CHALLENGES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL DROPOUT IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: *At the global level, school dropout represents an important concern of specialized research within the educational issue as a whole, a fact explained by the very high percentage of young people who do not complete their studies. Every school organization tries to own and successfully implement an effective school dropout management system to achieve the expected results, in accordance with the harmonization of the needs, interests, aspirations and expectations of the entire school community, but also of the society in general. This study aims to identify differences in the challenges faced by stakeholders dissatisfied with the dropout management (N=96) and those in the highly satisfied group (N=260). A series of statements were evaluated by the participants and the comparison was accomplished with the help of t-test for independent groups. We confirmed statistically significant differences for all challenges presented.*

Key words*: education, prevention, school dropout, school dropout management, strategy*

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Introduction

According to authors K. Alexander, D. Entwisle, C. Horsey (1997), as well as R. Vallerand and S. Senecal (1992), school dropout can be described as a process rather than a single event and is often considered the final result of an extended period of disengagement. While numerous researchers explain differently what constitutes school dropout, it is important to identify both common and individual objectives in this process.

Hence, this present study represents an area of interest for initiating research, considering the multiple causes that may underlie the occurrence of school dropout, from the perspective of the effects it generates.

Additionally, the management of school dropout continuously evolves due to facing various issues and pressures in addressing the ever-dynamic and challenging educational system needs.

From the perspective of the research presented by L. Forti et al (2006), C. Fartuşnic 2012), it is deduced that school dropout targets the following causes:

- *Family-related causes:* When families are dysfunctional due to a deficient family structure (single-parent, divorced parents, deceased parents, parents working abroad, step-parent, large number of children, child under the care of grandparents, living as a boarder/hostel student, experiencing diminished socio-economic status), (Tăuşan L.,2014), (Desforges, C., et Abouchaar, A.,2003), or

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when parents have low expectations regarding the academic preparedness of their own children (Uncu, V., et Penu, M. ,2011), (Corak, M. ,2004).

- *Social causes:* Children from different cultural backgrounds who find it challenging to adapt and have a different perspective on the importance of education, considering how teachers perceive students from diverse cultures, as mentioned by C. Desforges et A. Abouchaar.

Additionally, not only limited financial resources but also parents' education levels directly impact the chances of academic success, indicating the phenomenon of the intergenerational transmission of social inequalities (Ivan, C., et al,2013), Ekstrom R.B., et al, 1986). This includes the lack of tablets/computers/phones for online schooling, especially in the pandemic context.

The level of parental education is a significant predictive factor. Particularly, if the mother has a low level of education, there is a higher probability that the children will also have a lower level of education, making them more likely to drop out of the educational system early. This is due to the parents' limited ability to guide their children within the school environment, specific cultural norms, low valuation of school and studies in general, including professional ones. Thus, the reproduction of low human potential occurs through a mechanism of intergenerational perpetuation of the lack of interest in schooling, predisposing individuals to early departure from the educational system (Cosmovici, A. 1996)., (Jurcan, DM, 2011).

According to author D. Colibaba Evuleț low parental expectations regarding their children's achievements, reduced or non-existent supervision in daily activities, strongly correlate with school dropout. To deeply understand the phenomenon of school dropout, it's essential to first analyze the personal causes among students with low achievement rates, inappropriate behavior at school, such as frequent absences, negative relationships with the school, academic frustration, social problems, and frequent school changes over the years.

Other characteristics include self-control disorders, aggressive tendencies, difficulty in delaying gratification, attention and concentration disorders, inappropriate behavior, difficulties in accepting authority, friends with reduced educational aspirations, friends who have dropped out of school, friends exhibiting deviant behavior, from whom negative behaviors and false norms/values can be easily adopted; low motivation and insufficient ambition regarding education in general. Additionally, they often manifest other difficulties such as social withdrawal, high levels of anxiety and depression, feelings of loneliness, isolation, loss of meaning in life, and a sense of inability to influence things (Drăghicescu, L., et al 2008)., (Iucu, R., 2001).

