



ROMA AMONG STUDENTS ENDANGERED AND UNENDANGERED BY SCHOOL FAILURE: CZECH REPUBLIC STUDY

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Abstract

The research was focused on monitoring the differences between primary and lower secondary school pupils in the Czech Republic in terms of their needs “to be successful” or “to avoid failure”. Its aim was to analyse the motivation of pupils divided by teachers into two groups: students endangered and those not endangered by school failure. The research approach was based on the application of the standardized School Performance Motivation Questionnaire. Through its twelve indicators, the differences between the above-mentioned groups of students were analysed with a special respect to the students belonging to the Roma ethnic group. The research used indicators of descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean, mode). The process of comparison of the acquired data confirmed differences in motivation of the group of students endangered by school failure as compared to that of unendangered by school failure. Pupils at risk of school failure showed a lower need to be successful than their classmates from the group at risk. Students at risk of school failure showed a lower need to be successful than their classmates from the other group. Also within these groups were found differences between the motivation of Roma pupils and their classmates. The Roma preferred the need to avoid failure much more strongly. The findings are important for educational practice because the ratio of the two needs identified affects pupils' learning strategies and affects not only the effectiveness of their learning, but also their relationship to cognition and school in general.

Keywords: *performance motivation, endangered students, unendangered students, Roma students, non-Roma students, descriptive analysis, school motivation indicators.*

Introduction

The atomization of Czech society, which has arisen over the course of the past 29 years and its segregation tendencies, call to attention the dangers of a diversified educational system, which has been adopted by the Czech Republic since 1989 (Průcha, 1995). In essence, it has meant the departure of the best pupils educated in compulsory education from their peers of the given population age and within a specific place and period of time. In the case of the Czech Republic, this is especially to be the case of the phenomenon of the best students' leaving primary schools for long-term grammar schools after the fifth year of primary education (i.e. after the completion of ISCED 1). This leads to the creation of differing conditions within those choosing to remain in the compulsory education, which is connected to an inadequate attention span, and thus inaccessibility to education at this level (Macura-Milovanovic & Pecek, 2013). In this country, this inequality makes itself manifest among students as well as educators. The same problem is shown in Lauritzen and Nodelan's research on 151 peer-reviewed research articles (2018). The students of the given population age who continue studying at the primary school level, lose the possibility of being compared with the best students, i. e. those who have gone to grammar schools, and

the best lose their awareness of solidarity with the weaker ones, i. e. those who remained at the primary education level. Teachers in selective schools (see multi-year grammar schools) under compulsory education, are then forced to work with a different sample of pupils than teachers at the same level of education (ISCED 2) by virtue of only having the so-called "residual" pupils at their disposal. As a rule, they achieve lower levels of schooling, leading to an erroneous conclusion that teachers at lower secondary schools in the CR work less competently, than their counterparts at the multi-year grammar schools gymnasiums at the same level (ISCED 2) of education. However, in reality, it may well be the opposite. The quality of their work is unable to be compared, because teaching less motivated students and those possessing inadequate attention span, requires far more teachers' professionalism and parental co-operation than their counterpart students, who are both motivated and possess a better attention span, therefore having a better accessibility to the educator (Kiprianos et. al, 2012). However, the requirement of heterogeneous representation of students (Helus, 2015) in the classes of primary schools of the Czech Republic, according to so-called grade system, is not normally fulfilled. There are usually two reasons:

- 1) Parents do not respect the catchment area they belong to, i.e. the geographic location of the appropriate school (Act 561/2004 Coll., Section 36, subs. 5) and take the pupil to a primary school in another area, according to their free choice, even at the cost of changing their permanent residence (they usually do not want their children to be educated in that school either because of the poor reputation of those teachers or students in question).
- 2) All parents of regular pupils, have already moved out of the catchment area, thus the area is beginning to resemble a ghetto, and there is practically only a homogeneous group of pupils (usually from a less stimulating environment, without interest in acquiring new knowledge) remaining in the area.

