

DIANA NENADIĆ-BILAN<sup>1</sup> – MARIJANA MOHORIC<sup>2</sup>**Parents' educational practices on unacceptable behaviour of preschool children**

*The research on the frequency of the use of parenting practices in the situations of unacceptable behaviour of preschool children was conducted on a sample of 350 parents. The possible links between parenting practices and some parental demographic indicators were also investigated (gender, educational status, financial status, residential status, number of children in the family, number of family members). Research results show that nearly one third of parents use inadequate educational practices. Some parents' rearing practices are characterized by the absence of a reaction to children's unacceptable behaviour, by objecting, threatening, raising voice, abolishing privileges and corporal punishment. The financial and housing status of parents, the number of members in the family and the number of children have statistically significantly influenced the frequency of the implementation of some parenting practices. The obtained data point to the need for comprehensive and continuous support for parents in the development of parental skills.*

**Introduction**

In modern pedagogical science children are the subject of their own development, and parents' educational practices are expected to focus on raising their children's responsibility, forming their critical thinking, independence and creativity. The new position of children, the changes in the values and the goals of education seek different parental rearing practices (Maleš, 2012). The different approaches to the phenomenon of parenting derived from Baumrind's classification of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991) and Bowlby's theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1988) indicate the importance of the quality of early communication and interaction between children and parents, as well as other close entities. In his conception of parenthood, Juul (2008) emphasizes the importance of parental authority, the mutual dialogue between parents and children, the expression of interest in children, the knowledge of the children's needs and the parents' daily involvement in their children's life, in particular.

Despite the differences in the views on parenting, the various theoretical perspectives nevertheless agree on the importance of the emotional dimension of parenting, that is, the

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importance of expressing love, warmth, acceptance, and responsiveness to children's needs. Therefore, effective communication that expresses warmth and acceptance of the children's needs is as important as that of the demands and needs of the parents. According to Gordon (1996, 2000), all child behaviours may be classified as acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Parents often do not cope in the situations of their child's unacceptable behaviour. Good communication between parents and children is at the centre of Gordon's model of effective parenting. In good communication, unacceptable messages, such as threats, orders, moralizing, complaining, irony, mockery, criticism, blackmail, punishment, shouting etc., are avoided. Instead of these messages, adults use I-messages and positive feedback that expresses readiness to active listening to children, explains the reasons for the taken actions and clearly and unambiguously expresses the acceptance of children and their needs.

Analysing family communication, Koerner and Cvancara (2002) investigated two opposing family structures – conformity orientation and conversation orientation, which resulted in differences between communication patterns in the family. In conversation-oriented families, children are encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts freely, while in conformist-oriented families, children are expected to submit to parental orders and to refrain from expressing personal views. There is considerable research on the significant correlation between parenting rearing practices and child development, behaviour and achievement (Rinaldi and Howe 2012; Braza et al. 2015; Moed et al. 2016; Ekerim et al. 2017; Mesman et al. 2017; Iruka et al. 2018; Zeytinoglu et al. 2018; Wade et al. 2018).

Parenting is a very dynamic and complex phenomenon and its success depends on several factors. The child's development, whether positive or negative, is always influenced by the parents, so parents cannot give up their responsibilities despite the complexity of their role today (Francis, 2016, p. 259). Zloković and Nenadić-Bilan (2012) point to the relationship between the sense of satisfaction with parenting and the choice of rearing practices. *“The parental sense of competence includes the parent's assessment of the self-efficacy in the role of the parent and the assessment of satisfaction with fulfilling the parental role”* (Jurčević Lozančić and Kunert, 2015, p. 46). Parent education programs may reinforce their parental competencies. Dishion et al (2012) defined the concept of conscious parenting, which encompasses support for parents in the following areas: support for positive behaviour, the establishment of healthy boundaries, and the construction of family relationships by supporting parents in changing everyday interaction patterns.

