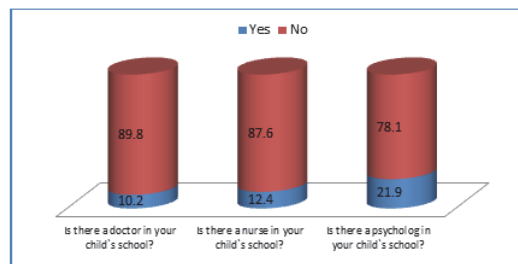
great concern. Noise pollution can affect us in several vital organs. Noise can interrupt a good night's sleep, and when this occurs, the person feels extremely annoyed and uncomfortable. This can considerably decrease a person's ability to work efficiently. The air quality is connected with transport car, combustion of solid wastes and emission in environment air pollutants as: oxides of sulphur, nitrogen oxides, mono and carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons, lead, soot, dust and cancerous substances which are the main factors increasing the cases of respiratory infection. Obesity is one type of malnutrition and considered as an important risk of factor for the several chronic diseases such as cardiovascular and diabetes. Obesity is an important cause of morbidity, disability and premature death (WHO, 2004). These related to child factors, family dynamics, parenting, knowledge and beliefs, extra familiar influences and resources and environment. (Ostrowska. L, et al. 2009. pg. 389-396).

## 2. Methodology

This is a point survey. To select the sample was used the sampling with stratification, where in each layer was made from a simple random sample. 300 questionnaires were distributed (mostly with closed questions) in six different villages, 50 questionnaires for each village) Shkodra district. The questionnaire was based on parents self-reporting. 274 of 300 questionnaires were returned (91%) questionnaires completed by parents of children attending these schools. The distribution was in North of Shkodra and South of Shkodra. In South of Shkodra was included a high school in Oblikë and the secondary school of Bushat and Trush (is including also an elementary school Shkjezë, annexed Bushat.) Also the questionnaire is delivered in North of Shkodra: Dragoç, Shtoj i Ri and Hoti i Ri (all secondary schools). The distribution period was December 2013 - January 2014. The data were elaborated with SPSS.20 program.

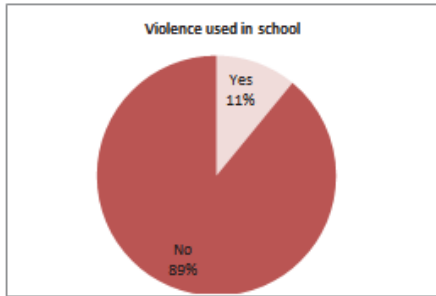
## 3. Results and Discussion

In this study have participated parents of both genders. 54% of them are females and 46% are male. Their age varies: 22% of the participants are between 22-35 years old; 36- 45 years old are 54% and over 46 years old are 24% of the population who participated in this study. They have also different levels of education: 5% have an elementary level of education, 38% followed the secondary school, 39,4% high school,15,7% university and 1,8% have a master degree. On the other hand their children also follow different level of education: 34% are in primary school, 44% in secondary school and 22% follow high school. About the kind of school (public or private) they follow, the parents admit that their children in 93% of all the participants in this study have followed only the public school and only 7% of them have followed both systems of education.

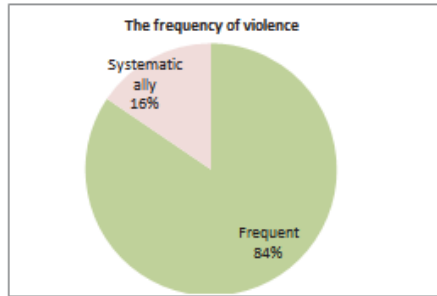


**Graf.1.** Is there a doctor/ nurse/ psychologist

The parents admit that in their children's school have a doctor (90%), and only 10% don't have a doctor. In fact there are no doctors in the schools, but the medical service of each rural area in Shkodra has a doctor and a nurse which look after health children in school. These institutions are near the schools so they do their job without being part of the school staff. 12% admit that the schools have a nurse and 88% do not admit this existence. About the presence of a psychologist in school, the parents in 78% of them say that there is not this service, only 22 % of the parents admit about the presence of this service. In fact only some schools in rural area have a psychologist; the schools in the city do not have a full time psychologist, but one psychologist covers 2-3 schools depending on the pupils' number.

