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Perceptions of parents about the role of school in children's lives

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## ABSTRACT

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The education of children is an essential aspect of their development and growth, parents play a critical role in ensuring their children's success in school. Thus, it is important to understand the perspectives of parents regarding the school their children attend. This thesis aims to explore the perspectives of parents regarding School, with the goal of gaining insights into their experiences, opinions, and suggestions for improvement.

This thesis is structured into five parts, including an introduction, theoretical background, research context, findings and conclusion. The theoretical framework for this study draws upon relevant literature and theories related to parent-school relationships and educational quality. The research methods used in this study are qualitative, involving semi-structured interviews and content analysis. The research material consists of interviews with a sample of parents of children attending school in addition to teachers as well

The main findings of this study indicate that parents have various perspectives about schools, and those are impacted by various factors such as the economic and cultural contexts. While many parents are satisfied with the school's academic standards and curriculum, some expressed concerns about the curriculum structure and school resources, and the level of communication between parents and school administration. These findings provide insights into the challenges faced

by parents and schools in developing effective partnerships that can support student learning and development.

In conclusion, this thesis offers a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of parents regarding School. The results of this study can be used to develop strategies that foster better parent-school relationships and to improve the quality of education provided by School. Additionally, this study opens up avenues for further research that can explore the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as teachers and school administrators, to gain a more holistic understanding of the issues affecting educational quality.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	3
1 INTRODUCTION .....	6
2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	8
2.1 Parents' views on education around the world.....	8
2.2 Teachers' role in coaching parents .....	9
2.3 Parents expectations .....	10
2.4 The parenting models .....	11
2.5 Parents involvements and its impact on children wellbeing.....	12
3 RESEARCH CONTEXT .....	15
3.1 The context .....	15
3.2 Methodology.....	16
3.3 Two research streams of data collection: .....	16
3.4 The analyzing methods :.....	17
3.4.1 Research approach.....	17
3.4.2 Geolocation of the respondents in Tunisia .....	19
3.4.3 Channels used for data collection.....	20
3.4.4 Participants .....	20
4 FINDINGS .....	21
4.1 Uncertainty and confusion.....	21
4.2 Emotional well-being .....	22
4.3 The contextual impact on education .....	23
4.4 Gap Between parents and school.....	24
4.5 Inspirations and wonders .....	25
5 CONCLUSION.....	26
6 DISCUSSION .....	27
REFERENCES .....	28
APPENDIX 1 .....	31
APPENDIX 2 .....	33

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Considering the rise of ED-Tech facilities, IT and social media, the conventional motivations behind the “Daily physical presence at school” seems to become irrelevant; at least when it comes to learning academic skills and developing social interactions with peers.

According to Maloney, K. K. L., & Malcom-Piqueux, L. E. (2021), the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread adoption of remote learning has made physical presence increasingly irrelevant in schools. The emergence of digital tools and platforms such as video conferencing, online discussion forums, and educational software has enabled students to attend classes, interact with their teachers, and complete coursework from the comfort of their own homes. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further accelerated the shift towards remote learning, as schools around the world were forced to close their doors and transition to online education to ensure the safety of their students and staff. This has highlighted the potential of a hybrid model for education, which combines traditional classroom-based teaching with online learning platforms, allowing students to access quality education regardless of their location or physical ability to attend a school in person.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shift to remote learning have significantly impacted the perspectives of parents about school. Many parents have had to adapt to new methods of learning, support their children's education from home, and balance work and family responsibilities. This experience has highlighted the importance of education and the role of schools in supporting children's academic and social development. It has also underscored the need for flexible and accessible educational options that can adapt to changing circumstances, such as remote learning. As a result, many parents now have a greater appreciation for the hard work of educators and are more engaged in their children's learning. However, the pandemic has also exposed disparities in access to technology and resources, which has raised concerns about equity in education. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning have had a significant impact on the perspectives of parents about school, highlighting the need for ongoing innovation and collaboration to ensure that all children have access to high-quality education.

It is becoming fundamental to analyze parents' perspectives towards schools and analyze potential gaps in order to identify them and compensate while needed, as parents are the main stakeholders when it comes to children's education.

This thesis emphasizes the importance of examining parents' perspectives on the role of schools in their children's lives. A comprehensive understanding of parenting concepts, childhood, school curriculum, and evaluation within the local cultural context and future needs is essential for this analysis.

There are five parts in this thesis, introduction, theoretical background; research context, data analysis and conclusion. Qualitative data research method including semi-structured interviews and content analysis were used to collect data from parents and teachers. The results of this study can be used to develop strategies to improve parent-school relationships and enhance the quality of education provided by the school.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

After conducting a comprehensive review of relevant literature, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the key education stakeholders, taking into account their relationships and diverse perspectives on education in varying cultural contexts. This approach enables the exploration of the topic from an impartial standpoint, facilitating an examination of contrasting viewpoints. Through this lens, we can gain a better understanding of the issue and the various factors that contribute to it.

### 2.1 Parents' views on education around the world

From a worldwide perspective, and regarding the parents' perspective on schools, the Varkey Foundation launched the Global Parents' Survey (Varkey Foundation 2022, 4) between December 2017 and January 2018, 27500 parents in 29 countries were interviewed. The survey highlighted four findings.

Firstly, there is an overall positive about the quality of school education, however parents seem to be less confident when it comes to public education. Parents from well performing countries in PISA ranking are also the least confident in the quality of their children education. Among these countries for example South Korea and Japan.

Secondly, there is an agreement among parents about the importance of the role of teachers in schools; 45% of parents worldwide refer to the quality of teaching as the first criteria for choosing their child's school alongside location (Varkey Foundation 2022, 4)

Thirdly, majority of parents agree that schools are well preparing children for future; according to the Global Parents' Survey "Almost two-thirds (64%) of parents believe their child's school is preparing them well for the world of 2030 and beyond", however there are different point of views regarding the role of universities. According to the same survey "Parents' biggest concerns about their children's futures globally [...] 42% listed getting a job and having a successful career as among their top three anxieties for their child's future" .



Lastly, the economic and social context impacts the commitments of parents towards their children. According to the Global Parents' Survey "25% of parents worldwide spend 7 or more hours a week helping their children with their education, this figure rises to 62% in India, 50% in Vietnam and 39% in Colombia. Parents in established economies are spending less time, with only 5% spending 7 or more hours a week in Finland, 10% in France and Japan, and 11% in the UK" (Varkey Foundation 2022, 4).