## Methodology

This research aimed to study the parents' reactions to unacceptable behaviours of their children, i.e. to measure the frequency of the use of certain parental educational practices in situations when their children misbehave. The aim of the research was also to determine whether parents' educational practices are in correlation with some parental demographic factors (gender, educational status, financial status, residential status, number of children in the family, number of family members).

Regarding the problem of the research, we selected a convenience sample. The research sample included 350 parents of preschool children attending preschool programs. Such a sample was selected because of the availability of parents and their continuous presence at the preschool institution.

The sample was comprised of a larger proportion of women (77.7 % women and 22.3 % men). According to the educational status, there is an equal proportion of participants with secondary school leaving certificate and college or university degrees - 169 (48.3%), while four parents (1.1%) had completed primary school. There were eight parents with a scientific degree (2.3%). With regard to the residential status, 179 participants (51.1%) live in their own flat, 76 participants (21.7%) live with their parents or relatives, 66 participants (18.9%) live in their own house, and 29 participants (8.3%) are subtenants. The study examined the participants' subjective assessment of their financial status based on the assessment of their own status compared to the status of others (Wood, 1996). According to the subjective assessment of financial status, most of the participants consider their financial status to be average (N = 203; 58.0%), while 130 participants (37.2%) consider their financial status to be good. Only seven participants (2%) rated their financial status as excellent. Nine participants (2.5%) said they were in poor financial condition, and one participant (0.3%) rated the financial status as a very poor. Data on the number of family members are as follows: 177 four-member families (50.6%), 103 three-member families (29.4%), 43 five-member families (2.3%), 15 two-member families (4.3%), 9 six-member families (2.6%), two seven-member families (0.6%) and one eight-member family (0.3%). With regard to the number of children in the family, there are 181 families with two children (51.7%), 135 families with one child (38.6%), 30 families with three children (8.6%), 3 families with four children (0.9%), and one family with five children (0.3%).

We used Gordon's (1996, 2000) model of good communication to construct questionnaire particles with questions about educational practices. Parents made a statement regarding the frequency of use of the following practices: noticing children's bad behaviour without

responding to bad behaviour; raising the voice or yelling; asking children to correct misbehaviour; threatening with punishment without punishment; objecting to children; providing feedback to children how their behaviour was perceived; abolition of privileges; corporal punishment of children (slapping, spanking) and talking to children about the reasons for bad behaviour. Parents rated each question particle with a four-point scale: never; rarely; often; always.

### Analysis and Interpretation of Research Results

#### *Parents' educational practices on children's unacceptable behaviours*

Table 1 shows the parents' answers about the use of some educational practices in situations of children's unacceptable behaviours.

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES	Noticing children's bad behaviour without responding		Raising their voice or yelling		Asking children to correct misbehaviour		Threat of punishment without punishment		Objecting to children	
	Mean	1,73	2,64	3,27	2,16	2,14				
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never - 1	155	44.3	2	0.6	0	0	65	18.6	65	18.6
Rarely - 2	139	39.7	139	39.7	35	10	173	49.4	176	50.3
Often - 3	51	14.6	191	54.6	185	52.9	103	29.4	103	29.4
Always - 4	5	1.4	18	5.1	130	37.1	9	2.6	6	1.7
TOTAL	350	100	350	100	350	100	350	100	350	100

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES	Providing feedback to children how their behaviour was perceived		Abolition of privileges		Corporal punishment of children		Talking to children about the reasons for bad behaviour		Something else	
	Mean									
	3,25		2,27		1,75		3,39		0	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never - 1	4	1.1	50	14.3	107	30.6	0	0	0	0
Rarely - 2	47	13.4	175	50	223	63.7	26	7.4	0	0
Often - 3	156	44.6	106	30.3	19	5.4	160	45.7	0	0
Always - 4	143	40.9	19	5.4	1	0.3	164	46.9	0	0
TOTAL	350	100	350	100	350	100	350	100	0	0

