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The Aspirations of Children at Risk of Dropping out of School: Do Engagement and School Satisfaction Play a Mediating Role?

Abstract

The aspirations of children play a central role in their academic pathways and condition future life opportunities. This article aims to explore the relationships between demographics, school engagement and school satisfaction in explaining the aspirations of children at risk of Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET). Data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire given to 681 children (aged 11 to 18) participating in an extracurricular support programme for students in situations of

vulnerability in Barcelona. Chi-squared variance tests, the Kruskal-Wallis test, and a Structural Equation Model were performed. The results show a bi-directional relationship between satisfaction with school and the self-perception of having good school habits and basic skills. Moreover, the lower the school engagement and satisfaction, the higher the probability of having low aspirations. Girls, primary-school children and those from a migrant background are more likely to have high aspirations.

Keywords: Early leaving from education and training; Student aspirations; School engagement; School satisfaction; Children at risk

1. Introduction

1.1 Early leaving from education and student aspirations

According to the definition provided by international bodies (OECD, EC, EUROSTAT, CEDEFOP), Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET), previously called Early School Leaving, refers to a person aged between 18 and 24 who has completed most lower secondary education but takes no part in further education or training. According to data from 2022 (Eurostat, 2024), this affects 9.6% of young people in Europe; reducing this figure is viewed as a priority by different countries and supranational organizations, such as the European Union (Education and Training 2030 Strategic Framework, European Commission) and the National Dropout Prevention Center in the United States.

ELET is linked to a number of risks, which are not only individual in terms of health and social participation, but also structural, such as a higher probability of unemployment, precarious work opportunities and dependence on welfare. The resulting rise in public expenditure, fall in minimum wages and higher unemployment rates, among other factors, may, in turn, hinder national growth (Guerrero-Puerta and Torres, 2023).

Although the ELET average in Spain has significantly declined over the past decade (from 24.7% to 13.9%), it is still far higher than the European average of 9.6% mentioned above. This has an unequal impact on the population, particularly young people in situations of greater vulnerability; those with special socio-economic needs;

those of foreign origin; students who join the education system late; and those who study in schools with great social complexity (García and Sánchez, 2020).

For the purposes of this study, among the endogenous and exogenous factors that explain ELET at the systemic micro-, meso- and macro level, we highlight the role played by the students' projections of their academic future. These become particularly relevant from the perspective of studies focused on academic pathways, and the conception of ELET as a process of the greater academic disaffection and difficulty that become more evident in secondary education, when more emphasis is placed on cognitive processes (Bernardi and Cebolla-Boado, 2014; Collet-Sabé et al., 2014).

The aspirations of children (and their families) play a central role in their academic pathways (Van den Broeck et al., 2022). According to these authors, academic and professional expectations form educational decisions in the move to post-obligatory and higher education; and these, in turn, condition future life opportunities (OECD, 2012). Furthermore, according to Carrasco et al. (2018), the fact that students have a horizon in their aspirations is an important factor of protection against leaving school early; this is particularly true if the students perceive that their teachers and family share these expectations.

1.2 Factors influencing student aspirations

On the one hand, student aspirations are determined by a series of personal, institutional and structural factors (Dupriez et al., 2012). Thus, firstly, the academic aspirations of children and adolescents are strongly influenced by their socio-demographic and educational contexts. These include gender (Merino and Martínez, 2012); the family's financial, social and cultural capital (Jackson, 2013); and the characteristics of the school, that is, whether it is state-run or private, an all-through school or simply primary or secondary, and the complexity of its social composition (Dupriez et al., 2012; Elias and Daza, 2019). In effect, according to these studies carried out in European contexts, young girls, native young people, those born into medium- or high-income families, and those whose parents hold university or post-secondary school qualifications have a greater

likelihood of displaying higher educational aspirations. Furthermore, the research is consistent in affirming that there is a direct link between academic achievement and high aspirations (Elias and Daza, 2019; Van den Broeck et al., 2022).

On the other hand, student aspirations are also connected to a series of elements related to the subjective plan that forms students' educational experience (Dubet and Martucelli, 1998). The first of these is academic self-concept, by which we mean that students' opinions regarding their academic ability demonstrate how they perceive their adaptation to the school curriculum (Baker, 1998). The attitudes and perceptions of children regarding academic self-efficacy and school engagement have been shown to play a positive significant role in their aspirations (Zava et al., 2022). Similarly,

motivation appeared as a key element in the study by Walkey et al. (2013), which used a motivation scale to show that those students with the lowest aspirations were less represented than those with higher aspirations in the factor “Doing my best”, while they were significantly more represented in that of “Doing just enough”.