Research was conducted in China (Chan T. C., Shu, Z., & Xiao H. Y 2021, 235) on 135 parents in elementary schools in Wu Xing District, Huzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, to introduce the parents' perception of schools and family collaboration. The research revealed that parents are perfectly aware of their role as active stakeholders in the learning community, however they are not aware about their contributions and ways they could contribute to their children's learning experience. The article referred to six types of parental involvement in the education of their children (Epstein 2002) ;

- a) Parenting knowledge and skills
- b) Communicating between home and school
- c) Volunteering at school and in the community
- d) Supporting student learning at home
- e) Involvement in decision-making and advocacy
- f) Collaborating with the community.

The introduced types of parental involvement can be used as guidelines for schools to install a clear framework in order to reach effective involvement of the parent's community in their children school. Interviewed Parents expressed clearly their willingness to commit to being part of the learning journey, however, they are expecting support and guidance from schools' administrators.

## 2.2 Teachers' role in coaching parents

One important thing about parents' perspective on school is the relationship they have with the teaching staff. According to Thomas D. Whitby the author of *The Relevant Educator* (Tom Whitby 2014), the biggest challenge remains in the fact that teachers themselves are facing the challenge of educating parents themselves about the education of their children. Since teachers were trained

and educated with mid 20<sup>th</sup> century education practices, this makes the situation even more complex.

According to Tom Whitby several beliefs and practices need to be changed, when it comes to parents, and teachers play a role in coaching parents about these new trends

- The homework load is not a qualitative parameter for education anymore
- Complaisant students are not considered as “good learners” anymore
- Teachers’ expertise on a specific subject should not be the main drivers of students learning experience
- The classroom conventional layout and design (rows and desks) do not necessarily increase attention during lessons
- Extending the learning experience out of schools' boundaries

Chung and Walsh ( Višnjić-Jevtić, A. 2021, 120) defined child-centered approach in three main points, “(a) a child in the centre of the world”; “(b) a child in the centre of learning” and “(c) a child as an active creator of his/her own learning”. Referring to the first two standpoints, these might be interpreted as adult’s perspectives on the position of children within the education ecosystem. Positioning a child as “the center of the world, and the child in the center of learning” is often referring to parents rather than educators, therefore appears the terms of Overparenting, helicopter parenting or curling parents. All these terminologies describe a unique educative stream tempting to customize the whole learning experience according to typical children's needs and requirements. However, and from educators’ perspective, teachers suppose that children acquire knowledge while performing certain educative patterns and learning milestones (Campbell-Barr, 2019; Visković & Višnjić Jevtić, 2019). Thus, an approach where the child is in the center of the learning experience might be out of educator’s spectrum.

### 2.3 Parents expectations

School tutoring service “Cluey Learning” – in collaboration with Pure Profile – surveyed more than 1,000 people during 3-8 December 2020 in Australia (The Educator, 2021). According to the survey, parents are claiming a more individual approach towards teaching for their children; it was mentioned “Because, just as you wouldn’t expect your child to have the same hairstyle as every other student in their school, you wouldn’t expect them to be identical learners.”

The Education Next conducted a survey (Barrows, S., Peterson, P.E., and West M.R. 2017, 8-18) in June 2016 regarding the perception of parents to their schools in the USA. A randomly selected population of 1,571 respondents were interviewed. The survey reflected three schooling models: Public schools, charter schools and private were compared to each other's. Public, charter, and private schools offer different approaches to education. Public schools are government-funded, open to all students, and required to follow state and federal regulations. Charter schools are publicly funded but operated independently and have more flexibility in curriculum design, teaching methods, and staff hiring. Private schools are privately funded, charge tuition fees, and offer more autonomy in admissions and curriculum design. Each type of school has its own advantages and parents can choose the one that best fits their child's needs and goals.

The survey revealed that parents have a preference to charter schools among the two other models. Charter-school parents appreciate what was described as "Extensive communication with school officials". It was also reported that the learning community in private schools were more homogenous while in the public and charter schools they were described as heterogenous.

## 2.4 The parenting models

While addressing the parenting issue, we naturally have to start by profiling them. This will allow us to have a better understanding for their behaviors and therefore their perceptions of the surrounding environment. In 1960, a psychologist named Diana Baumrind carried out a survey regarding the different styles of parenting. After thirty years of this survey (Sir Ken Robinson, 2019), Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin built suggested four styles of parenting: Authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved. Below, the main characterization is given of every parenting profile as the researchers described them.

Authoritarian parents announce strict rules and guidance to their children, without further explanations and directives why these rules exist. Children are expected to follow instructions and there is no room for negotiations. Researchers say that the child of an authoritarian parent is good at executing what he/ she is asked to do, but it seems to be that they are unhappy children and have issues dealing with socializing.

Authoritative parents have a settlement of rules with their children too, but they tend to explain reasons and motivations behind these rules. If rules are not followed by children, these parents tend to avoid punishment and see it as a learning opportunity.

Researchers say that these children are the happiest among the 4-parenting model, and are more suitable to reach their goals.

Permissive parents are more merciful and tolerant than what is usually expected, they treat their children as if they were friends. They prioritize care and protection and care less about consequences of actions. Children of permissive parents have difficulties dealing with authorities out of home and do not perform well at school comparing to their classmates

Uninvolved parents have a passive attitude towards their role and duties. They limit their role to provide food and shelter. Children of uninvolved parents naturally face issues related to “Self-control, self-esteem and happiness”.

Diana Baumrind established a theory related to the impact of parenting style on children's academics (Ana L. Candelanza, Eva Queenilyn C. Buot, Jewish A. Merin 2021, 1498) the theory attests that there is a law impact of the parenting style on children's academic performance and parenting style. The theoretical findings are contradictory to the initial statement attesting that the Authoritative parenting style has a positive impact on children's success at school. In the same article, where the theory was described, it has also been mentioned that there is no comprehensive research on the impact of parenting on academic success; there has not been much research concerning the effects of parenting styles on the academic performance of children,

## 2.5 Parents involvements and its impact on children wellbeing

Some Parents are perceiving school as service providers, they are not willing to share responsibilities and adopt a more proactive attitude towards education. An article published in “The Guardian” (The Guardian 2022) reports teachers' testimonials after the Covid Pandemic hit and the rapid switch to online teaching for an extended period and without further notice. The reactions and behaviors that parents have had during that period reflected their mindset towards schools. A Scottish delegate, Kat Lord Watson who used to work in a private school described how toxic the teaching online experience was, especially that parents were “Watching you and rating you on their

WhatsApp groups”, in the same article it was mentioned that “Parents of students now feel they can access teachers 24 hours a day, seven days a week”. This reflects the gap between the perception of parents about the limits of their responsibilities and their actual role as mentors and active stakeholders. Within these exceptional circumstances, and according to the same article, it was reported that teachers were still having a “Supervisor” attitude towards their children's teachers.