**Table 1. Parents' educational practices on children's unacceptable behaviours**

Based on the collected data, first we are focusing on the parental educational practices that could be categorized, according to Gordon (1996), as the language of unacceptance or ineffective communication. Noticing children's bad behaviour, 44.3% of parents (N=155) always respond, while 39.7% of parents (N=139) often respond to an unacceptable behaviour. On the other hand, 16% of parents (N=56) never or rarely respond to an unacceptable behaviour, which is a wrong practice, since in such a situation pedagogically it is correct to send feedback to children about unacceptable behaviour. In case of unacceptable behaviour, 32 % of parents (N=112) often or always threaten with punishment. This reaction of the parents represents the so-called you-message that is characterized by a language of unacceptance and aims at the children's obedience and adaptation to parents' demands. According to Gordon's model of successful relationships (Gordon, 1996), the threat of punishment is an ineffective communication, by which the relationship of trust and understanding between parents and children is gradually eroding. Additionally, 29.4 % (N=103) of parents often use objecting to children, while 1.7 % (N=6) of parents always use objecting. The rearing practice of abolishing some privileges, as a form of punishment, is often or always used by 35.7% of parents (N =125), while 14.3% of parents (N=50) never use this practice. Over half of the parents, 54.6% (N=191), often raise their voices or yell at children, while 5.1% of parents (N=18) always raise their voice

or yell at children. Corporal punishment is often used by 5.4% of parents (N=19). According to the results of our research, 69.4% of parents (N=243) still use corporal punishment, regardless of frequency of use<sup>3</sup>. Corporal punishment and other degrading forms of punishment could lead to aggression and delinquent behaviour of young people (Knox, 2010), so parents should be introduced to positive educational practices.<sup>4</sup>

Educational practices such as asking children to correct unacceptable behaviour, talking to children about the reasons for misbehaving and providing feedback to children on how children's behaviour was perceived are features of effective communication and positive parenting. The percentage of parents who have always used positive parenting practices to respond to their children's unacceptable behaviour are as follows: 37.1% of parents (N=130) would always ask children to correct misbehaviour; 40.9% of parents (N=143) always provide feedback to children how their unacceptable behaviour was perceived; 46.9% of parents (N=164) always talk to children about the reasons for their misbehaviour.

With regard to the educationally appropriate and consistent parental practices<sup>5</sup>, it can be concluded that:

- 44.3% of parents always respond to the children's unacceptable behaviour;
- 0.6 % of parents never raised their voice or yelled at children;
- 37.1% of parents always ask children to correct misbehaviour;
- 18.6% of parents never threaten with punishment;
- 18.6% of parents never object to children;
- 40.9% of parents always provide feedback to children how their behaviour was perceived;
- 14.3% of parents never abolish privileges;
- 30.6% of parents never use corporal punishment;
- 46.9% of parents always talk to children about the reasons of misbehaviour.

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<sup>3</sup> Gaudiosi (2005) notes that 94% of the Americans occasionally spank as a way of disciplining preschoolers, while Smith et al (2005) indicates that 80% of the 26-year-old young adults say they received some form of corporal punishment during childhood.

<sup>4</sup> The aim of the Council of Europe's Initiative against Corporal Punishment is to prohibit all forms of corporal punishment and promote positive parenting and culture (Daly, 2007). According to the Croatian law regulations, the prohibition of corporal punishment of children in the family is provided, among other regulations, by the law on protection from domestic violence (Zakon o zaštiti od nasilja u obitelji, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Only *always* and *never* data for positive and negative reactions of parents are shown.

Our findings also reveal that a certain percentage of parents use unacceptable practices to their children's misbehaviour<sup>6</sup>, which may further contribute to the occurrence of risk factors in the family environment. Specifically, the parents' following negative educational practices are identified:

- 55.7% of parents rarely, often or never respond to their children's unacceptable behaviour;
- 99.4% of parents rarely, often or always raise their voice or yell at the children;
- 62.9% of parents rarely, often or never ask children to correct their misbehaviour;
- 81.4% of parents rarely, often or always object to children because of the children's misbehaviour;
- 59.1% of parents rarely, often or never provide feedback to the children how their misbehaviour was perceived;
- 85.7% of parents rarely, often or always abolish privileges in the case of the children's unacceptable behaviour;
- 81.4% of parents rarely, often or always threaten with punishment without punishment;
- 69.4% of parents rarely, often or use corporal punishment;
- 53.1% of parents rarely, often or never talk to children about the reasons of their misbehaviour.