The second consideration is that research has also shown instrumental and expressive identification with the school, understood as the instrumental value the individual gives to what they learn at school and their acceptance of its rules, values and culture, to play a role in shaping the educational pathways of young people (Valls, 2021). A third element is the importance of relational aspects. A number of studies have found that teachers play a central role in explaining the processes of academic (dis)connection

and its influence at times of student aspirations, educational choice and transition (e.g. Tarabini, 2018; Van den Broeck et al., 2020). In respect of this, a recent study has linked recommendations or guidance towards an academic or vocational pathway after compulsory education with the perception teachers hold of children’s cognitive capacity; the real possibilities they have to continue their studies; or the avoidance of family or identity ruptures (Tarabini and Jacovkis, 2024). While results are not so consistent regarding peer-relationships, Walkey et al. (2013) found that those students with lower aspirations also scored lower on the scale of relationships with peers.

Finally, reference should be made to socio-affective aspects, which play an important role in shaping educational pathways. Asking young children about their own

perceptions is fundamental in understanding the usefulness and meaning they give to schooling (Demanet and Van Houtte, 2019; Reay, 2018; Tarabini., 2018). In international research on how education affects the quality of life, the concept of school satisfaction is used to gather these elements and measure the personal cognitive judgment of the value of children's school life; this is directly connected to the subjective well-being of young children (Suldo et al., 2014). These studies, which cover highly different contexts, have shown that educational satisfaction varies according to socio-demographic factors such as age or gender; the quality of relationships at school, whether with teachers or peers; positive interiorization of school rules and culture; individual academic competence and psychological functioning; and environmental contexts both inside and outside school

(e.g. Baker and Maupin, 2009; Danielsen et al., 2009; Elmore and Huebner, 2010; Karatzias et al., 2002). A higher degree of satisfaction with the school is associated with a feeling of greater security regarding students' academic abilities, obtaining higher grades and better behaviour in class (Suldo et al., 2014). Casas and González (2017) also revealed different components of school satisfaction, highlighting the effects of relationships with peers and teachers in subjective student welfare.

While the influence of emotional aspects on student aspirations has been studied recently (Garcia-Molsosa et al., 2024; Zava et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020), no in-depth research has been made into the relationship between school satisfaction and aspirations. In this context, Zava et al. (2022) stated that positivity, defined as positive, hopeful

orientation, and optimism play a significant role in student aspirations. Along these lines, Wu et al. (2020) suggested that subjective well-being has to be cultivated in school through a strategy that is directed at achieving better results and academic aspirations. More recently, in the context of Catalonia (Spain), Garcia-Molsosa et al. (2024) have analysed data for 2,056 year 10 students (the final year of compulsory education in Spain) attending 27 schools. The results showed that having a greater subjective well-being is related to a higher likelihood of having higher aspirations; this is particularly true for children from a migrant background.

1.3 Educational support programmes

Educational support programmes incorporate actions aimed at reducing academic failure and contributing to academic success, principally during compulsory education, but also afterwards. While these actions may vary through proposals that involve sport, culture or leisure, our study focuses on those that are directly related to academic content, by which we mean those that take place outside the school timetable and share social functions such as providing children with a safe space and attention; fomenting and complementing the educational opportunities provided by the school; and offering a resource that goes some way to compensating for financial, social and cultural inequalities. Furthermore, educational support programmes have a holistic focus, as they are linked to work on personal and emotional abilities and study habits.

There is a consensus in the research that, in order to establish ties between professionals and participants, the educational team must show commitment to their job and project higher educational expectations onto their students (Granger, 2010; Jordan et al., 2009, Little et al., 2008; Shernoff, 2010). Other studies (González, 2016) have stated that these educational spaces contribute to improving competences such as school performance; reading; mathematics; attitudes towards learning and education; psycho-emotional and social competences; and expectations regarding training. However, assessing the results of academic support currently constitutes both a necessity and a challenge (Palmer et al., 2009).