An important category/separate set of factors that can influence school dropout are life crises and events, as mentioned by authors D. Blue and J. Cook, p 18., listing: poor health, pregnancy, increased crime, arranged marriage, drug and alcohol abuse, emotional instability, thoughts or attempts of suicide.

In conclusion, the analysis of specialized literature has allowed us to observe other opinions regarding school dropout and its causes.

Reviewing several studies on the phenomenon, author D. Vrabie, p 12. establishes the impact of school-related factors on the increase of student school dropout (unfavorable school climate, school violence, bullying, absenteeism, teacher turnover, their neglect, lack of involvement; lack of motivation and/or interest, homework unrelated to the child's interests, discriminatory treatment of students by teachers, repetition).

Author D. Vrabie considers it necessary to mention that there is not a single cause of school dropout. Therefore, all factors (personal, social, economic, educational, and familial) need to be analyzed.

Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989, which stipulates that every child has the right to education and the development of mental and physical abilities to their maximum potential, and also from the analysis of Article 2, paragraph 3 of Law no. 1 of January 5, 2011, in which Romania defines the educational ideal of schools, it's evident that preventing and combating school dropout at both national and international levels has become an absolute priority in education public policies (Strategia Națională pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă a României Orizonturi 2020-2030,București 2008).

In June 2011, the Council of Education adopted a Recommendation on policies to reduce the number of students leaving education and professional training systems early. This recommendation includes three types of measures:

- Preventive measures aimed at addressing primary causes that could ultimately lead to early dropout.
- Intervention measures targeting any difficulties students face by improving the quality of education and professional training and providing specific assistance.
- Compensatory measures that create new opportunities for those who have left the education and professional training system before obtaining qualifications.

An efficient and effective management of school dropout requires selecting the most suitable strategies according to the context in which they operate, ensuring quality education for students at risk of dropping out. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance intervention techniques/methods, develop institutional capacity, stimulate intellectual curiosity, build relational credibility, enhance the quality of personality development, multiply examples of best practices, maintain an authentic balance between cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains, and respond immediately and efficiently to students' needs.

Two of the reasons why the dropout prevention management of an authentic school rethinks, plans, organizes, reflexively analyzes its own activity, being guided by knowledge, when using various strategies are caused by the obvious change of the student - subject of learning, but also for the fact that there is an immediate need for management and leadership adapted to the demands of the century in which we find ourselves.

In developing the study, we also considered the studies on the issue of preventing school dropout regarding:

- the need to establish and cultivate positive, constructive relationships between students and the teaching staff who coordinate the collectives, parents and colleagues, as well as to carry out the systematic monitoring of the students' progress during schooling in a mobilizing, dynamic, inclusive educational environment (Juvonen, J et al.,2019), encouraging in which the importance of education for the future personal and professional success of students is highlighted.

- using strategies that address the full range of school characteristics, including (a) school demographics, environment, disciplinary policies and procedures; (b) classroom environment and instruction; (c) the characteristics, philosophies, attitudes and behaviors of the manager; (d) facility staff characteristics, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours; and (e) student characteristics and behaviors (Christle, C. et al, 2007).

1. Methodology

This study aims to compare the perceptions of two distinct groups regarding the challenges associated with school dropout management. One group is composed of respondents who express dissatisfaction with school dropout management, while the other group consists of individuals who state that they are very satisfied.

Hypothesis: There are significant differences in the challenges faced by these two groups, in that those dissatisfied with the dropout management will report more frequent encounters with all identified challenges than the highly satisfied group of respondents.

Data Collection: Data for this research was collected through an in-house developed questionnaire-based survey. The dimension of interest for this article comprised a set of 17 challenges related to dropout management in schools. These challenges were identified through a thorough review of existing literature on dropout issues and management strategies. Challenges included factors such as lack of regular assessment, communication difficulties, funding issues and other challenges commonly discussed in the discourse of school dropout prevention.