The results show that many parents use negative communication reactions to their children's unacceptable behaviour, and do not demonstrate the skills of good communication.

### **Correlation of parental educational practices with some demographic indicators**

Table 2 presents data on the parental educational practices in situations of children's unacceptable behaviour regarding the parents' demographic characteristics: gender, educational status, financial status, number of family members, number of children and residential status.

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<sup>6</sup> Percentages of *rarely/often/always* responses for negative parental practices and percentages of *rarely/often/never* responses for positive parental practices are shown. Namely, the rarely used negative parenting practices indicate parents' inconsistency, confuse children, and may have negative effects.

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES		Gender	Educational status	Financial status	Family members	Number of children	Residential status
Noticing, not responding	$\chi^2$	.033	5.052	10.615	12.612	17.012	5.176
	P	.855	.168	.031	.050	.002	.159
Raising voice or yelling	$\chi^2$	.139	6.929	5.104	16.359	6.934	5.577
	P	.709	.074	.277	.012	.139	.134
Asking children to correct misbehaviour	$\chi^2$	.264	13.248	4.969	7.059	6.877	6.572
	P	.607	.004	.290	.315	.143	.087
Threatening with punishment without punishment	$\chi^2$	1.926	.830	6.797	4.128	.772	9.857
	P	.165	.842	.147	.659	.942	.020
Objecting to children	$\chi^2$	5.834	2.074	5.282	15.903	12.670	12.288
	P	.016	.557	.260	.014	.013	.006
Providing feedback to children about their behaviour	$\chi^2$	.053	14.657	7.547	11.806	7.259	.901
	P	.817	.002	.110	.066	.123	.825
Abolition of privileges	$\chi^2$	.248	1.079	1.295	13.257	8.704	1.018
	P	.619	.782	.862	.039	.069	.797
Corporal punishment of children	$\chi^2$	1.849	.973	1.416	1.848	.979	2.765
	P	.174	.808	.841	.933	.913	.429
Talking about the reasons for misbehaviour	$\chi^2$	.349	3.514	19.267	7.098	5.871	1.877
	P	.555	.319	.001	.312	.209	.598

**Table 2. The use of parents' educational practices regarding certain demographic variables**

### *Gender*

Objecting as a response to children's unacceptable behaviour is often or always used by 42.3% of fathers and 27.9% of mothers, while the same practice is rarely or never used by 72.1% of mothers and 57.7% of fathers. These differences indicate a possible correlation between parental objection and parental gender ( $\chi^2=5.834$ ;  $C=0.13$ ;  $P=.016$ ). However, analysis of variance did not confirm the variability between the groups of male and female subjects ( $F=2.699$ ;  $P> 0.05$ ), so mothers and fathers did not differ significantly in the use of objecting as a reaction to children's unacceptable behaviour.

### *Educational status*

Parents of different educational status differ from one another in asking children to correct their unacceptable behaviour. As there is an equal number of parents with secondary school leaving



certificate (N=169) and university degree (N=169), data analysis shows that parents with a university degree are more likely to ask a child to correct an unacceptable behaviour. Furthermore, 16% of parents (N=27) with completed secondary education and 4.7% of parents (N=8) with university degrees never or rarely ask children to correct their misbehaviour. The probability of correlation between parents' educational status and the request for behaviour correction was indicated by the values of chi-square ( $\chi^2= 3.248$ ; C=19; P=.004). However, the analysis of variance did not identify statistically significant differences in the use of the mentioned educational practice concerning the parents' educational status (F=2.649; P> 0.05).