Given all of the above, it is necessary to continue to search for elements that help our understanding of the role that educational commitment and satisfaction play in student aspirations, particularly in the case of children who are at risk of leaving education early. Models are needed that use scientific evidence to establish associations between aspirations and the socio-demographic variables that influence them, and the various aspects of school satisfaction and motivation, and then analyse whether they may have a mediating effect. The ultimate aim is to suggest recommendations for the implementation of programmes that could mitigate early school leaving and its impact on the welfare of children.

To help fill this gap, this study aims to explore the relationships between demographics, school engagement, and school satisfaction in explaining the aspirations of children at risk of ELET through the following specific objectives: (1) discover differences in the demographics, school engagement and school satisfaction of children at risk of ELET according to their aspirations; and (2) construct a positive model that analyses the relationships between student aspirations, demographics, school engagement and school satisfaction.

2. Method

The study took place within the framework of assessing the programme EXIT (<https://www.udg.edu/en/grupsrecerca/liberi/projectes-de-recerca/avaluacio-de-programes>), coordinated by the city council of Barcelona (North-East Spain) in collaboration with an NGO, which was attended by between 1,300 and 1,400 students per academic year (N=1318, 2022-23). This programme offers the most vulnerable students support during Years 5 and 6 of primary school and Years 7 to 11 of secondary in learning basic skills and those that are key in their personal and social development, as well as aiming to dissuade them from leaving education early. The programme is offered during extracurricular hours and comprises two 90-minute sessions per week. These are led, in coordination with the reference teachers, by university students called *Great*

Friends, who are trained and paid for this task. The children are chosen by their teachers at the start of the school year.

Assessment of the programme followed a mixed-methods design, including both qualitative and quantitative data collection, and a pre-test/post-test assessment based on the answers of all the stakeholders involved (children, teachers and *Great Friends*) at the beginning and the end of the school year. In line with the aims of this study, the data from the children's pre-test self-evaluation were analysed.

2.1 Participants

Of a total of 1,318 children enrolled in this extracurricular programme during the 2022/23 school year, 681 responded (51.7% response rate). The participants were aged 11 to 18 (Mean = 13.9, $sd = 1.8$), 55.2% identified themselves as boys, 42.6% as girls, and 2.2% as non-binary. The majority, 79.2%, were in compulsory secondary education, and aged between 12 and 16; the remaining 20.8% were in primary education; 61.6% were born in Spain and 38.4% in other countries.

2.2 Instruments and procedure

The children completed a self-administered questionnaire online. This had been created *ad hoc* and had 21 questions distributed in eight sections: sociodemographic data and

basic information about the school; study habits; basic skills achievement; grades; career and educational aspirations; satisfaction items; programme assessment; and free comments. The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions, dichotomous questions, and free text questions. A series of questions with Likert 5-point frequency and agreement scales were also included regarding study habits and basic skills achievement, as well as 11-point scale questions for the items related to satisfaction with school, life, and the programme (see the complete questionnaire in CORA <https://doi.org/10.34810/data1386>).

The schools where the children attend the extracurricular sessions were sent information with the link to the questionnaires, a description of the research, and informed

consent forms for parents and children to sign. The *Great Friends* gave the link to all the children in the group who then completed it individually and confidentially during the session. Any linguistic or comprehension barriers were solved with the aid of the *Great Friends*.

2.3 Measures

In line with the research aims, the variables considered are listed below, grouped into four categories: demographics; school engagement; school satisfaction; and student aspirations.

Demographics. Questions included gender (a single question: “You consider yourself: “a boy”, “a girl”, “non-binary”); school stage (codified as “primary” or secondary”); and cultural background, including the countries where the child and their parents were born, the answers to this last question were written in free text and later codified “Spain/Abroad”.

School engagement. Questions were asked regarding the students’ study habits (compliance and motivation when doing school tasks), and self-perceived basic skills achievement (“Do you read with ease?” and “Do you write with ease?”). Study habits and basic skills achievement were answered respectively as a Likert 5-points frequency scale (1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always), and agreement scale

(1 = do not agree, 2 = agree somewhat, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree a lot, 5 = totally agree).

School satisfaction. Questions were based on those items relating to satisfaction with the school included in the International Survey of Children's Well-being (www.isciweb.org), and covered three areas: satisfaction with school; with teachers; and with peer relationships. These were placed on an 11-point scale, the endpoints being 0=not at all satisfied, and 10=totally satisfied.

