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TRUANCY FROM SCHOOL, A SOCIAL PROBLEM IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

EVASÃO ESCOLAR, UM PROBLEMA SOCIAL NO PROCESSO EDUCATIVO

AUSENTISMO ESCOLAR, UN PROBLEMA SOCIAL EN EL PROCESO EDUCATIVO

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ABSTRACT: This study examines truancy as a serious social problem that extends beyond the school environment, influencing students' social, emotional, and academic development. Drawing on theoretical insights, surveys, and practical experience, the research seeks to deepen understanding of truancy and identify effective prevention strategies. Empirical data were collected from 56 students across four grades at a private high school in Slovakia. Results indicated that truancy occurs at all grade levels, with the highest prevalence in the second grade. Common reasons cited for absenteeism included laziness, fear of failure, and lack of preparation for lessons. Although most students acknowledged that truancy is not an appropriate coping strategy, they still engaged in it. The study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach involving schools, families, professionals, and the wider community. Key preventive measures include fostering supportive school environments, improving school-family communication, promoting self-discipline, and ensuring early identification of at-risk students.

KEYWORDS: Truancy. Adolescents. School attendance. Social pathology. Prevention strategies.

RESUMO: Este estudo examina a evasão escolar como um grave problema social que se estende além do ambiente escolar, influenciando o desenvolvimento social, emocional e acadêmico dos alunos. Com base em insights teóricos, pesquisas e experiência prática, a pesquisa busca aprofundar a compreensão da evasão escolar e identificar estratégias eficazes de prevenção. Os dados empíricos foram coletados de 56 alunos de quatro séries em uma escola particular de ensino médio na Eslováquia. Os resultados indicaram que a evasão escolar ocorre em todas as séries, com maior prevalência na segunda série. Os motivos comuns citados para o absentismo incluíram preguiça, medo do fracasso e falta de preparação para as aulas. Embora a maioria dos alunos reconhecesse que a evasão escolar não é uma estratégia de enfrentamento apropriada, eles ainda se envolveram nela. O estudo enfatiza a necessidade de uma abordagem abrangente e multidisciplinar envolvendo escolas, famílias, profissionais e a comunidade em geral. As principais medidas preventivas incluem a promoção de ambientes escolares favoráveis, a melhoria da comunicação escola-família, a promoção da autodisciplina e a garantia da identificação precoce de alunos em risco.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Evasão escolar. Adolescentes. Frequência escolar. Patologia social. Estratégias de prevenção.

RESUMEN: Este estudio analiza el ausentismo escolar como un grave problema social que trasciende el entorno educativo y repercute en el desarrollo social, emocional y académico del estudiantado. A partir de aportes teóricos, encuestas y experiencias prácticas, la investigación busca profundizar la comprensión del fenómeno e identificar estrategias efectivas de prevención. Los datos empíricos se recopilaban de 56 estudiantes de cuatro niveles de una escuela secundaria privada en Eslovaquia. Los resultados evidenciaron la presencia de ausentismo en todos los cursos, con mayor incidencia en el segundo nivel. Las razones más frecuentes señaladas para la ausencia incluyeron pereza, miedo al fracaso y falta de preparación para las clases. Aunque la mayoría reconoció que el ausentismo no es una estrategia adecuada para enfrentar dificultades, continuó recurriendo a él. El estudio subraya la necesidad de un enfoque integral y multidisciplinario que articule escuela, familia, profesionales y comunidad. Entre las acciones preventivas clave destacan la promoción de ambientes escolares de apoyo, el fortalecimiento de la comunicación escuela-familia, el estímulo a la autodisciplina y la identificación temprana de estudiantes en situación de riesgo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ausentismo escolar. Adolescentes. Asistencia escolar. Patología social. Estrategias de prevención.

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INTRODUCTION

The social changes in Slovakia after the transition to pluralistic democracy and a market economy brought new opportunities and a range of socio-pathological phenomena that fundamentally impact the behaviour of children and youth (Das et al., 2025). One of these phenomena is truancy, which is not new, but due to changed economic and social conditions (Garbarova et al., 2017; Kopac et al., 2022), it is acquiring new dimensions and contexts. While in the past truancy was often the result of the poor economic situation of families, today it is increasingly conditioned by psychological, family, school, and broader social circumstances (Vágnerová, 1999).