From a different other perspective, parents' involvement is directly affected by the school itself (Maša Đurišić and Mila Bunijevac 2017, 140-142). Once teachers express empathy and attention towards students, are respectful towards parents and proactive while creating interactive communication channels, parents become more involved in their children learning journey.

Families and parents play a tremendous role in creating a successful educational experience. Through their participation in school events and volunteering, they participate in the success of the learning experience. It has been clearly stated that parental involvement is subordinated to school achievement for both children and adolescents (Long, 2007).

There is a misconception on how parents perceive the emotional well-being of their children, a recent survey approached that matter and highlighted the gap between how stressed their children are and how their parents think; “Almost half of the teenagers' studied felt seriously stressed; only a third of their parents noticed. Fewer than one out of twenty parents thought their kids were extremely stressed, but almost one in three teenagers said they are. More than 40 percent of teens say they experience headaches; only 13 percent of parents realize it. Half of all teenagers have trouble sleeping; just over a tenth of parents know about it. About 40 percent of teens have anxieties about eating; only 8 percent of parent notice” (American Psychological Association, 2009). This quote reveals a significant gap in perception between teenagers and their parents regarding stress and related issues. Almost half of the teenagers studied felt seriously stressed, yet only a third of their parents noticed. Teenagers reported experiencing physical symptoms related to stress, but the majority of parents were unaware of them. The quote emphasizes the need for parents to pay closer attention to their children's well-being and bridge the gap in communication to better understand their needs.

The parents' lifestyle, life commitments, and duties are putting them under pressure, and they are becoming overwhelmed, this affects their relationship with their children and their perspectives

towards their education. Dr. Lisa Firestone wrote an article about the topic (Lisa Firestone, 2010) and believes that parents are not aware of their children's mental health, and this indeed is not coming out of negligence or bad intentions. "As parents in today's culture," she says, "we find ourselves encouraged to center our daily lives on our kids, yet as we focus our attention on car-pools, homework, and play dates, we run the risk of becoming dangerously distracted from what's most important: how our children feel."

### 3 RESEARCH CONTEXT

#### 3.1 The context

In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding the perception of parents about schools. Parents are an essential stakeholder in the education system and their perception of schools can have a significant impact on their children's educational outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the factors that influence parents' perception of schools and how these perceptions can be leveraged to improve the quality of education.

While there has been some research on the topic, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies that examine parents' perception of schools across different demographic groups and geographic locations. Moreover, most of the existing research has focused on the perceptions of parents with children in primary or secondary schools, with less attention paid to parents with children in higher education. Therefore, this thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature by conducting a comprehensive study of parents' perception of schools across various demographic groups and educational levels.

The findings of this research could have important implications for educators, and parents themselves. By understanding the factors that shape parents' perception of schools, education policy-makers and school administrators can develop targeted interventions to improve school quality and increase parental engagement. Moreover, parents can use the insights from this research to make more informed decisions about their children's education.

The one to one interviews and observation sessions were conducted in the "FLS" school, a private primary school adopting the Tunisian curricula by applying what was described by school administrators as "Finnish methodology". This is a small-sized school (45 pupils and 12 teachers) and was established in 2014. The school is located in a residential area in Tunis within the "middle level" social category area.

### 3.2 Methodology

The methodology for this research will involve a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative surveys and qualitative surveys (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The survey will be designed to collect data on parents' perceptions of schools across various demographic groups and educational levels. The survey questions will be developed based on a review of the literature (Bernard, 2011) and input from experts in the field. The survey will be administered online and will be distributed through social media and other channels to reach a diverse sample of parents. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of the survey respondents to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions and experiences with schools (Palinkas et al., 2015). The interviews were conducted via video conferencing and were video-recorded with consent from participants.

The data collected from both the survey and interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). The quantitative data from the surveys will be analyzed, while the qualitative data from the interviews will be transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify common themes and patterns in parents' perceptions and experiences. Overall, this mixed-methods approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of parents' perceptions of schools, allowing for a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of the factors that influence these perceptions (Palinkas et al., 2015).

### 3.3 Two research streams of data collection:

- The first research stream is quantitative, where a list of questions was formulated according to respective initial hypothesis. The questions were launched to a targeted audience using the writer community in addition to social media campaign.
- In second research stream is qualitative, where one to one interview was conducted to a private primary school located in Tunisia. The interviews were video recorded and on line, so it was a premium opportunity for the interviewer to catch emotional states and body language, and also adjust questions flow to the ongoing interactions with the interviewee.



### 3.4 The analyzing methods :

To analyze data from interviews and surveys, a systematic approach was required to extract meaningful insights and draw valid conclusions. It was necessary to use a combination of methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the collected data.

Content analysis in Chapter 1-Theoretical background was used to analyze textual data by identifying the frequency of specific words and analyzing the context in which they appear. Statistical analysis was used to analyze quantitative data obtained from surveys. It involves using statistical techniques to summarize and analyze data, such as calculating means, and standard deviations. Narrative analysis involved analyzing the stories and narratives provided by interviewees to identify themes and draw conclusions. Both Statistical and narrative analysis were used in Chapter 4-Findings

#### 3.4.1 Research approach

The research was carried out using two different methods, each with its unique features and characteristics. Different data collection techniques, such as surveys, interviews, and observations, depending on the specific channel.

During a period of 2 months starting from 1<sup>st</sup> of February to 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, the whole learning community (Teachers, Parents, Students) of a primary school called FLS (Finland Leaders School) based in Tunis – Tunisia was interviewed through both ZOOM and TEAMS video calls. The interviews were initially planned for 30 to 45 min, but in practice took 60min on average. And was conducted with 27 interviewees divided as in table 1.

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Number</b>
Student	10
Teacher	5
Parent	12

*Table 1. Interviewees in the research*

The first step of the research involved conducting interviews with parents, followed by their children (students) in the subsequent step. These interviews were conducted over a period of two months, from February 1st to March 27th, 2021. There was no specific order or agenda for the interviews as it was scheduled according to the availability of the interviewees. Furthermore, all the interviews were conducted via Zoom, ensuring a safe and convenient experience for everyone involved.