Student aspirations. There was just a single question with six exclusive response options: “select the option you prefer the most: a) I would like to continue studying Baccalaureate; b) I would like to continue studying a vocational training course; c) I plan

to finish secondary school and then not study anymore; d) I don't think I will finish secondary school, I'll stop studying soon; e) I don't know yet; f) Others: (free text)". The answers were then codified into four categories: academic pathway ("I would like to continue studying Baccalaureate"); vocational training pathway ("I would like to continue studying a vocational training course"); up to the end of compulsory education ("I plan to finish secondary school and then not study anymore", "I don't think I will finish secondary school"); and "I don't know yet". "Others" were codified and integrated into the former categories, or discarded if they did not fit into those categories. It is worth mentioning that compulsory education in Spain and Catalonia ends at the age of 16,

children can then follow an academic pathway that leads them to university (Baccalaureate) or a vocational training pathway.

2.4 Data analysis

In order to analyse differences in the distribution of all the variables regarding the children's educational aspirations, chi-squared variance tests were carried out for categorical variables, and a Kruskal-Wallis test for numeric variables (the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality had previously been performed).

A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was then performed to analyse the mediating effect of school satisfaction on students' aspirations, including: (a) students' aspirations

(endogenous variables); (b) gender, school stage and parents' country of birth (exogenous variables); and (c) school engagement and school satisfaction (latent variables). The SEM examines the direct and indirect relationships between these variables and the latent variables. The standardized coefficients of each arrow are partial regression coefficients that represent the effect of one variable on another, and control the other variables (β s $>.05$ is considered a small effect, β s $>.10$ a moderate effect, and β s $>.25$ a large effect) (Keith, 2015). We first defined the latent variables through the observed variables of study: "school engagement" included reading (reference variable) and writing with ease; motivation and compliance; and "school satisfaction", which included satisfaction with school (reference variable), teachers and peers. Then we analysed the direct effect of

sociodemographic variables on aspirations, school engagement, and school satisfaction. The third stage was to observe the effect of school engagement and school satisfaction on aspirations; then we performed a correlation between school satisfaction and school engagement. Finally, the effect of sociodemographic variables on aspirations mediated by school engagement and school satisfaction were analysed. Missing answers were eliminated from the SEM analysis. The analyses were carried out using RStudio.

According to published research, the exogenous variables are demographic factors that have a proven influence in shaping students' aspirations: gender, cultural background, and school stage. Both, gender and school stage have also shown a significant association with school satisfaction. The mediating variables are two

constructed latent variables: school engagement and school satisfaction. School engagement is understood to be the multi-dimensional construction that includes behavioural, cognitive, and emotional implication in school activities (Furlong and Rebelez-Ernst, 2014), and school satisfaction to be the personal cognitive judgment of the value of children's school life (Baker and Maupin, 2009). According to previous research (see Suldo et al., 2014), there should be a positive correlation between these variables. Finally, in our study, the endogenous variables are student aspirations, taken to be a reflection of student achievements at school linked to their willingness whether or not to continue their studies once they complete compulsory education (Van den Broeck et al., 2022).

2.5 Ethical issues

The University's Research Ethics and Biosafety Committee issued a favourable opinion on the research (CEBRU0003-23). Students over the age of 14 were asked to sign the informed consent form, in the case of younger children this was signed by their parents. The participants were given a telephone number and an email address to facilitate direct contact with the research group and resolve any doubts or suggestions regarding the questionnaire. All the participants agreed to take part freely and voluntarily, without any remuneration or reward. They could withdraw from the research at any time, and there were no compulsory questions. Throughout the process, work meetings were held with

the practitioners responsible for the programme EXIT to agree on the instruments, procedures, and steps to follow. All letters explaining the research, instructions, informed consents, invitations to the groups and links to the questionnaires were sent directly by these two institutions, thus the research team did not manage any data that might identify the participants.

3. Results

3.1 Differences in sociodemographic profile, school engagement and school satisfaction according to students' aspirations

Of all children participating in the study, 651 answered the question related to their aspirations: 225 (56.8%) wanted to follow an academic pathway; 144 (36.4%) a vocational training course; and 27 (6.8%) wanted to finish compulsory education and then not continue their studies. Students who did not know what to study in the future were discarded from the analysis ($n = 255$, 38.7%). Bivariate analyses are displayed to show differences related to gender, school stage, cultural background, academic performance and satisfaction with school items, according to the children's educational aspirations.