Sample: Participants in this study were drawn from educational institutions in Romania. The study included respondents who were actively involved in the educational process, such as principals, teachers, or administrators. Respondents who gave neutral answers to the question "Given the combined efforts of all stakeholders to implement the dropout prevention strategy, to what extent do you consider that dropout management in your school is effective?" were excluded from the analysis because the focus was on extreme levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Participants who expressed dissatisfaction with dropout management formed one group (N=96), while those who reported being very satisfied were included in another group (N=260).

Data analysis: To test the hypothesis of significant differences in perceived challenges between the two groups, the t-test for independent samples was used, being appropriate to compare the averages between two independent groups. In addition to the t-test, graphical visualization was used to improve the presentation of results. Bar charts

were used to visually represent the average challenge perceptions for the dissatisfied and satisfied groups. These charts provide a clear comparison of the challenges faced by the two groups and provide a more intuitive understanding of the differences in experience.

Results

First, the equality of the variances of the two groups of interest was tested using the Levene test. Based on the dispersion results, independent samples t-tests were interpreted to determine whether the observed differences in average perceptions were statistically significant or could have occurred by chance. The significance level for both tests was set at 0.05, indicating a 95% confidence level.

The 17 items, representing the challenges encountered, fall under the question "To what extent do you consider that your school faced the following challenges in the management of school dropouts?" and were evaluated on a 6-point Likert scale (from 1 "To a very small extent" to 6 "To a very large extent"). Table 1 below shows the results of the independent samples t-test.

Internal stakeholders do not have the necessary expertise to collect, process and analyze data

According to Levene's test, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, F=0.67 p=0.42, and the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the statement "Internal stakeholders do not have the necessary expertise to collect, process and analyze data" on the challenge faced. From the table resulting from the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the statement "Internal stakeholders do not have the necessary expertise to collect, process and analyze data" is $\Delta M=0.4$, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with school dropout management being 3.04 (SD=1.44), while the mean of participants very satisfied with management is 2.64 (SD=1.47). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.02 and 0.75. The t-test value is t(324)=2.25, p=0.02, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, thus allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence of at least 95% that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant. Those who consider that the school dropout management is not effective in their educational unit reported that they encounter the challenge "Internal stakeholders do not have the necessary expertise to collect, process and analyze the data" much more frequently than those who declare themselves very satisfied with the school dropout management.

Table 1. The results of the Levene and t test regarding the comparison between the group of respondents

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	ΔM	95% Confidence interval	
							Min	Max
Internal stakeholders do not have the necessary expertise to collect, process and analyze data	0.67	0.42	2.25	324	0.025	0.40	0.05	0.75
The necessary framework is not provided to express opinions, perspectives, examples of good practices on the issue of school dropout	3.37	0.07	6.41	324	0	1.02	0.71	1.34
Roles and responsibilities are arbitrarily assigned to those participating in the implementation of the ESL strategy	1.28	0.26	4.98	324	0	0.89	0.54	1.24
Lack of periodic evaluation of intervention strategies to observe their impact	0.26	0.61	7.16	324	0	1.19	0.87	1.52
Valorizing the progress achieved by students at risk of dropping out	6.68	0.01	2.53	206.03	0.012	0.45	0.10	0.81
A clear vision of full inclusion, based on the idea that all students can learn, is not established at the school level	7.95	0.01	7.22	157.23	0	1.30	0.95	1.66
Insufficient time to identify opportunities to provide the necessary support to the student at risk of dropping out	0.38	0.54	6.26	324	0	1.13	0.77	1.48
Communication difficulties between colleagues/management/community	14.30	0.00	8.78	147.16	0	1.57	1.21	1.92
The existence of opinions and misinterpretations between stakeholders, regarding the responsibilities of the school in identifying causes and implementing strategies	7.72	0.01	5.90	152.39	0	1.02	0.68	1.36
There is no uniform degree of involvement and assumption of responsibility by stakeholders	4.58	0.03	7.42	161.54	0	1.30	0.95	1.65
Failure to complete successful strategies, for objective reasons, such as staff turnover in the school	7.07	0.01	7.29	158.72	0	1.27	0.93	1.62
Lack of understanding from stakeholders that each student at risk of dropping out requires a specific intervention	10.57	0.00	6.83	152.71	0	1.22	0.87	1.57
There are opinions that support the fact that the prevention and reduction of school dropout are the sole responsibility of the schools facing this phenomenon	3.13	0.08	5.96	324	0	1.13	0.76	1.51
The examples of good practices from the Romanian educational environment regarding the reduction of school dropouts are not capitalized in a unitary way	0.42	0.52	7.26	324	0	1.30	0.95	1.66
There is no guiding model to guide schools in implementing and developing effective dropout prevention strategies	0.30	0.59	5.95	324	0	1.17	0.79	1.56
No opportunities were identified to carry out new projects in the school on this issue	1.11	0.29	6.60	324	0	1.19	0.84	1.55
Insufficient funds allocated from the school budget to prevent school dropouts	0.02	0.88	5.09	324	0	1.05	0.65	1.46