The interview questions were formulated based on the research objective and the literature review. The aim was to gather insights from parents about their perceptions of education in Tunisia, their child's school, the teacher, and the future of their child's education. The question "What is your opinion about education in Tunisia?" was designed to explore the general attitude of parents towards education in the country. The question "What is your opinion about your current child's school?" aimed to gain an understanding of parents' perceptions of their child's school. The question "What do you think about your child's teacher?" was intended to gather feedback about the teacher's performance and effectiveness. The question "How do you see the future of your child from an education perspective?" aimed to explore parents' expectations and aspirations for their child's education. Finally, the question "If you had a 'Magical Power,' what would be the things you will change/improve the school of your child?" aimed to encourage parents to provide suggestions for improvement and innovation in the education system. These questions were adapted from previous studies on parental involvement in education, including the work of Epstein (Epstein, J. L. 2011) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. 1995) .

In addition to interview, one survey was conducted through "Google Forms" and it was sponsored on Facebook. The survey reached was filled by 1354 participants who are parents, and they answered to 17 questions who were stipulated to investigate on a set of pre-established hypothesis (See Appendix 1 : Survey initial hypothesis and relevant questions)

The key figures about the survey:

People Reached: 51440

Post Engagements: 1354

Post reactions (Like): 143

Post comments: 58

Post shares: 9

Respondents that participated to the survey launched via Facebook:

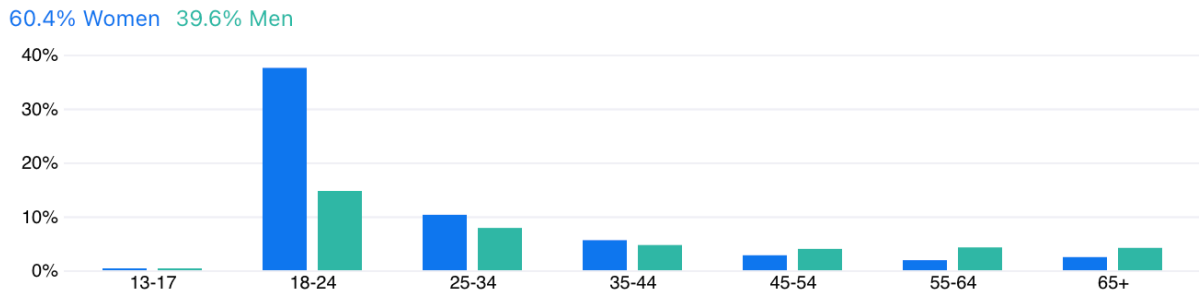


Figure 1. The age and gender division of the survey respondents

Source : Facebook\_NEST\_ad center\_14/04/2021

### 3.4.2 Geolocation of the respondents in Tunisia

The survey respondents were primarily drawn from the five main governorates of Tunisia, with Tunis Governorate leading the pack with an impressive 7,584 participants. Sfax secured the second position with a considerable 4,704 respondents, while Nabeul Governorate ranked third, garnering 3,685 responses. Both Ben Arous and Sousse Governorates demonstrated relatively comparable participation levels, with 3,488 and 3,456 parents respectively. This data provides valuable insights into the diverse perspectives of parents across these key regions, allowing for a thorough analysis of regional attitudes towards education and the role of schools in children's lives.

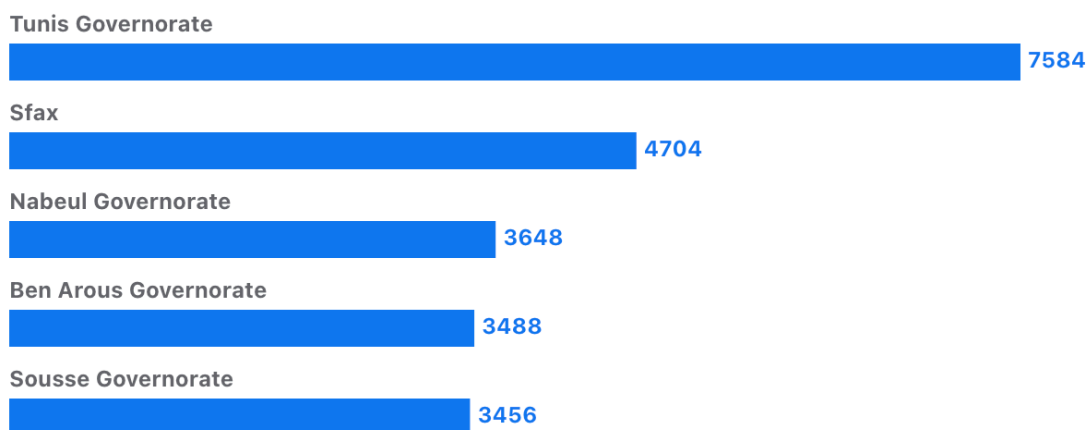


Figure 2 : Location of the respondents

Source : Facebook\_NEST\_ad center\_14/04/2021

### 3.4.3 Channels used for data collection

Two primary research methods were employed during the data collection phase: remote interviews and surveys. The rationale behind utilizing multiple channels was to obtain valuable feedback and tailor the questions and interactions to suit the target population. For instance, during face-to-face online interviews with parents, it was insightful to observe emotions and body language while discussing matters related to their children's educational journey at school. This multi-faceted approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of parental perspectives on the role of schools in their children's lives.

Research Channel	Instrument
Remote interview	ZOOM, TEAMS, FACEBOOK
Survey	FACEBOOK Ads, GOOGLE FORMS

Table 2 : Instruments used in each research channel

The whole data collection approach was undertaken in an overall period of 3 months starting from February, and ending up in April 2021. Below a GANTT chart summarizing the approach timeline.

Step	2021											
	February				March				April			
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
Remote Interviewing												
Data coding and the method section written												
Survey												

Table 3 : GANTT chart for the research timeline

### 3.4.4 Participants

There are two distinctive data streams used in this study; The surveys and the online interviews. The introduced streams resulted in two groups of participants. The first group participating to the interview sessions includes Teachers (5 x Participants), Parents (12 x Participants) and Students (10 x Participants) knowing that all of the interviewed participants were part of the same school (FLS). In second group of participants participating to the survey includes 268 parents 60% were women, and the predominant age range was 18–24-year-old (Facebook-ad figures)

## 4 FINDINGS

After analyzing both surveys answers (See appendix 2 : Survey answers) and interviews data, it was discovered that there is an overall dissatisfaction from parents towards education in Tunisia, and more particularly about schooling experience. Causes of dissatisfaction can be divided into three interconnected parts, these are; The uncertainty and confusion, Emotional well-being, and The contextual impact on education, Gap between parents and school, and inspirations and wonders . Below a description of the 5 main appealing findings that were discovered after confronting interview analysis to survey data.