Considering educational status, different data were found about the parents' practice of providing feedback to children: 100% of parents with a science degree, 88.2% of parents with completed secondary education, 83.4% of parents with university degree, and 25% of parents with primary school education often or always do that. Chi-square test and contingency coefficient indicate the probability of a correlation between the practice of providing feedback to children and the parents' educational status ( $\chi^2=14.657$ ; C=0.20; P=.002). However, analysis of variance did not confirm statistically significant correlation between the educational practice and the parents' educational status (F=3,401; P >0, 05). Regarding educational status, parents do not significantly differ in situations when children need to be provided with feedback about their misbehaviour.

#### *Financial status*

Parents differ in the frequency of responding to unacceptable behaviour of the children with regard to their financial status. Comparing the two most represented categories of parents concerning financial status, 88.2% of parents (N=179) of average material status and 80% of parents (N=104) of good material status often or always do not respond when they notice their children's misbehaviour. The differences are significant ( $\chi^2=10.615$ ; C=17; P=.031). Analysis of variance also indicated a statistically significant correlation between the absence of parents' reaction and their financial status (F= 3.571; P >0.05). Parents of better financial status seem more likely not to react when they notice an unacceptable behaviour of their children. Possible explanations of observed tendency may be various, beginning by the parents' higher orientation of a better financial status towards their business responsibilities and earning income to the lack of time devoted to their families and children. In any case, not only the parents' unresponsiveness but also the lack of the parental involvement in the process of the children's education may cause an emergence of a "death spiral" that destroys such an important continuity

of the educational process and may result in the various personality disorders (Mariani-Meloni, 2004, p. 91) in the end.

Parents differ in their use of the educational practice of talking about the reasons for children's misbehaviour regarding their financial status. Parents of average financial status are more likely to discuss the reasons for their children's unacceptable behaviour. Considering the other two categories of parents' financial status, parents of excellent financial status more often talk to their children about their misbehaviour compared to the parents of poorer financial status. Chi-square test and contingency coefficient indicate the probability of a correlation between talking to children about the reasons of their behaviour and the parents' financial status ( $\chi^2=19.267$ ;  $C=0.23$ ;  $P=.001$ ), but analysis of variance statistically did not confirm significant correlation ( $F=2.526$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

### *Residential status*

There have been differences between parents regarding the threat of punishment and their residential status. Threatening with punishment is often or always used by 42.4% of parents living in their own house, 39.5% of parents living with their own parents, 34.5% of those who are subtenants and 24.6% of those who live in their own flat. Chi-square test and contingency coefficient indicate the probability of a correlation ( $\chi^2 = 9.857$ ;  $C=0.17$ ;  $P=.020$ ). Analysis of variance confirm the statistically significant difference regarding the threat of punishment and the parents' residential status ( $F=4.0558$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). Parents living in their own flat less often threaten with punishment in the case of children's unacceptable behaviour. We assume that several factors moderate the impact of the residential status on threatening with punishment, so it is not possible to determine the cause and effect sequence quite clearly.

Parents differ in terms of their residential status when responding to children's unacceptable behaviour. The use of objecting as a reaction to children's unacceptable behaviour is correlated with the parent's residential status ( $\chi^2=12.288$ ;  $C=0.18$ ;  $P =.006$ ). Analysis of variance confirmed the statistical significance of the correlation ( $F= 3.746$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). The results reveal that parents living in the house with their parents (42.1%) or in their own house (40.9%) are most likely to object to children. Parents living in their own flat were the least inclined to object to children (76.5%). Living in one's own house may cause additional problems compared to living in one's flat (e.g. greater care of house maintenance, greater financial investment, etc.), so parents, burdened with additional worries, may be more likely to respond with negative communication patterns. Parents living together with their own parents may find themselves, in relation to other parents living alone, under the pressure of daily negotiation and

harmonization with the third generation. This may be reflected in the increased incidence of impatience and nervousness in communicating with children, and thus in the more frequent use of objection as a reaction to unacceptable children's behaviour.