Source: developed by the author

The necessary framework is not provided to express opinions, perspectives, examples of good practices on the issue of school dropout

According to Levene's test, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, F=3.37 p=0.07, and the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the challenge "The necessary framework is not provided to express opinions, perspectives, examples of good practices on the issue of abandonment school". From the table resulting from the t-test, we can see that the difference in means for the analyzed challenge statement is ΔM=1.02, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the school dropout management being 3.15 (SD=1.39), while the mean of the participants very satisfied with the management is 2.12 (SD=1.282). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.71 and 1.34. The t-test value is t(324)=6.41, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant. People who consider that school dropout management is not effective in their educational unit reported that they encounter the challenge "The necessary framework is not provided to express opinions, perspectives, examples of good practices on the issue of school dropout" much more frequently than those who they say they are very satisfied with the school dropout management.

Roles and responsibilities are arbitrarily assigned to those participating in the implementation of the school drop-out strategy

According to Levene's test, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, F=1.27 p=0.26, and the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the challenge "Roles and responsibilities are arbitrarily assigned to those who participate in the implementation of the school dropout strategy". According to the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the statement tested is ΔM=0.89, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the management of school dropout being 3.34 (SD=1.38), while the mean of the participants very satisfied with the management is 2.46 (SD=1.5) . The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.58 and 1.24. The t-test value is t(324)=4.98, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant . More specifically, people who believe that school dropout management is not effective in their educational unit reported that they encounter the challenge "Roles and responsibilities are arbitrarily assigned to those who participate in the implementation of the school dropout strategy" much more frequently than those who are very satisfied with the school dropout management school.

Lack of periodic evaluation of intervention strategies to observe their impact

According to Levene's test, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, F=0.26 p=0.61, and the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the tested challenge. From the table resulting from the t-test, we can see that the difference in means for the statement "Lack of periodic evaluation of intervention strategies to observe their impact" is ΔM=1.19, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with school dropout management being 3.44 (SD=1.37), while

the mean of participants very satisfied with management is 2.24 (SD=1.37). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.86 and 1.52. People who consider that school dropout management is not effective in their educational unit reported that they encounter the challenge "Lack of periodic evaluation of intervention strategies to observe their impact" much more frequently than those who declare themselves very satisfied with school dropout management. The t-test value is t(324)=7.16, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant.