Truancy manifests itself as intentional skipping of school classes without justifiable reasons, and its occurrence is observable across all grades of primary and secondary schools (Bieliková, 2003). In addition to individual causes related to the student's self-evaluation, personality, family background or relationship to school, truancy often reflects broader social tensions, such as conflicts in the community, low cohesion, the presence of deviant groups or the spread of addictions.

Adolescence, a period of seeking identity and emancipation from parental authority, increases the risk of deviant behaviour, including truancy (Turček, 2012). Peer pressure, the desire to fit in and at the same time escape from school obligations, becomes a common reason for skipping classes (Anbarasu & Bhuvaneswari, 2024). During this period, truancy often becomes not only a means of coping with stressful situations, but also a manifestation of resistance to the school system, which adolescents may perceive as unfair, authoritarian or unreasonably repressive (Bieliková, 2003).

According to Reid (2005), several types of truancy can be identified depending on the prevailing causes. The traditional truant usually comes from an unsupportive family environment and is characterised by low self-esteem, while the psychological truant is absent due to fear or other psychological difficulties. On the other hand, the institutional truant shows open resistance to school rules and teacher authority and is often associated with open conflict behaviour. A specific type is the genetic truant, whose causes and forms of truancy change during his school life (Reid, 2005).

An analysis of the causes of truancy shows that it is a complex phenomenon that cannot be simplified to a simple problem of disobedience or unwillingness to attend school. On the contrary, truancy often signals deeper personal, family or social issues, the ignoring of which can lead to serious consequences, such as school failure, social isolation or crime (Emmerová, 2007). Moreover, truancy is present among students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and children from well-off families, confirming its multifactorial nature (Kyriacou, 2005).

Surveys show that the most common reasons for student absences include conflicts with classmates or teachers, fear of evaluation, failure to master the curriculum, and the desire for fun and adventure outside the school environment (Slovíková, 2005). Last but not least, the role of the school as an institution that does not always have sufficient tools to prevent this phenomenon and effectively solve it cannot be overlooked.

As Bakošová (2008) states, solving truancy requires a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach that includes the school, the family, experts, the community and, if necessary, social and legal protection authorities. Preventive measures should be based primarily on building a safe and supportive school environment, developing teachers' competencies, project management, strengthening communication between school and family, and early identification of at-risk students (Vartiak, 2015; Bassey, 2020). School should be a place where students feel accepted, receive help in solving problems, and are not exposed to disproportionate punishments that can lead to even greater alienation (Bieliková, 2003).

The presented article aims to point out truancy as a serious social problem that goes beyond the framework of school institutions and affects broad areas of the lives of children and youth. Based on theoretical knowledge, surveys, and practical experience, we want to contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon and, at the same time, identify possible strategies for its prevention and solution. Truancy is not just a problem for individuals, but for the entire society, which should pay increased attention to creating conditions for the healthy development of children and young people (Norwood, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Truancy as a specific form of socio-pathological behaviour of children and youth is the subject of interest of several domestic and foreign authors. The literature defines truancy as intentionally skipping school classes without justifiable reasons. At the same time, it is a serious signal of problematic behaviour of a student, which often reflects not only their personality characteristics, but also broader social, family and school conditions (Cannistrà et al., 2022; Kyriacou, 2005).

According to Havlík (2005), truancy is one of the behavioural disorders that have their place in the category of antisocial disorders. It is characterised by conscious and planned skipping of school classes. At the same time, students' motivations differ, from an attempt to avoid unpleasant subjects or teachers, to a desire for fun and adventure (Havlík, 2005). Bieliková (2003) emphasises that truancy can also take the form of impulsive behaviour, when a student reacts to a stressful situation without a prior plan. Vágnerová (1999) distinguishes several types of truancy according to the motive of the action, from impulsive, through purposeful, to wandering, with each type having specific causes and consequences.

Reid (2005) identified four basic types of truants: traditional, psychological, institutional and genetic. Each type is characterised by the student's specific personality and social characteristics, which condition their relationship with school and their motivation to avoid school duties. Traditional truants usually come from a problematic family environment and are prone to isolation, while psychological truants are absent due to fear, phobias, lack of creativity other psychological difficulties (Vartiak & Garbarova, 2024).