#### *Number of children in family*

Regarding the number of children in the family, a difference was observed in the absence of parental responses to unacceptable children's behaviour. As there were relatively few parents of three or more children in the sample, conclusions should be drawn cautiously. There is never or rarely a response to children's unacceptable behaviour in 86.7% of parents of one child, 84% of parents of two children, and 80% of parents of three children. On the other hand, 13.3% of parents of one child, 16% of parents of two children, 20% of parents of three children and 100% of parents of four children often or always do not respond to the children's unacceptable behaviour. It seems that parents of fewer children more frequently respond to their children's unacceptable behaviour. This may be partly due to the concentration of time available on one child, but also to the fact that in families with more children, older children take on the role of adults and help or warn the younger siblings' misbehaviour. Correlation between the number of children in the family and the absence of a parental response was confirmed by  $\chi^2$  and the coefficient of contingency ( $\chi^2=17.012$ ;  $C=0.22$ ;  $P=.002$ ). However, analysis of variance did not confirm a statistically significant correlation ( $F=3.251$ ;  $P> 0.05$ ).

Concerning the number of children, there are also differences in the use of an objection as a parental educational practice. In the families with more children, parents more often use the objection as an educational response to children's unacceptable behaviour ( $\chi^2 =12.670$ ;  $C=0.19$ ;  $P=.013$ ). Analysis of variance confirmed a significant correlation between parents' objecting to children and number of children ( $F=3.504$ ;  $P> 0.05$ ).

#### *Number of family members*

The study examined the frequency of use of raised voice or shouting in relation to the number of family members. The sample includes more families with three ( $N=103$ ) and four members ( $N=177$ ), while there are fewer families with five ( $N=43$ ), two ( $N=15$ ), seven ( $N=7$ ) and eight members ( $N=8$ ). Therefore, the two largest groups of parents, those who come from families with three or four members, will be compared. Raised voice or shouting in response to unacceptable children's behaviour is often or always used by 67.8% of parents from four-member families and 46.6% of parents from three-member families. The same practice was never or rarely used by 53.4% of parents from three-member families, and 32.2% of parents

from four-member families. It seems that parents coming from families with four members are more inclined to raise their voice or shout in response to unacceptable children's behaviour. The observed difference among parents with different number of family members was significant ( $\chi^2 = 16.359$ ;  $C = 0.21$ ;  $P = .012$ ), however, analysis of variance showed that the difference was not statistically significant ( $F = 2.389$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

According to the data obtained, there is also probability of a correlation between parental objection to children and the number of family members ( $\chi^2 = 15.903$ ;  $C = 0.21$ ;  $P = .014$ ), i.e. there is a tendency that parents living in families with more members more often object to their children. Analysis of variance revealed a statistically significant difference in variability between the groups of these parents ( $F = 4.263292$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). The research results indicate that parental objecting is more frequent in larger families, so special attention should be paid to parents in families with more members and it is necessary to support them in fulfilling their parental role.

Concerning the abolition of some privileges in reaction to the children's misbehaviour, parents' responses varied according to the number of family members. Abolition of privilege is often or always used as an educational practice by 77.8% of parents from six-member families, 40.1% of parents from four-member families, 33.3% of parents from two-member families, 30.2% of parents from five-member families, 28.2% of parents from three-member families. Two parents from seven-member families, and one parent from eight-member family never or rarely use such a reaction to their children's misbehaviour. As the number of seven-member ( $N = 2$ ) and eight-member families ( $N = 1$ ) is small, the data on other family subgroups will be compared. Chi-squares and contingency coefficients indicate probability of correlation between the abolition of privileges and the number of family members ( $\chi^2 = 13.257$ ;  $C = 0.19$ ;  $P = .039$ ). Analysis of variance revealed that the variability between groups was statistically significant ( $F = 4.486$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). The abolition of privileges is the least used by parents from families with three members. This practice is used in families where the mother and father focus on one child and are likely to be more permissive to their child's unacceptable behaviour. In this research parents from four and six-member families were most likely to use the abolition of privilege in response to unacceptable children's behaviour. There is a growing tendency for parents coming from families with more members to raise children by abolishing some privileges.