Table 1. Sociodemographic variables according to aspirations

Regarding sociodemographic variables (Table 1), girls, primary-school children, and children from a migrant background were more prone to have high aspirations, while a

substantially higher percentage of children with both parents born in Spain expected to follow a vocational training pathway (50.6%, $p = .009$); this was also the case when we compared secondary-school and primary-school children (39.5%, $p = .012$).

Table 2. School engagement variables according to aspirations

Table 2 shows the results for school engagement variables (study habits and basic skills achievement). Children who would like to leave school at the end of compulsory education showed notably lower rates of compliance with school tasks (3.2 out of 5, $p <$

.001), reading with ease (3.1 out of 5, $p = .009$), writing with ease (2.9 out of 5, $p < .001$) and motivation (2.9 out of 5, $p = .002$).

Table 3. Satisfaction variables according to aspirations

As can be seen in Table 3, the means were lower in all satisfaction items for children who expected not to continue studying after finishing compulsory education (6-7 out of 10), although there were no statistically significant differences with other groups.

3.2 Relationships between demographics, school engagement, school satisfaction and aspirations

A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was performed with gender; parents' country of birth; school stage (exogenous variables); school engagement, school satisfaction (latent variables); and students' aspirations (endogenous variables). The statistics show that the model had a good data fit (χ^2 p-value <.001; CFI and TLI > .90; RMSEA = .056) (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

As Figure 1 shows, the latent variable school engagement included motivation (the most contributing factor), reading and writing with ease and compliance. The latent variable school satisfaction included satisfaction with school (the most contributing

factor), with teachers (also a relevant contributing factor) and with peer relationships. The two latent variables displayed a positive correlation ($p < .001$), revealing a bidirectional relationship between being satisfied with school and having self-perceived good school habits and basic skills. In addition, the lower the school engagement and satisfaction, the higher the probability of having low aspirations. Furthermore, a strong relationship was found between having a high level of school engagement and expecting to continue academic studies ($\beta = .586$, $p < .001$). However, school satisfaction was negatively associated with having high expectations ($\beta = -.076$).

When controlling for the other variables, girls and children with almost one parent born outside Spain were more likely to have better school engagement, school satisfaction

and aspirations. In addition, indirect effects showed that in the case of children from a migrant background, the greater the school engagement, the higher the aspirations ($\beta = .097, p < .05, \text{S.E.} = .048$). Secondary-school children were more likely to have a low school engagement and school satisfaction, and this was the strongest relationship in the model ($\beta = -1.586, p < .001$).

Figure 1. Structural Equation Model (SEM)

4. Discussion

The discussion of the results of our research and the respective conclusions are presented in five areas. The results should be seen in the light of the selectivity of the sample (all children in the same community programme) and the one-sided perspective of the children themselves. Although these could be considered limitations of the study, the focus on the most vulnerable young population and the approach from their point of view offers a valuable contribution to studies on school failure, given the importance of knowing the subjects' own perspective (Demanet and Van Houtte, 2019; Reay, 2018; Tarabini., 2018).

Expectations of continuing to study after secondary education

The majority of the participants of the extracurricular programmes wish to continue their studies after having finished compulsory secondary education. This desire is contrary to the stereotypical image of students in contexts of vulnerability, which is determined by individual, family or social characteristics. In fact, over 90% of secondary-education students in Spain express their desire to continue studying after secondary education. According to Carrasco et al. (2018), while these figures are high when compared with other European countries, they contrast with the high rate of early school leaving in Spain, which is one of the highest in Europe.

Tensions between aspirations and low academic success

This tension leads us to the second result worth highlighting. Those students at greatest risk of vulnerability and of leaving school early, as is the case of the students in our study, provide evidence of the contrast between high aspirations - often studying post-compulsory courses such as the Baccalaureate - and low academic success. This tension is in line with the imbalance between aspirations – desire and expectations – that they expect to actually occur (Elias and Daza, 2019). A possible explanation for this is that the most vulnerable students place a high instrumental value on education and, despite the difficulties, express their wish to continue studying. Notwithstanding this, the relevance of the extracurricular programmes is vital if we consider those factors that hinder the continuity of post-compulsory studies. The fact that the role of the school and teaching

body is not always pro-active and compensatory, the influence of the family and surroundings, experiences of educational failure and the lack of opportunities in the environment are all evidence of limitations when it comes to what is on offer and places available in professional training.