Kyriacou (2005) divided the causes of truancy into three main groups: individual (personality disorders, low self-esteem), family (parental neglect, poverty) and school factors (unfavourable relationships with teachers, bullying, lack of interest in teaching). Similarly, Slovíková (2005) states that truancy can result from bullying by classmates, fear of teachers, failure at school or difficult family circumstances.

The truancy issue in secondary school students was examined in detail by Bradová (2011), who identified the main reasons for absences in adolescents, which include mainly refusal of school duties, the influence of peer groups and the desire for adventure. The author also points out the importance of a pedagogical approach and creating a positive school environment that can motivate students to attend regularly (Bradová, 2011).

Emmerová (2007) also pays significant attention to the issue of distinguishing between classical truancy, conditioned by school factors, and social truancy, which results from a neglectful family environment. The author emphasises the need for preventive measures and a multidisciplinary approach, which includes cooperation between the school, family, experts and other interested institutions (Emmerová, 2007).

Bakošová (2008), in her work, points out the diversity of causes and forms of truancy, emphasising the need for an individual approach to each case. According to the author, truancy often results from a combination of several factors, and its solution requires long-term systematic work and adequate measures at the school, family and society levels (Bakošová, 2008).

Ferencová (2002) and Pětiová (2009) point out the specifics of truancy in secondary school students, emphasising the growing influence of peer groups, Internet communities and the media, which can support and legitimise the avoidance of school obligations. According to their findings, truancy in adolescents is often a form of protest against authorities and a search for one's identity (Ferencová, 2002; Pětiová, 2009).

Jasečková et al. (2022) emphasise the need for a multidisciplinary approach to addressing truancy and highlights the role of prevention, which should be based on creating a safe and supportive environment in schools, developing students' social and communication skills, strengthening school-family relationships and early diagnosis of at-risk students.

To prevent truancy, Bradová (2011) draws attention to teachers' critical role and ability to create a motivating environment that supports regular school attendance.

According to Slovíková (2005), schools should pay increased attention to students with a tendency to truancy and ensure an individual approach for them in cooperation with professional staff.

As early as the 1980s, Filas (1984) emphasised the need for an active approach by schools to families in which school obligations are neglected, and today this approach is considered a standard part of preventive programs (Filas, 1984). Train (2005) draws attention to psychosomatic manifestations of school phobias that can lead to truancy, and in these cases, professional psychological help is necessary.

A summary of current knowledge shows that truancy is a complex phenomenon with many causes and forms, and its solution requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines preventive, interventional and repressive measures. The key to a successful solution is the early identification of at-risk students, systematic work with families, development of school-level motivational strategies, and ensuring all stakeholders' cooperation (Bradová, 2011; Emmerová, 2007; Jankalová & Vartiak, 2017).

Methodology and Research Hypotheses

The presented article aims to point out truancy as a serious social problem that goes beyond the framework of school institutions and affects broad areas of the lives of children and youth. Based on theoretical knowledge, surveys, and practical experience, we want to contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon and, at the same time, identify possible strategies for its prevention and solution.

As part of the research part of the article, an empirical survey was conducted, the aim of which was to identify the level of truancy at a specific secondary school, as well as to identify its most common causes, students' relationships with teachers and students' ideas about their future. The survey was conducted at the Private High School in Slovakia, where the research sample was made up of students from the first to the fourth grade.

The research process took place in several stages. In the first stage, the research team prepared the research. This included an analysis of available professional literature, the study of legislative standards and the preparation of a methodological framework based on quantitative and qualitative methods. The researchers prepared a structured questionnaire to identify the incidence and causes of truancy, which was distributed among the respondents.

The second stage focused on obtaining empirical data. The research was carried out as an anonymous questionnaire, which students from all grades filled out. The research sample consisted of 56 respondents. Data collection was carried out directly on school premises during classes, emphasising anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Participation in the

research was voluntary, and students were informed in advance about the goals and significance of the study.

Subsequently, an analysis of the obtained data was carried out. Descriptive statistical methods were used to assess the incidence of truancy in individual grades, identify the most frequently cited reasons for absences, and assess students' attitudes towards truancy as a form of problem solving. The analysis also included a comparison of the incidence of truancy in terms of gender, grade and other variables. The data were processed in tables and graphical form to increase the clarity of the results.

Three hypotheses were also established as part of the research:

H1: We assumed that truancy would be highest in the third grade, and these students would not consider truancy the correct solution to their problems.