### 4.1 Uncertainty and confusion

According to the research findings, parents expressed that they experience a considerable amount of uncertainty and confusion regarding the purpose of education and their role in their children's education. Parents feel that there is a lack of clear communication and guidance from schools on these matters. Additionally, parents highlighted that they feel pressure to conform to societal expectations and fulfill their responsibilities as parents, while also navigating complex education system. This has resulted in parents feeling overwhelmed and unsure about how best to support their children's academic and personal development. Overall, the research indicates that there is a need for increased support and resources to help parents navigate the complexities of education and their role in it .

53% of parents, while taking their children to school every day think that they are doing "something beneficial for their future lives" (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers), however, 38% think that they do it because "They have to" (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers), and 3,5% think that they are doing "something harmful for them" (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers). This figure highlights the lack of clarity related to the purpose of education and the role of schools themselves for parents.

The uncertainty related to education in Tunisia has several roots, even though over 46% of parents think that their previous experience at school as a child affected positively their adult life, they have

difficulties envisioning how the schooling experience would affect their children's future (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers). Parents are divided when it comes to the impact school-education has into their future adult's life, 40% think that it will not help in future, however 45% think that it would help (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers).

Considering current needs in terms of learning, parents are not clear whether the current school's offer in terms of learning is aligned with their actual needs or not, 70% think that nowadays, the school should focus more on Educating children and SEL ( Social and Emotional Learnings) rather than academic and sciences (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers). As the main figure highlighting this uncertainty 78% of parents informed that they would remove their child from school if they find a better school (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers), and 83% of them are ready to engage their child in another education system rather than a "Conventional school" if they find clear evidence of success and this reflects a lack of trust towards schools (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers),.

78% of parents think that school is not the only way for a child to build his/ her personality, and 86% of them are aware that other educative approaches besides "Conventional school" are existing (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers).

Parents seem to be in between a complicated dilemma; from one side they are not generally satisfied with the current offer in terms of education and have the willingness to change for something more appropriate, and on the other hand, they have no other alternative rather than conventional schooling model. This dilemma comes across in the following comment by a parent interviewed in the research:

"I feel guilty about my child ... I feel like I'm not doing enough"

Interviewed Parent – Tunisia

## **4.2 Emotional well-being**

We shall discuss the unexpected findings of a survey on parents' opinions of the educational environment and school setting. According to the survey, an overwhelming majority of parents 84% believe that the school environment is harming their kids' emotional health and wellness (Refer to

Appendix 2 : Survey's answers). Additionally, it appears that school's detrimental effects go beyond the classroom as 70% of parents think it is affecting their connection with their child (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers). These results show the need for additional research and development in this area and shed light on the perceived drawbacks of the educational system. The announced findings can be schematized in the quotations below :

"I visited many psychologists with my son ..."

Parent A – Parent – Tunisia

" My child was bullied ... we were harassed and forced to subscribe him for extra lessons with his teacher "

Parent B – Parent – Tunis

5 out of 12 parents, during the face-to-face interviews informed that their child has visited a psychologist or is suffering from a sort of emotional disorder. Some school leaders declared also that Tunisian parents tend to approach psychologists to resolve their children's issues without trying other alternatives within the school's stakeholders

### **4.3 The contextual impact on education**

When it comes to policies and regulations; 85% of parents think that whatever efforts parents or teachers do, they will be always confronted with the country's regulations and policies the national educational context is somehow bounding any initiatives of innovations or trying new educative approaches. This means that the Tunisian learning community (parents and teachers) is bounded to current Local regulations and policies, and there is a small room for change and discussions.

Parents reported that the most important criteria leading to choosing a particular school for a child are: The school curriculum 65% and proximity (location) 23% (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers). This reflects the ambiguity of the situation for the parents; they emphasize the importance of the curriculum to choose the school for their child, but they largely agree the current schooling experience is not adapted for children's future needs and that there is tight room for improvements

into education practices considering local rules and regulations. Below, an additional statement of an interviewed parent reflects this statement.

“Whatever teachers try to do/ innovate, they always find themselves bound with local regulations and policies”

Parent C – Parent – Tunisia

#### **4.4 Gap Between parents and school**

This subchapter explores the relationship between parents and their child’s school. The chapter is based on surveys and interviews (Refer to Appendix 1 & 2) conducted with parents and aims to shed light on the extent of communication and collaboration between parents and schools. The chapter highlights the importance of effective communication and cooperation between parents and schools for the education and social development of children. It is suggested that a gap exists between parents and schools, which is reflected in the responses of parents in the survey.

As is shown in the parent’s answers; 56% of them rated their relationship with their child’s school as average (Refer to Appendix 2). This suggests that there is room for improvement in the level of communication and collaboration between parents and schools. Effective communication and collaboration are key to ensuring their children receive the support they need to succeed academically and socially. By working together, parents and schools can create an environment that promotes learning and growth for children. 57% of interviewed parents feel that their concern is not properly considered by their child’s school (Refer to Appendix 2). This stresses the gap between parents and school’s stakeholders. The same finding is shared from teachers’ perspectives (the interviews in the previous section) who are stressing out the lack of sustainability in terms of learnings acquisition when students go back home.

The relationship between parents and the school community plays a crucial role in the academic success of children. According to the recent surveys, it appears that there is a need for improvement in this area. Parents have expressed dissatisfaction with their relationship with their child’s teacher, with 59% rating it as “Average” and only 27% as “good” (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey’s answers). While looking into the reasons behind this trend, several issues emerged, one of the main issues was poor communication between parents and teachers. Parents felt that they were



not receiving enough feedback on their child's progress or were not being kept informed about school events or policies. Another issue was a lack of engagement. Parents often reported feeling excluded from school activities or not being given enough opportunities to participate in their child's education.

#### **4.5 Inspirations and wonders**

Parents' perceptions about schools can be influenced by a variety of factors including their own experienced as students, cultural beliefs about education, and the media. For some parents, their own positive or negative experiences in school can shape their expectations and attitudes towards their child's education. Additionally, cultural beliefs about education can impact how parents view the importance of certain subjects or activities within the school curriculum.

51% think of interviewed parents reported that western educative approaches (Ex: Finish Education system, Montessori, etc.) are great, but they can not be adapted to our context in Tunisia (Refer to Appendix 2 : Survey's answers). This means that the particular local cultural and social context is not in line with certain external curricula and cannot cope with it. However, parents are impressed by western innovative teaching and are deeply convinced by the well-being and fairness of such approaches.

## 5 CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to explore the expectations and perspectives of parents when it comes to their children's education and their relationship with school. Based on the conducted interviews and literature review, it appears that parents' expectations and perspectives are heavily influenced by the economic and cultural context they live in.

While there is a unanimous agreement on parents' willingness to support their children and be part of the learning community and school academic activities, there are several gaps and misconceptions regarding their respective roles and duties. The typical cultural, economic, and political context also heavily impacts the relationships between parents and schools and the way roles are divided.