Socio-demographic variables and the relationship with school engagement

The area of socio-demographic variables provides interesting results: girls and children of parents born abroad show greater school engagement, and have higher satisfaction and aspirations, coinciding with international research which shows that adolescent girls have higher rates of school satisfaction than their male peers (Danielsen et al., 2009; DeSantis-

King et al., 2006; Gilman et al., 2008; Huebner et al., 2005). In this same area, studies such as that of Merino and Martínez (2012) have found that girls tend to choose academic pathways, while boys choose those that lead directly to work. Despite this, there is greater debate among researchers as to the specific result regarding young children of foreign origin.

On one hand, there is a relationship in education in general between student nationality and educational inequalities; García and Sánchez (2020) showed that foreign-born students have greater difficulty in continuing their education and higher rates of early leaving; they are also over-represented in pathways that lead to them leaving school early and under-represented in the numbers of students who complete post-obligatory

studies. However, when examining sub-groups at risk, such as the participants in our study, we note that students of Spanish origin who attend schools in a highly-complicated context display almost the same probability of leaving school early as foreign-born students who attend other kinds of schools (García and Sánchez, 2020). We can thus conclude that the social class factor is relevant, it has a higher specific weight than that of the foreign origin of students. This underlines the importance of the work and relationships that support programmes provide (Granger, 2010; Jordan et al., 2009, Little et al., 2008).

Differentiated behaviour depending on school stage

Secondary school students show lower rates of school engagement and satisfaction than primary school students. It should be considered whether this is due to their age, or the influence of the school context, as secondary school tends to be less personalized and with less support, weaker links and with complicated educational transitions. The results of our study coincide with those of international research, which finds that levels of school satisfaction tend to fall in secondary education (e.g. DeSantis-King et al., 2006; Elmore and Huebner, 2010; Hui and Sun, 2010).

Analysis of model and role of mediating variables

Finally, analysing the model and role of mediating variables, we find that those students who wish to study for the Baccalaureate display higher averages in variables related to the learning of basic skills such as reading with ease, and those related to study habits such as motivation and commitment. We can conclude that the model with the highest degree of school engagement is linked to greater expectations, while that with the lowest degree is linked to lower expectations. Furthermore, the variable that best explains school engagement is motivation, which is a key part of educational support programmes. Moreover, students who do not wish to study beyond the age of 16 show lower averages than those who do in all school satisfaction variables. This behaviour is also seen in the

model, since the lower the school satisfaction, the higher the probability of having lower expectations.

This finding has been the subject of little research, and although it is in line with previous studies that relate school satisfaction with early school-leaving (Baker, 1998; Ekstrom et al., 1986), this is not the case when regarding expectations, and has clear implications for educational practice and policy. Despite this, no contrary dynamic has been noted, since school satisfaction is not related to high expectations. This leads us to conclude that, while it is probably not very relevant when choosing the kind of academic or professional pathway, it is relevant in leaving school early.

Conversely from the above, school engagement shows a much clearer and consistent result. This highlights one of the limitations of the study, namely, that the relationship between variables needs further research in order to provide more conclusive results. For example, the created model shows no link between school satisfaction and high expectations, although there is a relationship in bi-variable analyses. This leads us to conclude that other variables may intervene in school satisfaction. Likewise, the variable in our study that best explains school satisfaction is satisfaction with teachers. This coincides with previous research (DeSantis-King et al., 2006; Ferguson et al., 2010, Hui and Sun, 2010), which found that the quality of the relationships between teachers and students can predict student satisfaction, and they are even more important than the

those between peers or with students' families. This reinforces the importance of forming strong bonds when dealing with academic orientation (Carrasco, 2018).

The research implications are clear, since the results point to the need for further research along these lines. In fact, the model shows that the relationship between school engagement and school satisfaction is bi-directional and positive. This coincides with research in other contexts (e.g. Suldo et al., 2014; Tian et al., 2014), as well as specific research into groups at risk (Baker, 1998). In summary, the results suggest that these are aspects that should not be dissociated and that a holistic approach should be taken towards actions carried out by educational support programmes.

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