Valuing the progress achieved by students at risk of dropping out

Following the application of the Lavene test to compare the variances of the group of those who declare themselves dissatisfied with the school dropout management and the group of those who are very satisfied with the challenge tested, we are forced to reject the null hypothesis obtaining a value of F=6.68 at a significance level of p=0.01, more smaller than the threshold set by α=0.05, thus concluding that the variances of the two distributions are not equal. From the table resulting from the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the statement "Valuing the progress achieved by students at risk of dropping out" is ΔM=0.45, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the management of dropping out being 3.3 (SD=1.41), on when the mean of participants very satisfied with management is 2.85 (SD=1.64). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.1 and 0.81. The t-test value is t(206.03)=2.53, p=0.01, where the level of significance obtained is lower than the critical decision level established, thus allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence of at least 95% that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant. Next, we observe that people who consider that school dropout management is not effective reported that they encounter the challenge "Valuing the progress achieved by students at risk of school dropout" much more frequently than those who declare themselves very satisfied with school dropout management.

A clear vision of full inclusion based on the idea that all students can learn is not established at the school level

We are forced to reject the null hypothesis following the application of the Lavene test obtaining a value of F=7.954 at a significance level of p=0.005, lower than the threshold set by α=0.05, thus concluding that the variances of the two distributions are not equal. From the table resulting from the t test, we can see that the difference in means for the statement "At the school level, a clear vision of full inclusion, based on the idea that all students can learn" is not established, is ΔM=1.3, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the management school dropout being 3.3 (SD=1.54), while the mean of participants very satisfied with management is 2 (SD=1.33). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.95 and 1.66. The t-test value is t(157,233)=7.22, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the

established critical decision level, thus allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistical significant. People who believe that school dropout management is not effective in their educational institution reported experiencing the tested challenge much more frequently than those who say they are very satisfied with school dropout management.

Insufficient time to identify opportunities to provide the necessary support to the student at risk of dropping out

According to Levene's test, the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the statement "Insufficient time to identify opportunities in order to provide the necessary support to the student at risk of dropping out", with a value of F=0.38 p=0.54. Following the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the analyzed challenge is ΔM=1.13, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the school dropout management being 3.66 (SD=1.52) they encounter this challenge much more often than the participants who declare themselves very satisfied with management (M=2.53, SD=1.47). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.77 and 1.48. The t-test value is t(324)=6.26, p=0, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant.

Communication difficulties between colleagues/management/community

Following the application of the Lavene test, we are forced to reject the null hypothesis obtaining a value of F=14.29 at a significance level of p=0.00, lower than the threshold set by α=0.05, thus concluding that the variances of the two distributions are not equal. From the table resulting from the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the challenge "Communication difficulties between colleagues/leadership/community" is ΔM=1.57, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the school dropout management being 3.48 (SD=1.56), while the mean of participants very satisfied with management is 1.91 (SD=1.23). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 1.21 and 1.92. The t-test value is t(147,159)=8,779, p=0, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, and the difference between the sample means is statistically significant. People who believe that the management of school dropout is not effective in their educational unit reported that they encounter the challenge "Communication difficulties between colleagues/leadership/community" much more frequently than those who say they are very satisfied with the management of school dropout.

The existence of opinions and misinterpretations among stakeholders, regarding the responsibilities of the school in identifying causes and implementing strategies

We are forced to reject the null hypothesis for the Levene test obtaining a value of F=7.72 at a significance level of p=0.01, thus concluding that the variances of the two distributions are not equal between the two groups tested for the statement "The existence of opinions and misinterpretations between stakeholders, regarding the school's responsibilities in identifying causes and implementing strategies". From the table resulting from the t-test we

can see that the difference in means between the groups is ΔM=1.02, the mean of those dissatisfied with the school dropout management being 3.07 (SD=1.49), while the mean of the participants very satisfied with the management is 2.06 (SD =1.24). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.68 and 1.36. People who consider that school dropout management is not effective in their educational unit reported that they encounter the challenge "Existence of opinions and misinterpretations among stakeholders, regarding the responsibilities of the school in identifying causes and implementing strategies" much more frequently than those who declare very satisfied with dropout management. The t-test value is t(152.38)=5.89, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, thus allowing us to state with at least 95% confidence that the observed difference is statistically significant.