**Concluding remarks**

Our analysis suggests that almost one third of parents use inadequate educational practices. The educational practices of some parents are burdened with unresponsiveness to their children's misbehaviour, objecting, threatening, shouting, abolishing privileges, and use of corporal punishment. The use of language of unacceptance (Gordon, 1996) makes children inaccessible – children become detached, avoid conversation, hide their thoughts and feelings, and develop defence mechanisms. These upbringing practices destroy mutual acceptance and trust, disrupt the family atmosphere of harmony and seriously distort the children's integrity. The outcomes of such parenting could result in the children's low level of self-esteem, negative self-image, various forms of aggression and other problems in children's behaviour. Opposite to dysfunctional and rude parenting, good parenting practices are characterized by sensitivity to children's needs, support for children's positive behaviours, good communication, respect and love. Therefore, it would be useful for parents to focus primarily on discovering the positive traits of their children, not only on their failings (Tagliabue, 2008, p. 14; Isaacs, 2012, p. 23). Moreover, children have an existential need to be recognized and positively valued in their uniqueness, Bellingeri will say "ematically nurtured" (2011, p. 132), in order to be able to grow according to the capacity of one's own personality. It is necessary to create such an educational "climate" in which mutual respect, personalities and rights are realized (Messildine, 2008, p. 332), as well as to establish good communication with children based on the language of acceptance, what will provide a sufficiently good "living space" in which the development of the children's abilities and their willing personality structure is not impeded (Contini, Fabbri & Manuzzi, 2006, p. 184).

The research data on the use of some educational practices in view of parents' demographic characteristics indicates that there is no correlation between educational practices with parents' educational status and their gender. Parents do not differ in the use of some educational practices regarding these variables. However, financial and residential status, the number of family members and the number of children significantly influenced the frequency of the use of certain parental educational practices. The results of this research confirm the correlation between the financial status and the absence of parental reactions to their children's unacceptable behaviour, residential status and threats, number of family members and objecting, number of children and objecting, residential status and objecting and number of family members and abolition of privileges. Parents with better financial status appear to be more likely not to respond when they notice unacceptable children's behaviour ( $F=3.571$ ;

$P > 0.05$ ). Parents living in their own flat less frequently threaten with punishment in the case of unacceptable behaviour of children ( $F = 4.055$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). There is a tendency of more frequent use of objecting as an educational practice by parents living in families with a larger number of members ( $F = 4.263$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ), as well as in families with a larger number of children ( $F = 3.504$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ), as well as in families living in their own house or in a house with their parents ( $F = 3.746$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). As the number of family members increases, parents' inclination to abolish some privileges also increases ( $F = 4.486$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). Our findings indicate that financial and residential status, number of family members and number of children significantly influenced the frequency of applying certain parental educational practices. According to some other studies (e.g. Raboteg and Pećnik, 2006), financial difficulties are associated with parenting practices that are less consistent and supportive in upbringing and may have an indirect effect on other parenting behaviours.

This research reveals that parents need support in developing positive parenting skills, especially in situations where children unacceptably behave as well as in situations of their developmental and other crises. Consistent use of good communication and the language of acceptance is also important. It is essential to an effective educational action that can develop only in one dynamic educational relationship between parents and their child (Macario, 2003, p. 93). Therefore, parents should be aware of the elements of parental competence and the procedures that could jeopardize the positive parental actions (Francis, 2016, pp. 263–273). The results indicate a possible risk group of parents who may need help in introducing positive and effective parenting, which means they need to respect the integrity of their children and ensure a non-violent family environment that excludes all forms of physical and psychological punishment of children.

Although parent education activities in preschool institutions have been organized more and more frequently over the past decade, the research has identified the need for comprehensive and continuing parents' education in the successful performance of responsible parenting tasks. Parent education is a key task in promoting "preventative education" (Corominas, 2011, pp. 71–72) in order to prevent the negative consequences of their inappropriate upbringing in the case of unacceptable behaviours of children.

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