The results of this thesis provide insights into the complex relationship between parents and schools and how it is shaped by economic and cultural context. The findings could help educators and policymakers better understand the expectations and perspectives of parents and develop strategies to improve parent-school collaboration.

Improving the relations between parents and the school community is critical for the success of our children. By fostering open and effective communication, encouraging engagement, and creating a welcoming environment, schools can work towards building stronger relationships with parents. This will not only benefit the academic outcomes of our children but also help to create a more cohesive and supportive community.

In conclusion, this thesis has shed light on the expectations and perspectives of parents regarding their children's education and their relationship with schools. The results of the study have increased knowledge in the development area and provided insights that could be utilized in practice. By reflecting on the used theoretical foundation against the empirical results, this thesis has contributed to the understanding of the complex relationship between parents and schools.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The findings of this thesis have provided understanding of the expectations and perspectives of parents in relation to their children's education and their relationship with schools. However, the research has also raised new questions and challenges that need to be addressed in future studies.

One of the ethical considerations that emerged during the research process was need to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees. This was addressed by obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring that their identities were protected.

Another ethical consideration was the potential for bias in the selection of participants. To mitigate this, efforts were to recruit a diverse group of parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The research has highlighted the need for further investigation into the factors that influence the relationship between parents and schools. For example, it would be interesting to explore the impact of cultural and societal norms on parents' expectations and perspectives? Additionally, further research could explore the impact of different parenting styles on the relationship between parents and schools.

The results of this study suggest that there are several gaps and misconceptions regarding the respective roles and duties of parents and schools. In light of this, it is important for educators and policymakers to develop strategies to improve communication and collaboration between parents and schools. For example, schools could provide more opportunities for parent involvement in decision making processes and ensure that communication is clear and transparent.

By analyzing the subject of thesis and its execution, as well as ethical considerations and new questions that have raised, the discussion has presented the author's own comments and views on the development task or research task. The findings could inform policy and practice in the field of education and contribute to the ongoing dialogue around the importance of parent-school collaboration.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Survey initial hypothesis and relevant questions

Below a list of the initial hypothesis and related question that were asked in the survey,

Hypothesis	Related surveys questions	Answers options
Parents are not satisfied about the "Schooling" experience of their children	How would you describe your relationship with your current child's school ? (Survey question 1)	Bad, Average, Good
Parents think that school is the only and unique way for their children to succeed	I think that School is the unique way for a child to meet his full potential (Survey question 2)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
Parents are aware about other existing education alternatives rather than traditional schooling (Ex: Home schooling, Online curriculums)	I am aware that other educative approaches beside "Conventional school" are existing (Survey question 3)	There are other approaches, Only schools, No idea
Parents are ready to try other alternatives education rather than "School" if they find evidences of success of such approaches	I am ready to engage my child in another education system rather than "Conventional school" if I find clear evidence of success (Survey question 4)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
Parents think that their previous childhood experience at school affected their life in a Positive way	My previous experience at school as a child affected my adult's life (Survey question 5)	Affected positively, Affected Negatively, Didn't affect
Parents think that the experience of their children at school will be useful for their adult life	I think that the actual experience of my child at school would perfectly fit into his future experience as an adult (Survey question 6)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
The existing schooling system is harmful for children mental health	The existing "Conventional school" model is harmful for children mental health (Survey question 7)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
Toxic environment : Whatever Parents or educators do, the over all policies and local regulations are stronger than their willingness to make change happen	Whatever we do as parents or teachers do, we will be always confronted to the country's regulations and policies (Survey question 8)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
The school environment is harming my relationship with my child	The school environment is harming my relationship with my child (Survey question 9)	Agree, Disagree, No idea

Western education philosophies (Ex: Finn Education system, Montessori, etc) are great, but they can not be adapted to our context in Tunisia	Western education philosophies (Ex: Finnish Education system, Montessori, etc) are great, but they can not be adapted to our context in Tunisia (Survey question 10)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
Friends and family recommendation are the first parameter to choose the school of my Child	Friends and family recommendations are the first parameter to choose the school of my Child (Survey question 11)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
I feel that my concern is properly considered by my child's school	I feel that my concern is properly considered by my child's school (Survey question 12)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
I would change the school of my child if I find better	I would change the school of my child if I find better (Survey question 13)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
How would you qualify your relationship with your child's teacher ?	How would you qualify your relationship with your child's teacher? (Survey question 14)	Bad, Average, Good
Parents have a clear purpose towards school	When I bring my child to school every day, I feel that (Survey question 15)	Beneficial for his life, Something that I have to do, Toxic for his life
Consider SEL learnings more important than Sciences	Nowadays, school should focus more on Educating children and SEL rather than academic and sciences (Survey question 16)	Agree, Disagree, No idea
The main parameters pushing a parent to choose school for his/ her child	What is the most important parameter that makes you choose the school of your child ? (Survey question 17)	Proximity, Price, Safety, Curriculum, Friends and family opinion, Safety and school's reputation



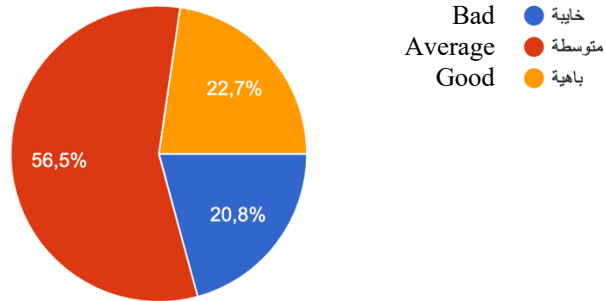
## APPENDIX 2

### Survey ANSWERS

#### Question 1/17 :

“How would you describe your relationship with your current child's school?”