In addition to this, the concept of success in the school environment is perceived through a five-point classification scale (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). Successful is the student who has excellent grades, while unsuccessful is the one with the lowest grades, i. e. grades four or five. The practice per se however, confirms that success in practical life, is not reflected by the level of school success and by no means the marks obtained at school. Children growing up in a stimuli deprived environment, surrounded by people whose possibilities are restricted, either by their past education, property deficiencies, or limits resulting from their lower social status, are practically condemned to initial school failures. School enters into their lives as an interference in the form of seeming to be something unusual and strange. The concept of school success as a flawless and reliable management of the high pace of challenging tasks (Helus, 1987) is conducive to this situation. However, this concept is based on the assumption that the family background and the parents' style of their children's treatment (upbringing) at the pre-school age, will prepare them for the school requirements and that children will enter school ready, with the ability to achieve success, i.e. such preparation is essential to enable the realization of a high "academic achievement". The current Czech school, however, remains quite indebted to the fulfilment of the true sense of education, i.e. to the maximum development of each student's capabilities and potential.



Dissimilarities of Roma Students in the School Environment

Roma children come to school from a family environment with a different sense of discipline and order. The ability to "postpone pleasure", which is the basis of the majority concepts of discipline and self-discipline, is not cultivated in the Roma family (Roth et al., 2013). On the contrary, every opportunity to achieve a sense of well-being is, used here, and enjoyment is not delayed, as is common in the non-Roma environment: "You will get a dessert after rating your dinner or when you do your homework, or when you clean up the toys..." (Tomová, 1995). This, however, does not cultivate the will. Moreover, foregoing an enjoyment for the present, with the reward now, for greater enjoyment in the future, is a prerequisite, which in turn cultivates resolution, tenacity and endurance.

From the point of view of the level of self-service (in the sense of being able to serve themselves), there are also differences between Roma and non-Roma pupils. It is intrinsic to the Roma concept of childhood that children remain at home for a considerable period of time and are not brought up to be able to serve themselves. Everything, within the realm of the family behind them, is carried out by their mother or their older sister. Their roles and status are very important, in particular the older sister's status plays an important role in our investigation due to her enormous care of all her siblings, which is closely associated with her lack of time for herself. In domestic research (Balabánová, 1995; Selická, 2019) there are frequent references to that fact. Otherwise, girls are more likely to be obedient and orderly, and they are generally more successful at school than boys. On the contrary, individual independence is highly valued within the ethnic majority society. Not to be dependent on others, to be able to help themselves, not to beg for anything, to manage independently -without others- all of these qualities are considered to be highly desirable by the majority of the population. A child is never alone, it is always around his own people who help him to cope with all its problems that may occur. Decision-making is generally a matter of a large Roma family or Roma community; and thus even their children, can beadle with decision-making and the decision will be a result of participating in it, and as a result the fully participated-in decision is reached, which is then accepted by all members of the group. In Roma communities, individuals do not only subordinate themselves to the common decision, but they rather identify themselves with it. "For people for whom their individuality is the basis of all thoughts, decisions, and actions, it is difficult to imagine that other people can perceive themselves as part of an entity that is only autonomous. The school, on the contrary, demands that the child should work independently. This means, not to lean on another child, and also, by way of correlation, not to be leant upon by the other children either." (Kopecká, 2006)

From the standpoint of communication, Roma children - despite strict family hierarchy - are equal participants in conversation with their peers. They make their statements independently, without previously having been asked, thus, when they are confronted with an impersonal address at a school such as: "So kids, now we are going to key our little mouths and listen", they practically do not fully comprehend to what the teacher is referring. At a later stage, when a Roma student is subjected to a scolding on the part of the teacher in his school for the common applications of expressions he normally uses within the realm of his every-day family life, he/she feels abused, and the prejudice in him is reinforced and he/she starts perceiving the school world as absurd, incomprehensible and

hostile. Even Roma self-confidence has a very specific framework. Roma self-confidence is dependent on the social environment so much, so that if a Roma child happens to be alone, he does not have any.

The motivation of a Roma child, by means of appeals to his individual values, is ineffective at school. In addition to that, interfering in the family values of Roma people, without a thorough knowledge of such, is really dangerous. A well-meant praise, e. g. "... you are better than your older brother," (Peček & Munda, 2015) can be totally demotivating for a Roma pupil because it is not the job of the child to be better than the one who is recognized as the best one by the family. Another characteristic feature of the psyche of such Roma, which is called the lack of individuality, then interferes with our teaching Roma children at school, whereas in the life of Roma children it is considered more as more of an advantage (Navrátil, 2003).