There is no uniform degree of involvement and assumption of responsibility by stakeholders

Following the Lavene test for comparing group variances, we are forced to reject the null hypothesis obtaining a value of F=4.58 at a significance level of p=0.03, lower than the threshold set by α=0.05, thus concluding that the variances of the two distributions are not equal . From the table resulting from the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the statement "There is no uniform degree of involvement and assumption of responsibility on the part of stakeholders" is ΔM=1.3, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with school dropout management being 3.5 (SD =1.49), while the mean of participants very satisfied with management is 2.2 (SD=1.33). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.95 and 1.65. The t-test value is t(161.54)=7.42, p=0.00, being able to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant. We thus confirm that people who consider that school dropout management is not effective in their educational unit report that they encounter the challenge "There is no uniform degree of involvement and assumption of responsibility by stakeholders" much more frequently than those who declare themselves very satisfied with school dropout management.

Failure to complete successful strategies, for objective reasons, such as staff turnover in the school

According to the Lavene test for comparing group variances, we are forced to reject the null hypothesis, obtaining a value of F=7.069 at a significance level of p=0.008, thus concluding that the variances of the two distributions are not equal. The difference in means for the statement "Non-completion of some successful strategies, for objective reasons, such as staff turnover in the school" is ΔM=1.27, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with school dropout management being 3.39 (SD=1.49), while the mean for participants very satisfied with management is 2.11 (SD=1.3), the latter encountering this challenge much less often. The t-test value is t(158,717)=7.286, p=0, where the obtained significance level is less than the established critical decision level, thus allowing us to

state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant, this being most likely found in the interval [0.93, 1.62].

Lack of understanding from stakeholders that each student at risk of dropping out requires a specific intervention

After applying the Lavene test, we conclude that the variances of the two distributions are not equal for the statement "Lack of understanding on the part of stakeholders of the fact that each student at risk of dropping out of school requires a specific intervention", obtaining a value of F=10.57 at a level of significance p=0.01, lower than the threshold set by α=0.05. From the table resulting from the t-test we can see that the difference in means is ΔM=1.22, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the management of school dropout being 3.31 (SD=1.54), while the mean of the participants very satisfied with the management is 2.1 (SD=1.28). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.86 and 1.57, with people who believe that school dropout management is not effective in their educational unit reporting that they encounter the challenge "Lack of understanding by stakeholders of the fact that every student at risk of dropping out requires a specific intervention" than those who say they are very satisfied with the management of dropping out. The t-test value is t(152.71)=6.83, p=0.00, being able to state with at least 95% confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant.

There are opinions that support the fact that the prevention and reduction of school dropout are the sole responsibility of the schools facing this phenomenon

According to Levene's test, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, F=3.13 p=0.08, and the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the challenge "There are opinions that support the fact that the prevention and reduction of school dropout are the exclusive responsibility of schools that face with this phenomenon". Following the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the challenge tested is ΔM=1.131, those dissatisfied with the management of school dropout encountering this problem much more often (M=3.53, SD=1.66) than those who declare themselves very satisfied of management (M=2.4, SD=1.52). The t-test value is t(324)=5.96, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant , and the real difference is found in the interval [0.76, 1.51].

The examples of good practices from the Romanian educational environment regarding the reduction of school dropouts are not capitalized in a unitary way

For the challenge "Examples of good practices from the Romanian educational environment regarding the reduction of school dropout are not exploited uniformly" the two compared groups have equivalent variances, with a value of Levene's test F=0.42 p=0.52. From the table resulting from the t-test, we can see that the difference in means is ΔM=1.3, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with the school dropout management being 3.65 (SD=1.52), while the mean of the participants very satisfied with the

management is 2.34 (SD=1.46) . The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.95 and 1.655. The value of the t-test is t(324)=7.26, p=0.00, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence of at least 95% that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant, the group of those dissatisfied with a management meeting more often with this challenge.