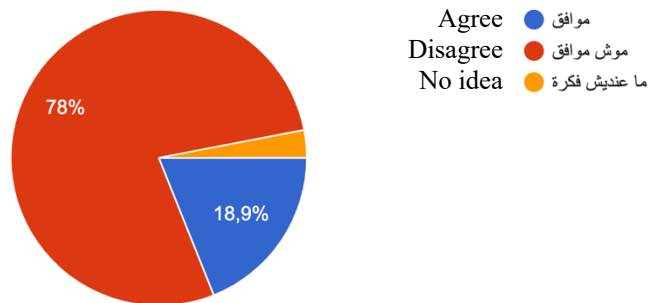
كيفاش تنجم توصف علاقتك معا الروضة والا المكتب متاع صغيرك ؟  
260&nbsp;réponses



#### Question 2/17:

“I think that School is the unique way for a child to build his/ her personality”

المكتب هو الطريقة الوحيدة للصغير باش يكون شخصيتو؟  
264&nbsp;réponses

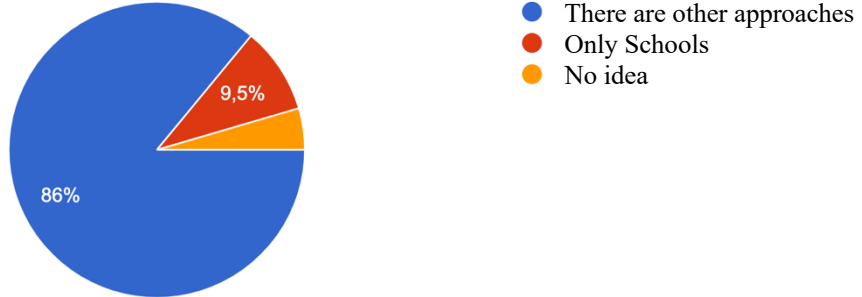


### Question 3/17:

"I am aware that other educative approaches beside "Conventional school" are existing"

نعرف الي فما طرق أخرى، ولدي ينجم يتعلم و يقرأ بيها بخلاف المكتب

264&nbsp;réponses

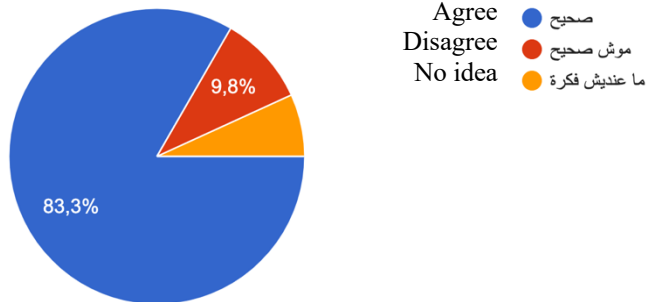


### Question 4/17:

"I am ready to engage my child in another education system rather than Conventional school" if I find clear evidence of success"

إنجم نخلي ولدي يتعلم بأساليب أخرى مختلفة على المكتب إذا كان نكون متأكد مانتيجة

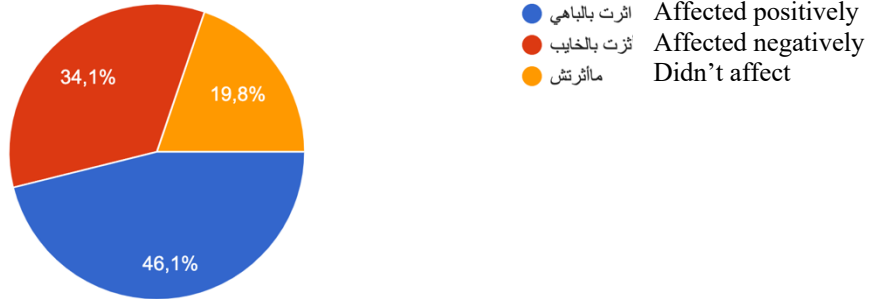
264&nbsp;réponses



**Question 5/17:**

“My previous experience at school as a child affected my adult's life”

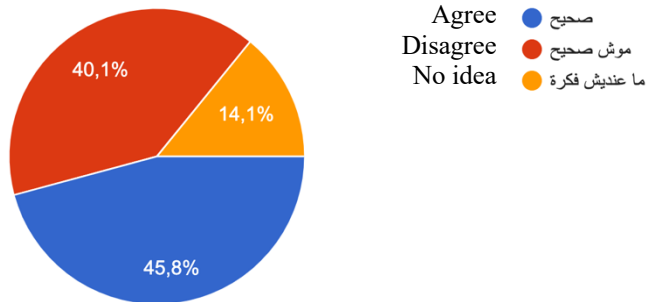
التجربة السابقة متاعي كتلميذ، اثرت على حياتي كي كبرت  
258&nbsp;réponses



**Question 6/17:**

“I think that the actual experience of my child at school would perfectly fit into his future experience as an adult”

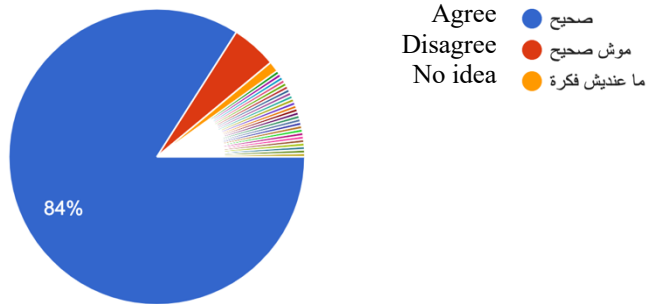
تجربت ولدي الحالية في المكاتب باش تعاونو برشا في حياتو في المستقبل  
262&nbsp;réponses



**Question 7/17:**

“The existing "Conventional school" model is harmful for children mental health”

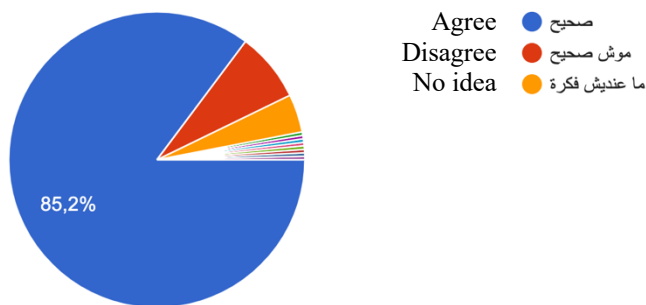
طريقة التعليم الحالية في المكاتب مضره بالصحة النفسية متاع الصغار  
263&nbsp;réponses



**Question 8/17:**

“Whatever we do as parents or teachers do, we will be always confronted to the country's regulations and policies”

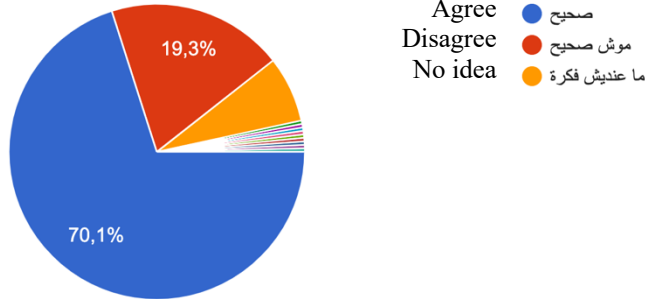
مهما كانت الجهود متع الاولياء و المعلمين, ديما يلقاو رواحهم مضطرين باش يتبعو السيستم متاع البلاد  
264&nbsp;réponses