When the majority contemplates the concept of "time", it is nearly always in the sense of past or future tenses. Roma people live mostly in the present time. Both the past and the future are somewhat at the edge of their internal, present time. Roma people are also presenting the past. The presented past has a disadvantage over recollection: it is accurate and full of emotion. The presented past cannot be corrected by reason of memory or recollection, and therefore – who, once in vain or involuntarily hurt a Roma, can never regain his trust (Greenberg, 2010). Forgiveness is related to the memory function - time heals. In the understanding of Roma time, the tense of the present, does not therefore alleviate or heal. Therefore, Roma children can hardly be motivated by promises directed towards a more distant future. If their future is changed into the "present-day" (the presented future), it will become the content of their imagination and fantasy. Thus, there is no need to exert any effort to achieve it. If the future does not become the presented future, it will remain outside the boundaries of their imagination, and as a result of this, there is no conceivable reason to exert any effort (Hübschmanová, 1999).

For Roma people it is extremely difficult to find orientation in labyrinths, but if they are surrounded by space, their orientation is more easily accessible to them. The ability to find orientation without knowledge, is one of the major obstacles to learning. If we know the outcome, it is boring to deal with the way the result has been arrived at. Intuition is a guide often better than a cold calculation of reason. Most people coming from the majority of the society, cannot rely on their intuition, and therefore they use it as a complementary means (O'Nions, 2015). Roma people, on the other hand, use intuition primarily in the form of a simple plan, and therefore they are not interested in other search engines whilst searching for answers. This is explained by the frequent contrast between success of Roma children in practical life and their failure at school or in psychological tests (Hübschmanová, 1998). The school education system stands on the value scale of the Roma population deep below the desire to receive as much money as possible, or at least materially measure up to the majority (Ylgür, 2018). In spite of that Roma parents are convinced that their children will cope with their lives without attending a school, and thereby be able to cope with life's demands just as well as the children who have completed compulsory school attendance.

Roma children are usually not used to a day-to-day regime from their family environment, and thus, this form of their development is not specifically supported and encouraged (Karpati et al., 2014). They are not familiar with a day to day rhythm of events and are therefore not prepared to submit to it at school, they are not able to adjust to the orders and



regulations they meet for the first time in school. They do not understand why they must be separated from older siblings for reasons of age, why they cannot fully express their intense feelings at school and control their actions. At home they do not play and do not paint or draw pictures, they do not even have so many toys, kits, puzzles that would contribute to the development of their skills and abilities. They do not know how to handle books, they do not know the terms they cannot meet elsewhere, other than in books (Burjanek, 2000). The risk of underestimating this issue lies in the fact that the lack of interest in their acquiring higher education and higher qualifications is constantly being revealed in emerging generations. The low education level of the Roma population is a limiting factor in the integration of the Roma into the majority society, and significantly reduces their employment opportunities.

Research Methodology

General Background

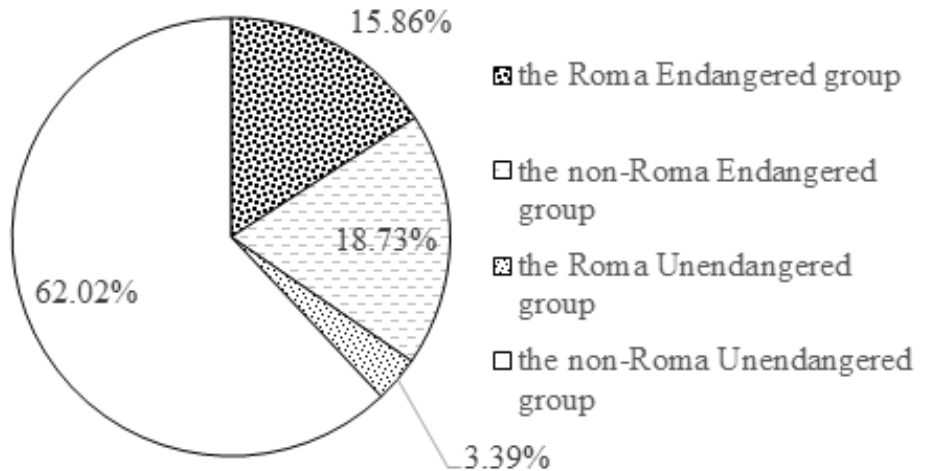
Motivation of students to school performance is one of the basic activities in the work of teachers. Each student experiences assignment situations differently, has different tendencies to hold on or resign when solving a task, shows different interests and aspirations, takes different attitudes to overcoming obstacles, etc. Since the 1950s many authors have been dealing with this issue. Our research was based on Atkinson's theory (1974) and Heckhausen's extended cognitive model of motivation (Heckhausen, 1980, 1991). It follows that the need to achieve success on the one hand or to avoid failure on the other is due to the attractiveness of the activity for the pupil and the subjective probability of the expected outcome. We monitored both needs on a sample of respondents divided into four research groups.