There is no guiding model to guide schools in implementing and developing effective dropout prevention strategies

According to Levene's test, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, F=0.295 p=0.587, and the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the statement "There is no guiding model to guide schools in order to implement and develop effective strategies to prevent school dropout". The t-test results show that the difference in means for this challenge is ΔM=1.173, and the true difference between the means lies in the interval [0.79, 1.56] with 95% confidence. People who consider that school dropout management is not effective (M=3.73, SD=1.58) in their educational unit reported that they encounter the challenge much more frequently "There is no guiding model to guide schools in order to implement and develop effective strategies of school dropout prevention" than those who declare themselves very satisfied with school dropout management (M=2.56, SD=1.64). The t-test value is t(324)=5.95, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant.

### No opportunities were identified to carry out new projects in the school on this issue

The two compared groups have equivalent variances for the challenge tested According to Levene's test, F=1.11 p=0.29. From the table resulting from the t-test we can see that the difference in means for the statement "No opportunities were identified to carry out new projects in the school on this issue" is ΔM=1.19, the mean of the group of those dissatisfied with school dropout management being 3.52 (DS= 1.535), while the mean of participants very satisfied with management is 2.33 (SD=1.464). The confidence interval shows that the true difference between the means is most likely between 0.84 and 1.55. The t-test value is t(324)=6.59, p=0.00, thus we can confirm with a very high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant.

Insufficient funds allocated from the school budget to prevent school dropout

After applying the Levene test, we conclude that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, F=0.023 p=0.88, and the two compared groups have equivalent variances for the challenge "Insufficient funds allocated from the school budget to prevent school dropout". According to the t-test the difference in means for this challenge is ΔM=1.051, and the true difference between the means is found in the interval [0.65, 1.46]. The t-test is t(324)=5.09, p=0.00, where the obtained significance level is lower than the established critical decision level, allowing us to state with a high degree of confidence that the difference between the sample means is statistically significant . Respondents who believe that school dropout management.

is not effective in their educational unit (M=4.07, SD=1.72) reported that they encounter the challenge "Insufficient funds allocated from the school budget to prevent school dropout" much more frequently than those who declare very satisfied with school dropout management (M=3.02, SD=1.69).