H2: We expected that more than half of the respondents cited insufficient preparation for classes and the resulting fear of failure as the reason for truancy.

H3: We assumed that more than 50% of truants do not inform their parents about their absence and that their parents are not in close contact with the class teacher.

The entire survey was conducted over one month and its organisational arrangements included cooperation with the school administration, class teachers and a school psychologist. After the completion of data collection, the results were processed and interpreted, and they were presented to the school administration and the teaching staff to support the creation of preventive measures to reduce the incidence of truancy in the school environment.

RESULTS

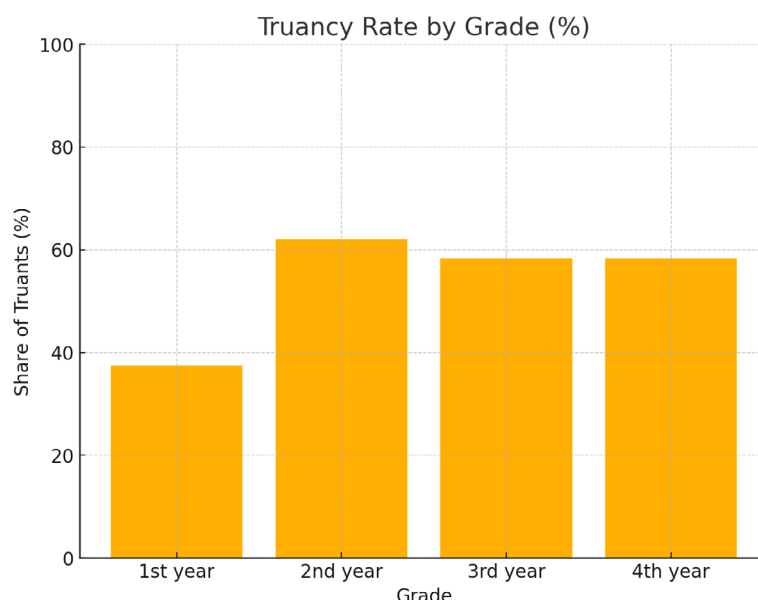
An empirical survey conducted at the Private High School in Slovakia focused on determining the incidence of truancy, identifying its causes, and examining students' attitudes towards school, teachers, and their future. The research sample consisted of 56 students from the first to fourth grades, with an even number of respondents in each grade, enabling an objective comparison.

The incidence of truancy by grade and attitudes towards truancy

The survey confirmed that truancy is present in all grades, with 30 students identified as truants, representing 53.57% of respondents. The highest proportion of truants was recorded in the second grade (62%), followed by the third and fourth grades with the same proportion (58.33%). Six students (37.5%) were identified as truants in the first grade. These data show that truancy reaches its highest intensity in the second grade, which can be explained by

the higher degree of adaptation of students to the school environment, which allows them to gain greater courage when skipping classes.

Figure 1
Truancy Rate by Grade



Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

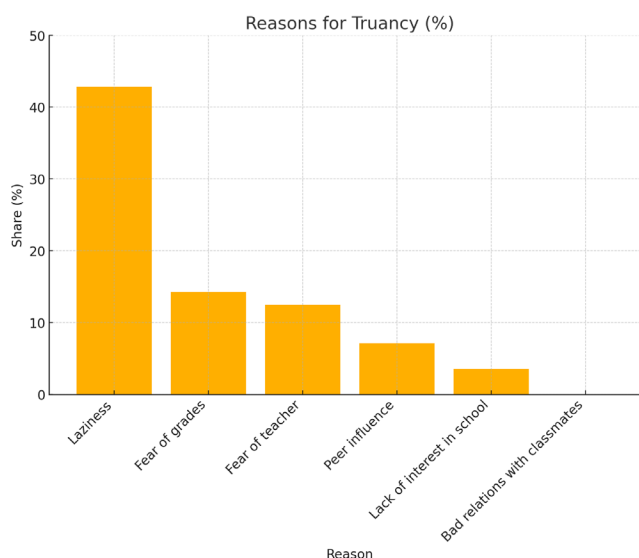
In terms of students' attitude towards truancy as a possible solution to problems, it was found that in all grades, the opinion prevailed that truancy was not the right solution (48.21%). Interestingly, in the third grade, where the highest truancy rate was assumed, 43.75% of students stated that truancy was not a good solution, while 31.25% were not sure, and 25% admitted that it could be a good solution.