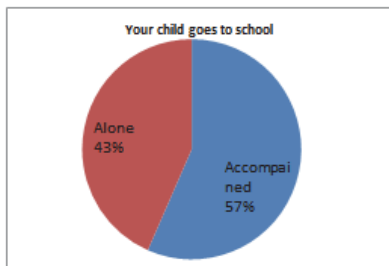


Graf. 2. Violence used in school

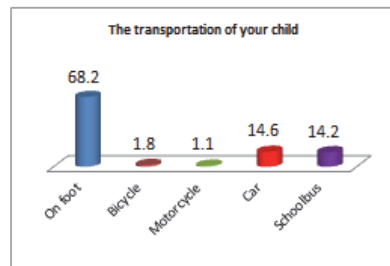


Graf.3. The frequency of violence

Parents admit in 11% of them that they are violated by the school staff, especially the teachers and about the frequency of it, 84% of this violence is rare and in 16% of the cases it is frequent. It is true that the cases are reducing but the truth is that it still exists in our schools.

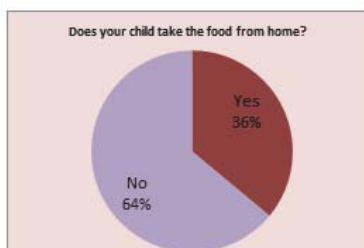


Graf.4. Your child goes to school

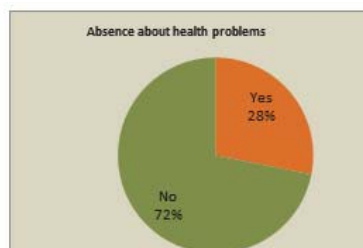


Graf. 5. The transportation of your child

The children according to the accompaniment of their children admit that in 57% of the answered they say that they accompanied their children in school and 43% of them let them to go alone. They admit that 68% of their children go to school on foot, 15% go by car, 14 % use the school bus (this is a vehicle that is offered to the children who live far from the school, but it is a bus paid by the parents and it is not the property of the school, but a private vehicle to support the parents and their children). 2% of the children use a bicycle and only 1% uses a motorbike. The parents confirm that the reason they accompany their children is because of the crowded traffic, the unsafe roads and the feeling unsafe in general about all things can happen during the way to school. They report also the lack of means of transport to more remote areas. (Qarku Shkodër 2010, pg.9)



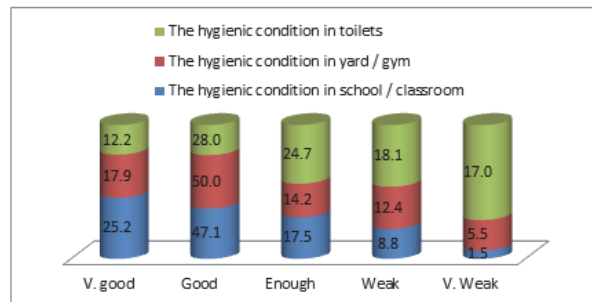
Graf. 6. Does your child take the food from home



Graf. 7. Absences about health problems

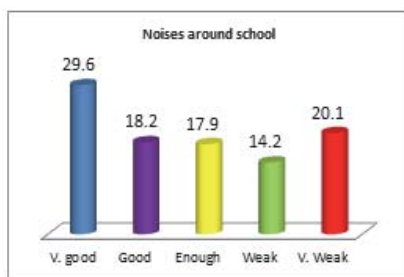
About the feeding of their children at school, this is not offered by our schools, but the children can take away their snacks or they can buy something near the school. About this question 64% of the parents participants admit that their

children do not get or buy food at school, but 36% of them agree about this fact( their children have a snack at school). 68% of the last group of the children bought the food at school (salty or sweet snacks, hamburgers, sandwiches, chocolates, different beverages-classified as unhealthy food) and only 32% of them take the food prepared at home. The reason of their absences in school is only in 28% of them because of health problems as flu, the influences of the winter and the other illnesses of this group age.