Figure 1. School Dropout Management: Very Satisfied vs. Unsatisfied Respondents
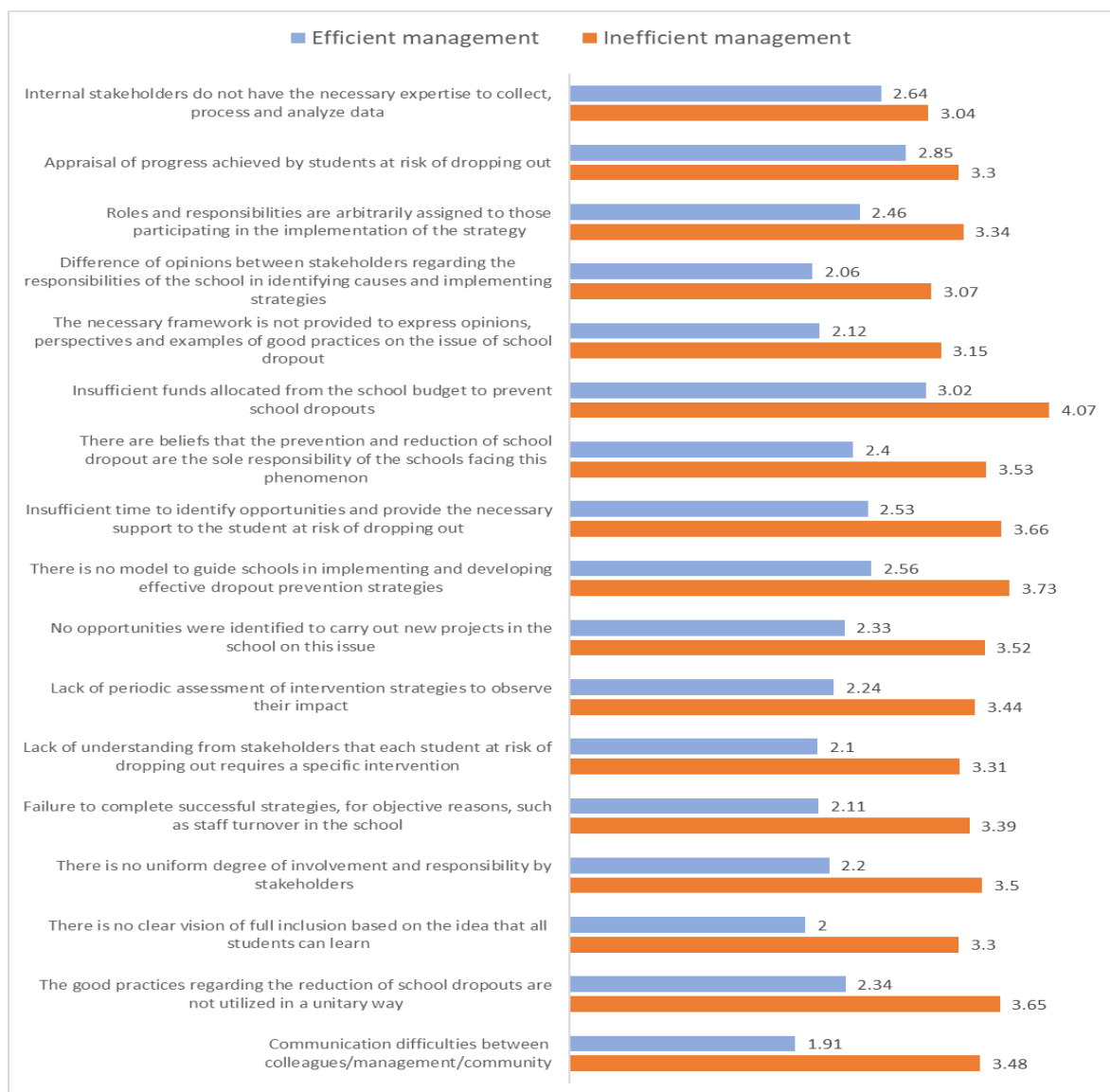
Source: developed by the author

The biggest differences were obtained for the challenge "Communication difficulties between colleagues/leadership/community" (ΔM=1.57), followed by "The examples of good practices from the Romanian educational environment regarding the reduction of school dropout are not exploited in a unitary way" (ΔM=1.3) and the challenge "At the school level, a clear vision of full inclusion is not established, based on the idea that all students can learn" (ΔM=1.3). The smallest differences were observed for the statement "Internal stakeholders do not have the necessary expertise for data collection,

processing and analysis" (ΔM=0.4) and "Valuing the progress achieved by students at risk of dropping out" (ΔM=0.45).

Conclusion

We confirmed our hypothesis by indeed observing more challenges faced by the group of stakeholders dissatisfied with the management of school dropout. The results were obtained by thorough analysis and we are confident in their significance, though this study is not without limitations. The sample size was satisfactory, but rather modest when it comes to the representation of internal stakeholders in the matter of school dropout management. Another limitation also comes from the population included: school dropout stakeholders only from Romania. Considering this, we cannot generalize our findings beyond the studied country, though we believe that this article is a good starting point for any researcher interested in challenges faced by stakeholders in managing school dropout.

School managers, regardless of the time, in relation to the direct and indirect beneficiaries of education, with the staff of the unit should reveal themselves, first of all, as people, authentic, with emotions, feelings, vulnerabilities, and then, as professionals, who lead and coordinates the efforts of organization members, formulates strategic and operational objectives to combat school dropout.

Through an effective school dropout management, knowledge can be transmitted, analyzed, decided, evaluated, developed and optimized, providing feedback, thus supporting the autonomy and initiative capacity of the staff, through motivation and involvement corresponding to them leading directly to the prevention, reduction/combat of school dropout.

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