Reasons for students' truancy

When determining the reasons for truancy, students were presented with a list of the six most common reasons. The most common reason was laziness (42.85%), learning difficulties, poor preparation and fear of a bad grade (14.28%). To a lesser extent, students mentioned fear of the teacher (12.5%), the influence of friends (7.14%) and lack of interest in school (3.57%).

Notably, no student mentioned bad relationships with classmates as a reason, pointing to the fact that the leading causes of truancy are primarily related to students' relationship with teachers, school duties and their motivation.

Figure 2
Reasons for truancy

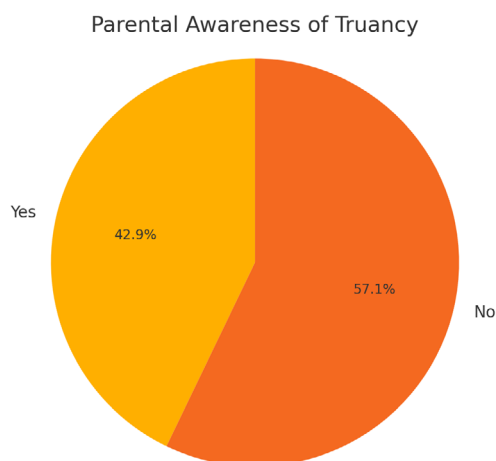


Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

Relationship of students to parents and parents awareness of truancy

The survey confirmed that in most cases (57.14%), parents were unaware of their children's truancy. The highest level of lack of information was recorded in the fourth grade (75%), which can be explained by the efforts of older grade students to be more independent and self-reliant in their decision-making. Another significant finding is that more than half of the students (58.92%) resolve problems with their parents only sometimes, 33.92% often, and 10.71% do not resolve their issues with their parents. These results indicate poor communication between students and parents, which may contribute to continued truancy.

Figure 3
Parental awareness of truancy



Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

Students' attitudes towards attending school and teachers

The students' responses show that 26.7% of students always like going to school, 58.9% rather like it, 14.2% somewhat dislike it, and no student stated that they dislike going to school. From these data, it can be concluded that a negative attitude towards school is not the main reason for truancy, but rather a behaviour related to individual attitudes, laziness and low self-discipline.

Students' attitudes towards teachers are mostly ambivalent. As many as 66.07% of students stated that they are satisfied with teachers' behaviour only sometimes, 17.85% are often happy, and 16.07% are dissatisfied. These answers indicate that relations between students and teachers are generally neutral or slightly negative, which can impact the emergence of truancy, especially if students feel insufficiently supported or understood.

Students' attitude towards education and the future

The survey showed that 78.57% of students believe that education ensures a better future, while 60.71% stated that they have an idea about their future profession. This finding is positive because it suggests that students are aware of the importance of education for their future, despite their truancy. This discrepancy can be explained as a consequence of the internal conflict of the adolescent period, when students are aware of the importance of education but are prone to impulsive decisions and prefer short-term goals over long-term perspectives.

DISCUSSION

The survey results provide essential insights into the nature, extent and causes of truancy in specific secondary school settings. They confirm that truancy is present in all grades and represents a serious problem with its specificities, particularly in terms of causes, perceptions by the students themselves, and the relationship of students to school, teachers, and parents. The results show that although most students know the importance of education for their future, their behaviour does not correspond to these attitudes, which points to the presence of internal ambivalence and conflicts characteristic of adolescence (Kyriacou, 2005; Lasekan et al., 2025; Vágnerová, 1999).

The dominance of the second grade in the number of truants is an interesting finding that requires deeper analysis. It can be interpreted as a consequence of the students' adaptation to the school environment, when, after completing the first grade, they gain greater confidence and courage to be absent without fear of repressive measures from the school or parents. Compared to Reid's (2005) typology, a large proportion of these

students could be classified as institutional truants who use truancy to reject school duties and teachers' authority.

Regarding the causes of truancy, the results align with previous research (Bradová, 2011; Slovíková, 2005), which confirms that the main reason for absences is laziness, poor preparation for teaching and fear of failure. An interesting finding is the low proportion of fear of teachers or lack of interest in school, which indicates that the leading causes of truancy are more subjective and are related to the students' personality traits, as well as their ability to cope with school duties and stressful situations. The absence of bad relationships with classmates as a cause of truancy confirms that the social inclusion of students is not a problem in the given conditions, which can be considered a positive indicator (Sharpe et al., 2025).