Sample Selection

The main aim of the research was to verify different motives of behaviour of the group of students endangered and that of unendangered by school failure. The research was carried out continuously between 2016 and 2018 at 48 primary and lower secondary schools in the Czech Republic willing to cooperate. The research sample of respondents cannot be described as representative, although it is quite extensive. The total number of respondents was created by 1356 students, of whom 65 % were designated by their teachers as those without problems in the field of learning and solving school problems (with grades better than 'good' in all subjects, the good grade being included; i.e. the group of students creating the category of those **Unendangered** by school failure). The remaining 35 %, on the other hand, were marked by their teachers as students with difficulty or even inability to learn, manage and achieve their school tasks (graded either 'sufficiently' or 'insufficiently' at least in one subject: we continue to call this category as the students **Endangered** by school failure or those at risk of school failure). Both monitored groups of students, simply referred to as Endangered and Unendangered students, were secondarily structured according to the visual characteristics to Roma groups and non-Roma groups – see Figure 1.

Figure 1

Representation of the Endangered and Unendangered students reported as Roma groups and non-Roma groups



At first glance, it is apparent that this representation of Unendangered students in the groups of the non-Roma Unendangered and Roma Unendangered students, is disproportionate. Whilst the Endangered students selected by teachers are represented in both these groups almost identically, Roma students in both groups (the Roma group 15.86 %, the non-Roma group 18.73 %), the Unendangered Roma group (3.39 %) shows only a tiny share compared to the non-Roma Unendangered (62.02 %).

Instrument and Procedures

The research problem was to find out whether all four groups of students differ or agree on the need to achieve success and the need to avoid failure. The assumptions were formulated:

- The group of Endangered Students will have a different need for success and a different need to avoid failure than the group of Unendangered students,
- A group of Roma students will have a different need for success and a different need to avoid failure than their non-Roma classmates from both the groups - Endangered and Unendangered.

This assumption was verified by means of the application of a research tool – a standardized questionnaire focused on School Performance Motivation of Students (Hrabal & Pavelková, 2011). Through its twelve indicators, data were collected on the frequency and strength of students' motivational needs from each of the above groups. The first six indicators (1-6) tracked the need to be successful, the second six indicators (7-12) tracked the need to avoid school failure. The strength of motivational needs was evaluated for each indicator



(1-5) by a certain number of points. Each student could get 6-30 points in total. The lower the score for the first six indicators, the greater the need for success in the group. The lower the score for the other six indicators, the greater the need to avoid failure.

Data Analysis

The **need for success** was identified by the following six statements. The structure of students' responses can be summarized in three table schemes:

1. To be successful at school, I care about it:

1. a lot	2. enough	3. moderately	4. I don't care	5. I don't care at all
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2. During the learning process, I can concentrate:

3. At school I raise my hand to report I am ready to answer the question:

5. When I start a school task, I tend to finish it:

6. I try to do the schoolwork as well as I can:

1. always	almost	2. often	3. sometimes	4. mostly not	5. almost never
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4. If I could choose, I would like to be graded according to results:

1. in all subjects	2. in most subjects	3. only in some subjects	4. in only one or two subjects	5. in any subject
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The second six statements on a five-point scale identified **the need** for students to **avoid school failure**. The structure of students' responses can be summarized in two table schemes:

7. When I have to be tested, I'm afraid:

9. When we have to write a test or an exam:

10. When we have to write a test or an exam I do not want to go to school:

11. When we write a test or exam paper at school, I prefer to get the upper mark:

12. I am afraid of any possible school failures:

1. almost always	2. quite often	3. sometimes	4. seldom	5. almost never
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8. To be honest, I am afraid to go to school at all:

1. I'm afraid so much	2. I'm afraid	3. I'm a bit scared	4. I'm not really afraid	5. I'm not afraid at all
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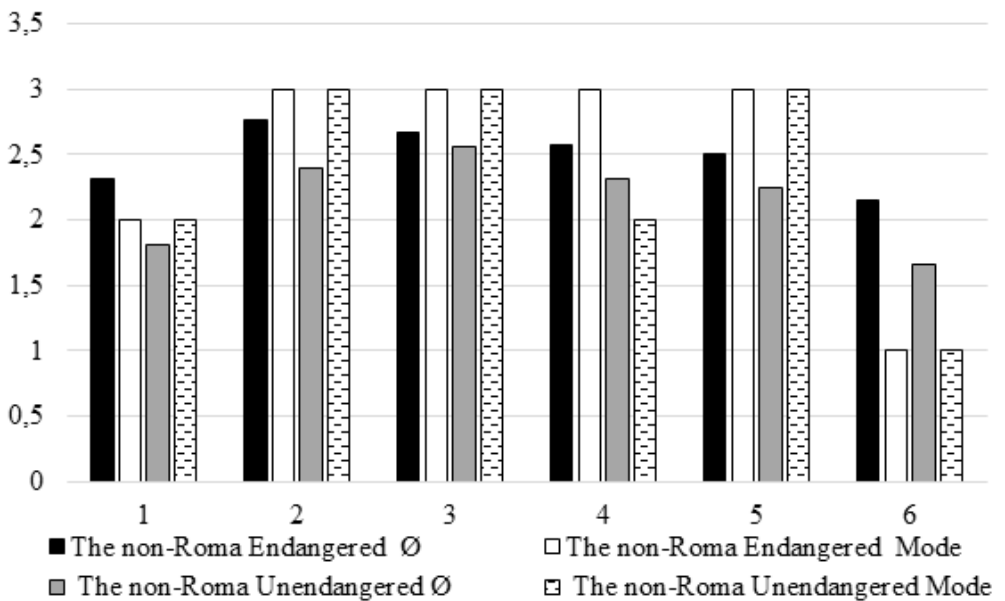
The data obtained from the sum of the above values were processed using indicators of descriptive statistics: the arithmetic mean was calculated for each indicator and each group and the most frequently reported value was determined by the students. The data were analysed by comparing these mean values across all groups of students. To describe the graphs below, their symbolic abbreviations are used: the most frequent answers (Mode) and the arithmetic average (\bar{O}).

Research Results

Based on summarized data, overviews of motivational tendencies of all groups of students were obtained. In observing the students' **need to be successful**, the resulting values of arithmetic means and modes were compared for the groups of Endangered and Unendangered students without the Roma ethnic group – see Figure 2. Simultaneously, the same values were compared for both groups of Roma students -Endangered and Unendangered ones- see Figure 3.

Figure 2

The need to be successful in Non-Roma Endangered and Unendangered students

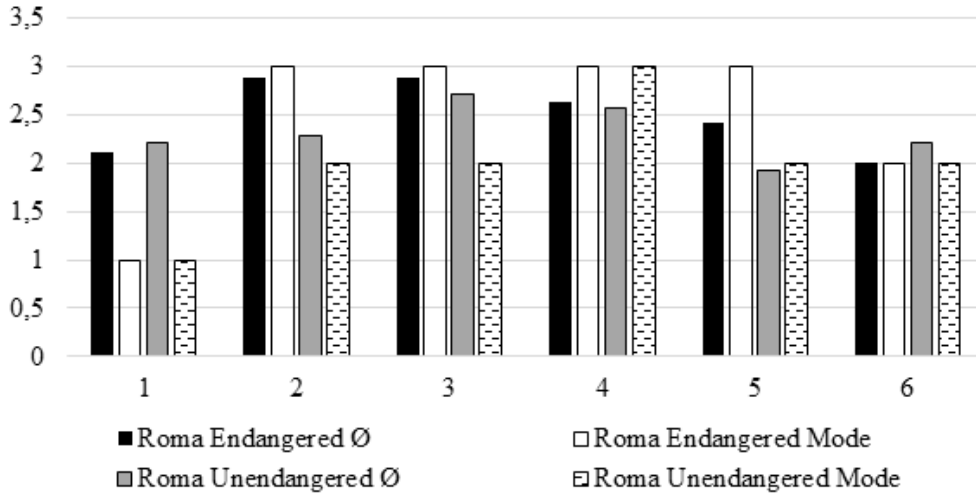


It is clear from Figure 2 that Unendangered students from non-Roma society showed in all indicators a stronger need to be successful, as the arithmetic mean values of the group are always lower than those of the Endangered students. In the case of Roma students, the need to be successful was not unambiguously demonstrated between the Endangered and the Unendangered. As shown in Figure 3, in two indicators (1, 6), the Roma Endangered group showed an even higher need to be more successful (lower arithmetic mean of the score) than their classmates from the Roma Unendangered group.