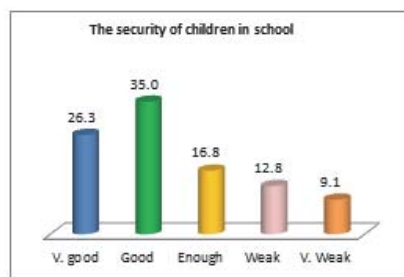


**Graf.8.** The hygienic conditions in school/yard/ toilettes

The parents' opinion about the hygienic conditions in school environments, 47% of them evaluate them good, 25% very good, 18% enough good , 9% weak and 1,5% very weak. According to the parents' point of view the school and the staff take care of the school environment, they appreciate this aspect of the school. About the hygienic conditions of the school' toilets we see the opposite side of their evaluation comparing to school environments. The parents report in 28% that their situation is good, 25% is enough good, 18% weak, 17% very weak and 12 % very good. On the other hand, the parents have another level of evaluation in the outside environments of the school (yard 50% evaluate it good, 18% very good, 14% enough good, 12 % weak and only 6% very weak. Still today there is little knowledge or awareness among parents about certain groups of diseases that affect children. The curricula of our schools are not adequate to achieve the level of involvement of comprehensive health education. The lack of these programs at the appropriate level, in the long term perspective directly affects the reduction of the sensitivity of the population to health issues. (Qarku Shkodër, 2010, pg.39)



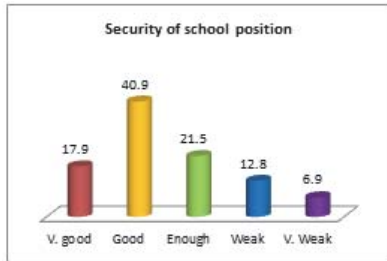
**Graf. 9.** Noises around school



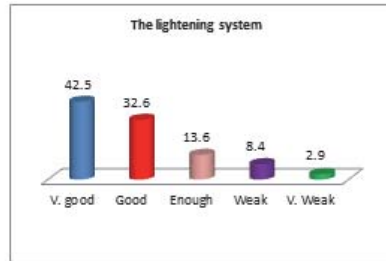
**Graf. 10.** The security of children in school

About the noises around the school, the parents accept in 30% that the level of the noises is very good, that means that they do not have noises near and around the school, 18% of them evaluate it good and the same percentage enough good, 14 % say that the noises are weak and 20 % very weak (so they admit that there are noises). According to the school position, even though they are in rural areas, the schools are near the main streets, where the traffic is more frequent and also the schools are mostly in the center of the village so they are surrounded of all the possible services of the village. For this reason we can say that all of them influence the quietness of the school. Also about the position of the school faced to the traffic near or not the school, 18% of the parents admit that the position is very good,41% good, 22 % enough good, 13% good and only 7% weak. In fact all the schools represented in this study have fences, especially with the possibility to see through it and to give the possibility to observe the street before they get out of the school, even

though they are in the main street. On the other hand the parents as they admitted, that they accompanied their children for safety reasons, especially to prevent accidents on the road.

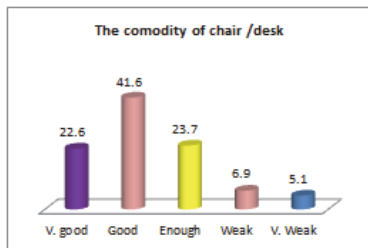


**Graf.11.** Security of school position

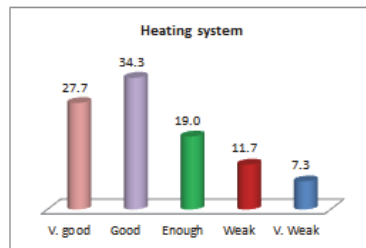


**Graf. 12.** The lightening system

About the school position, the distance from the road and the traffic, they evaluate this position 40,9% good, 21,5% enough good,17,9% very good, weak in 12,8% of them and very weak 6,9 % of them. On the other hand, about the security inside the school, if the school has a fence to protect meanwhile their children are studying in school, the parents admit in 26,3% of the answered that it is very good, 35 % good, 16,8 % enough good, 12,8% weak and 9,1 % very weak. According to their opinion, the lightening system in the classrooms is for 43% of them very good, 33% good, 14% enough good, 8% weak and only 3% admit that it is very weak.