Notably, most students do not consider truancy a suitable solution to their problems, indicating a particular value orientation towards recognising school as an essential institution. On the other hand, it is alarming that despite this attitude, more than half of the respondents commit truancy. This discrepancy can be explained in the context of the developmental specifics of adolescence, when young people often act impulsively and prefer short-term satisfaction to long-term goals (Turček, 2012).

The results regarding students' communication with parents confirm the findings of Emmerová (2007), who draws attention to poor communication between adolescents and their parents. The high proportion of students whose parents did not know about their truancy may be a consequence of insufficient parental interest, but also of deliberate concealment on the part of students. These factors together create an environment in which truancy persists and is not detected in time, which increases the risk of its worsening and negative consequences for the further development of the student (Bakošová, 2008).

According to the results, students' relationships with teachers are at the level of neutral satisfaction. This attitude may be influenced by the perception of teachers as representatives of authority, while a more intense positive relationship that could have a preventive effect on truancy is missing. Reid (2005) emphasises that the quality of the relationship between student and teacher can play a key role in preventing school skipping, which points to the need to build a positive atmosphere and a partnership approach of teachers towards students.

A gratifying finding is the high proportion of students who believe in the importance of education for their future, as well as the fact that the majority have a clear idea of their future profession. This fact provides scope for using motivational strategies that can strengthen students' engagement in the school environment and reduce the truancy rate. Strengthening students' sense of purpose and self-motivation can be one of the effective preventive measures. In summary, it can be stated that the survey results confirm the multifactorial nature of truancy, which is conditioned by a complex of individual, family and school factors (Havlík, 2005). Addressing this phenomenon therefore requires systematic preventive measures at the

school level, including more intensive communication between teachers and students, strengthening school cooperation with parents and using support programs to develop students' personal and social competencies (Bradová, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Research conducted at the Private High School in Slovakia confirmed that truancy is a significant social problem affecting children's and youth's behaviour across all grades. The results showed a high incidence of truancy, with the phenomenon most intense in the second year of secondary school. This fact can be explained by better adaptation of students to the school environment, which allows them to be absent with greater courage without fear of consequences.

Although most respondents do not consider truancy to be an appropriate way of solving problems, more than half of students regularly engage in it. This discrepancy confirms that truancy cannot be perceived as a simple manifestation of disobedience, but as a complex phenomenon linked to developmental, family, school and broader social factors. The most common reason for absences was laziness, followed by fear of failure and insufficient preparation for classes.

To a lesser extent, students also mentioned fear of teachers or peer pressure. The absence of bad relationships with classmates as causes of truancy indicates that in the conditions studied, the social integration of students is not problematic, which is a positive finding. On the other hand, poor communication between students and parents and a high level of parents' lack of information about children's absences represent a risk factor that may contribute to the deepening of the problem. These findings align with Emmerová's (2007) and Bakošová (2008) conclusions, which emphasise the importance of the family environment and communication to prevent truancy.

In students' attitudes towards school and teachers, predominantly neutral to slightly negative attitudes were identified. Although students declared that they mostly liked going to school, they rarely expressed satisfaction with the behaviour of teachers. This situation points to the need to improve the relationship between teachers and students, which, according to Reid (2005), plays a key role in preventing school avoidance. It is also encouraging that most students recognise the importance of education for their future and have an idea of their future profession, which creates space for applying motivational strategies to increase student engagement in the school environment.

Based on the data obtained, it can be stated that addressing truancy requires a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach that considers the specifics of adolescent development

and focuses not only on the student but also on his family, school environment and broader social context. Recommended measures include systematic work of the school with at-risk students, strengthening cooperation with the family, developing communication and social skills of students and creating a safe and supportive school environment.

Educating parents about the risks of truancy, strengthening their competencies in raising children, and solving problem situations are also necessary. Lastly, the school should actively cooperate with professional workplaces and social and legal protection of children to identify risk cases in time and take adequate measures.

As a complex social problem, truancy goes beyond the framework of school institutions and requires a societal interest in creating conditions for the healthy development of children and youth. As Bakošová (2008) states, only long-term, systematic and targeted work of all stakeholders can reduce the incidence of truancy and support students on the path to responsibility, self-discipline and awareness of the importance of education for their future lives.

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