Figure 3

The need to be successful with Roma Endangered and Unendangered students

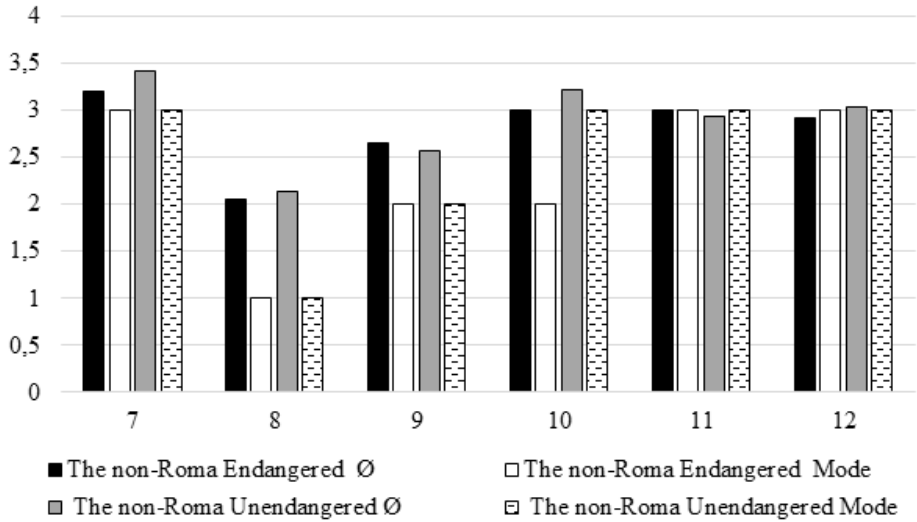


When comparing the need to be successful across the above-mentioned groups of Endangered students, i.e. between the Roma group and the non-Roma group, no significant differences were found. Within all Endangered students, there was a slightly higher need for successful Roma at three indicators (1, 5, 6), while the non-Roma Endangered students showed slightly higher for three indicators (2, 3, 4). The group of Endangered students monitored by us, regardless of ethnicity, was relatively consistent in terms of students' need to be successful at school. Therefore, in the monitored group of Endangered students, it can be concluded that both the Roma group and the non-Roma group represented in the research sample have more in common, and that they do not fundamentally differ in their motives for school achievement. In groups of Unendangered students, i.e. between the Roma group and the non-Roma group the motivation was not so well balanced. Roma students showed a higher desire to be successful only in two indicators (2, 5), while their non-Roma classmates showed it in four indicators (1, 3, 4, 6), where a lower arithmetic mean of the score was recorded per group.

In observing the students' **need to avoid failure**, the values of arithmetic means and modes were compared separately for groups of Endangered and Unendangered Roma students, and separately for groups of the Endangered and Unendangered non-Roma students. The non-Roma students of the Endangered group (see indicators 7, 8, 10, 11, 12) showed a stronger need to avoid failure than their classmates from the Unendangered non-Roma students (the lower arithmetic mean) - see Figure 4.

Figure 4

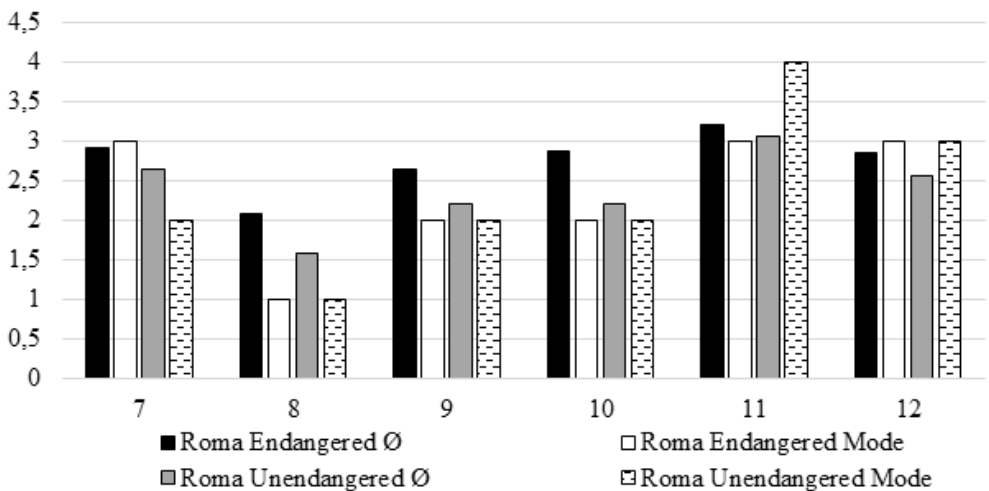
The necessity to avoid failure in the group of Endangered and Unendangered non-Roma students