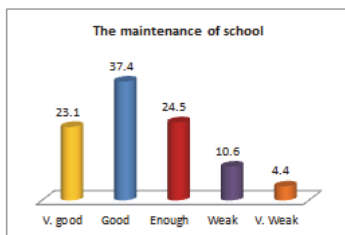


**Graf. 13.** The comodity of chairs/desks

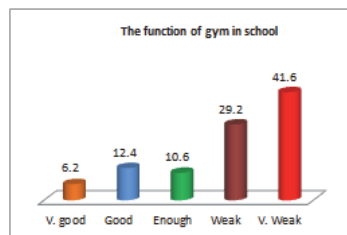


**Graf.14.** Heating system

Their opinion about the comfort ability of the desks and chairs in the classrooms is very good for 22% of them, good for 41,6% of them, for 23,7 % it is enough good, for 6,9% weak and for 5,1% very weak. About the heating system in the school the parents evaluate it in the highest level (34, 3%) good, 27, 7% very good, 19% enough good, 11,7% weak and 7,3% very weak. In our school we do not have a central heating so not all the school is warm during the winter of cold in summer. The heating is only in the classrooms and it is mainly with gas or in some cases there is no heating at all. Even though they have heating with gas, can't cover all the surface of the class room, but on the other hand it affects the children's and teachers' health, causing breathing problems, allergies etc.

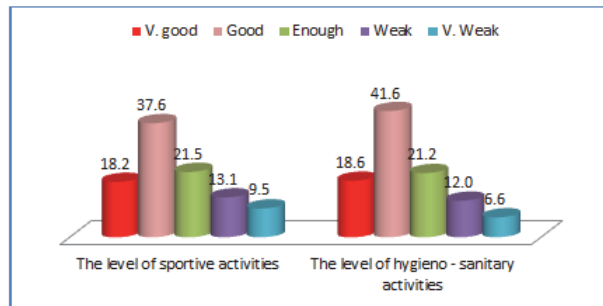


**Graf. 15.** The maintenance of school



**Graf. 16.** The function of gym in school

About the maintenance of the school environment 37,4% evaluate it good, 24,4% enough good 23,1% say it is very good, 10,6% weak and 4,4% very weak. On the other hand, about the gym environments to practice physical education, there is not a good evaluation by the parents, because mostly the schools do not have gyms. The physical education is generally done in the school yard or in the classrooms when the weather conditions are not good to do it outside. The parents in 41,6% of them evaluate it very weak, 29,2 % weak, 12,4 % good, 10,4 % enough good and 6,2% very good. In the reality the parents report the lack of space for entertainment, the inability to take advantage of existing school facilities. (Qarku Shkodër, 2010 pg.9)



**Graf. 17.** The level of sportive and sanitary-hygienic activities

According to the Law of Education and the Disposition about the school, the schools should offer extracurricular activities (sports, concerts, shows etc). About the sportive activities and the frequency of these activities by the school they admit in 37,6% that their level and frequency good, 21,5% enough good, 18,2 % very good and 9,5 % very weak. About the Sanitary- hygienic activities they admit in 41,6% of them that they are good, 21,2 % enough good, 18,6% say that they are very good, 12% weak and 6,6 % very weak.

#### 4. Conclusions

According to the parents' opinion about the school conditions related to their children health we can conclude that:

In rural areas, the schools do not have a doctor inside it, but the medical services covered by the doctor and the nurse of these medical services in their respective areas. Only in some rural areas is a school psychologist, which is officially appointed by the Shkodra's directory of Education. The parents accept the presence of the violence by the teachers toward their children, even though it is rare.

In the majority of cases the children are accompanied to school by their parents, for security reasons. Only a small part of their children go to school with motored vehicles, because of the distance from school.

The schools even though they are placed in rural areas they are near the main streets with traffic and surrounded with all the possible services of these areas that causes noises influencing in the educational process. On the other hand even though the schools have fences that allow the children to check the street, for the parents the school location can be a cause for their children accidents.

The hygienic conditions in classrooms, toilets and the other environments in the school are considered good by the parents, but according to their opinion the most problematic environment are the toilets. The level of lightening, the accommodation of chairs and desks and the heating system are considered good by the parents, but specially the heating (the kind and/or its absence) is the main problematic part in their point of view.

About feeding, the parents accept that their children do not take away their food, but they buy the food near the schools, that not all the time is under control and healthy, with different consequences as: alimentary intoxication, overweight and malnutrition. The level of different activities (sanitary-hygienic and sportive) are not absent in schools, but they are not applied in the desired level by the majority parents' point of view.

#### 5. Recommendations

To raise the pupils level of education by the doctors and the medical staff, through the promotion and health education.

To improve the physical and hygienic school conditions for better health for the children.

To increase the road safety and the safety in the school by the local government.

Children and parents should be aware about the existence, the law application about the violence and the denunciation of the violent cases in school.

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