**Question 9/17:**

“The school environment is harming my relationship with my child”

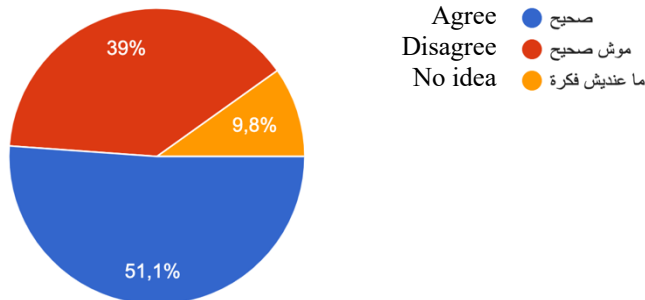
الجو العام متاع القراءة عندو تأثير سلبي على علاقتي بصغيري  
264&nbsp;réponses



**Question 10/17:**

“Western education philosophies (Ex: Finish Education system, Mentssori, etc) are great, but they can not be adapted to our context in Tunisia”

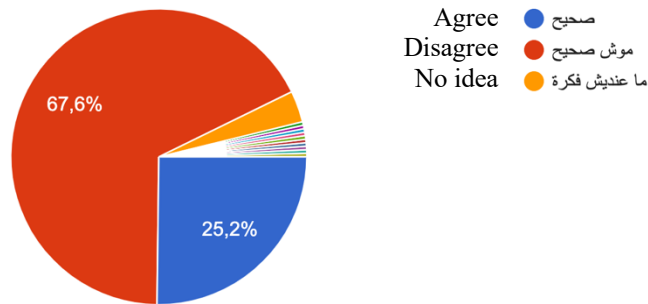
باهين، اما صعيب باش يتطبقو في تونس (Ex/ Mentssori, Système Français, Cambridge, etc) المناهج التعليمية الأجنبية  
264&nbsp;réponses



**Question 11/17:**

“Friends and family recommendations are the first parameter to choose the school of my Child”

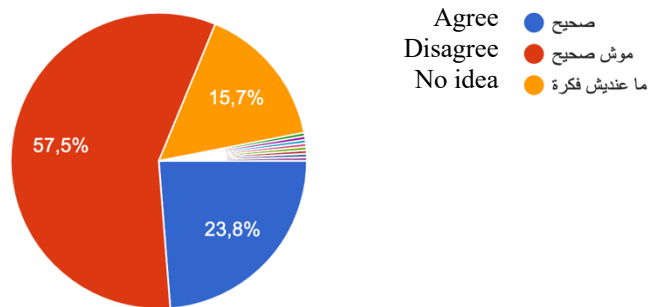
نعطي أولوية للرأي متاع احبابي (الاصحاب والعائلة) في إختيار المكتب متاع صغيري  
262&nbsp;réponses



**Question 12/17:**

“I feel that my concern is properly considered by my child's school”

الرأي متاعي يأخذه بعين الإعتبار في المكتب متاع صغيري  
261&nbsp;réponses

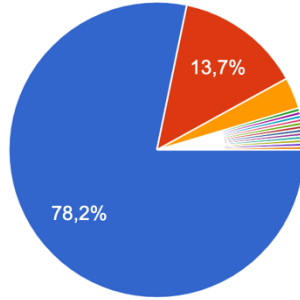


**Question 13/17:**

“I would change the school of my child if I find better”

نبدل المكتب متاع صغيري اذا كان نلقا مكتب ما خير

262&nbsp;réponses



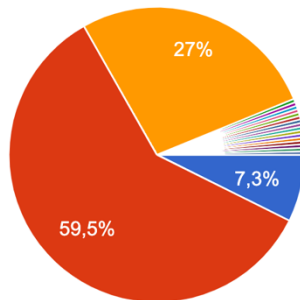
Agree ● صحیح  
Disagree ● موش صحیح  
No idea ● ما عنديش فكرة

**Question 14/17:**

“How would you qualify your relationship with you child's teacher?”

كيفاش اتنجم اتوصف علاقتك معا المعلم متاع صغيرك ؟

259&nbsp;réponses



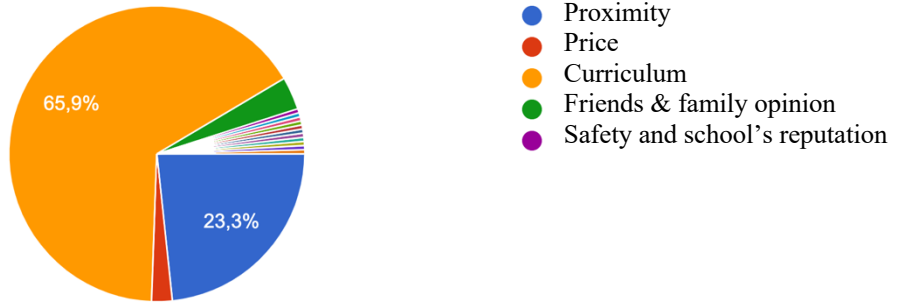
Bad ● خايبة  
Average ● متوسطة  
Good ● باهية

**Question 15/17:**

“What is the most important parameter that make you choose the school of your child ?”

شئوا أهم عامل يخليك تختار المكتب وإلا الروضة متاع صغيرك ؟

223&nbsp;réponses

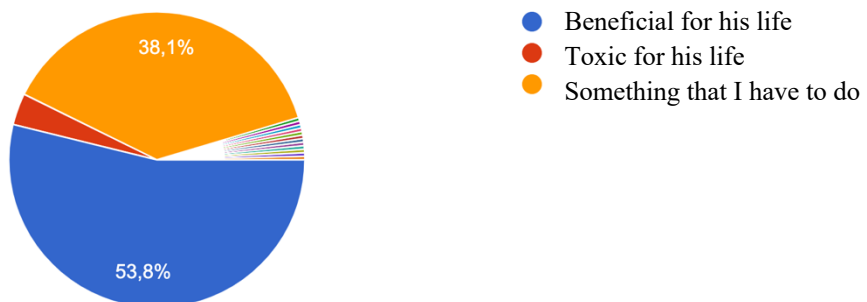


**Question 16/17:**

“When I take my child to school every day, I feel that I’m doing something ...”

كي نهز ولدي للمكتب كل يوم نحس بروحي

260&nbsp;réponses





**Question 17/17:**

“Nawadays, school should focus more on Educating children and SEL rather than academic and sciences”

في وقتنا هذا المكتتب يلزم دُورُو يكون باش يعلم الصغار الأخلاق والتصرف في المجتمع اكثر ملي باش يعلمو اللغات و العلوم  
259&nbsp;réponses