In the Roma Endangered and Unendangered Groups, Graph 5 shows their necessity to avoid school failure. Figure 5 shows a lower level of reported mean values compared to Figure 4, indicating a higher need for Roma students to avoid school failure than for non-Roma students. The Unendangered Roma students showed lower values of arithmetic means in all indicators (7-12), i.e. higher motivation to avoid failure than their Roma classmates from the Endangered group.

Figure 5

The necessity to avoid school failure in the Roma Endangered and Unendangered groups





Comparing the need to avoid failure across the above-mentioned groups of students, i.e. between Roma and non-Roma, stronger and more frequent examples of motivation were found among Roma students. In all Endangered students, Roma students showed a stronger need to avoid failure than the Endangered group of non-Roma students in four cases (7, 9, 10, 12). They outnumbered Roma students in their interest in avoiding Roma students' failure at only two indicators (8, 11). In groups of Unendangered students, i.e. between Roma and non-Roma, there was a stronger need to avoid failure of Roma students (statements 7, 8, 9, 10, 12). The differences in the reported mean values were significantly greater than those of Endangered students.

Discussion

Motivation is a basic prerequisite for success, including school success (Karpati et al., 2014). The results obtained by the research are not surprising in terms of different school motivation between the group of Roma and non-Roma students. This is also related to their different representation among the students endangered and those unendangered by school failure (Tomová, 1995). The different cultural and social environment of the Roma motivates them very early, i.e. as early as they start attending school, in a different direction and intensity as compared with the students of the non-Roma society (Selická, 2019). In our research, non-Roma students unendangered by school failure showed a greater need to be successful than their classmates at risk of school failure. On the other hand, Roma students from the endangered group showed a greater need to avoid failure than their endangered classmates. In our case, it can be assumed that this contradictory tendency of a group of students endangered by school failure is related to their fear of losing group membership (Doubek et al., 2015). There were no differences in the need “to be successful” between groups of Roma Endangered and non-Roma Endangered students. This is also confirmed by other authors (Peček & Munda, 2016). However, in this research, the need to avoid failure has always been stronger for Roma than for non-Roma students. The above described differences cannot be ignored in pedagogical practice. They express the student’s relationship with the school and affect the effectiveness of his / her learning activity (Govington & Müller, 2001). The future performance of students in their lives also depends on their results, which is doubly true for Roma students. The teacher should be able to reflect these differences and work with them in the classroom.

Conclusions

This research presents some results from the realm of school achievement motivation in relation to two groups of respondents: Endangered and Unendangered students in a more detailed division into the groups of Roma and non-Roma students. It has been shown that the group of Endangered pupils consisting of Roma students and non-Roma students was more compact in terms of school motivation to achievement than the group of Unendangered students. This group has shown greater discrepancy expressed by a statistical mean and modus than the Endangered group. It was confirmed that Unendangered non-Roma students by school failure are different from the Endangered group ones, by showing a greater need for achievement of school success and less need for avoiding school failure.

In students of the Roma ethnic group a stronger tendency to avoid failure was confirmed in the group of Roma Unendangered than in the group of Roma Endangered students. This is a completely opposite tendency than in the group of non-Roma students. At the same time, in general, Roma students showed a greater need to avoid failure than others students. In these points, the formulated assumptions were confirmed. There were no significant differences between the non-Roma and the Roma group in the subgroup of Endangered students. Thus, the research assumption was not confirmed only at one point. Both groups (of Endangered and Unendangered students) coincided with their great fear of school and the fear of school failure. Consequently, this can be considered, in particular with the group of Unendangered students, as an indicator of a not quite favourable school environment for the maximum development of students' potentials.

Acknowledgement

The research paper came from research supported by SGS UJEP grant No. 43201 15 2003-43 01.

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Received 18 January 2020; accepted 25 June 2020



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