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The Lived Experience of Teachers, Administrators and Parents Regarding the Responsibility of Primary School Students

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to explore the dimensions and determinants of responsibility among primary school students from the perspectives of teachers, school administrators, and parents. Using thematic analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 participants, including 8 teachers, 7 school administrators, and 9 parents, until theoretical saturation was reached. The findings indicate that responsibility is a multidimensional construct shaped by the interaction of familial, personal, social, and educational factors. Participants identified commitment, regularity, accountability, and fulfillment of individual and collective duties as important dimensions of student responsibility. Teachers primarily emphasized individual and classroom-based assignments and varied assessment practices, whereas school administrators focused more on teamwork, collective activities, and organizational strategies. The findings suggest that the development of responsibility cannot be achieved through isolated efforts within a single educational setting. Rather, it requires coordinated and complementary efforts among parents, teachers, and school administrators. Providing students with meaningful individual and collective responsibilities, together with diverse educational and assessment practices, can support the gradual development of responsible behavior during the primary school years.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Responsibility is regarded as one of the fundamental dimensions of students' personal and social development and plays an important role in preparing children for active and constructive participation in family, school, and society. The development of responsibility during the primary school years is particularly important because this period provides opportunities for children to gradually acquire habits of commitment, regularity, accountability, self-discipline, and attention to the consequences of their actions. Although responsibility is often addressed as an individual characteristic, its development is influenced by a range of interacting personal, familial, social, and educational factors. In the school context, teachers and administrators have direct and indirect roles in creating opportunities for students to practice responsible behavior, while parents contribute to the development and reinforcement of such behaviors in the family environment. Therefore, understanding how different educational stakeholders conceptualize student responsibility and the factors that contribute to its development can provide a more comprehensive picture of this construct. The present qualitative study aimed to analyze the dimensions and determinants of responsibility among primary school students from the perspectives of teachers, school administrators, and parents. More specifically, the study sought to identify how these groups understand student responsibility, what factors they consider influential in its development, and what educational practices they employ or recommend for fostering responsible behavior among primary school students.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using thematic analysis to explore participants' perceptions and experiences regarding student responsibility. The research population consisted of teachers, school administrators, and parents of primary school students. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who had direct experience with the educational and developmental processes of primary school students. In total, 24 participants took part in the study, including 8 teachers, 7 school administrators, and 9 parents. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to describe their understanding of responsibility, its dimensions, the factors influencing its development, and the educational practices used to promote it. The interviews provided flexibility to pursue issues emerging during the conversations while maintaining consistency around the main themes of the research. Data collection and analysis proceeded iteratively, and interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached; that is, until further interviews did not produce substantially new themes or dimensions relevant to the research questions. The collected data were analyzed thematically. The analysis involved identifying meaningful units within the interview data, organizing related concepts, developing themes and subthemes, and interpreting the relationships among the identified dimensions. The perspectives of the three participant groups were considered comparatively in order to identify both shared understandings and differences in their views concerning student responsibility.

Results

The findings indicate that responsibility among primary school students is a multidimensional construct rather than a single behavioral characteristic. Participants described responsibility as involving several interconnected dimensions, including commitment to assigned duties, regularity and consistency in performing tasks, personal accountability, and the ability to fulfill obligations within individual and collective contexts. The findings further showed that the development of

responsibility is influenced by the interaction of familial, personal, social, and educational factors. From the participants' perspectives, the family constitutes an important context in which children initially encounter expectations concerning duties, commitments, and accountability. Personal characteristics and students' developing capacities also contribute to how responsibility is expressed and practiced. At the social level, interactions with peers and participation in collective activities provide opportunities for students to experience responsibility beyond their individual tasks. Educational factors, particularly the practices adopted by teachers and school administrators, were also identified as significant determinants of responsible behavior. Teachers generally emphasized individual and classroom-based assignments as opportunities for students to practice responsibility. They also referred to the use of different forms of evaluation for monitoring and reinforcing students' responsible behavior. In contrast, school administrators placed greater emphasis on team-based activities, collective responsibilities, and organizational strategies within the school. These differences suggest that teachers and administrators may approach the development of responsibility from complementary but somewhat different perspectives. Overall, the findings indicate that responsibility develops through repeated opportunities to undertake meaningful duties, receive feedback, experience accountability, and participate in both individual and collective activities.

Discussion

The findings suggest that responsibility in primary school students should be understood as a dynamic and multidimensional educational outcome that develops through the interaction of individual characteristics and the environments in which children live and learn. The different emphases identified among teachers, administrators, and parents indicate that no single educational context can independently account for the development of responsible behavior. Family practices can provide the initial framework for experiencing duties and commitments, while classroom activities can transform these expectations into concrete opportunities for individual responsibility. At the same time, school-wide and group-based activities can extend students' experiences of responsibility to collective and organizational contexts. The distinction between teachers' emphasis on individual and classroom assignments and administrators' emphasis on team-based and organizational strategies is therefore better understood as complementary rather than contradictory. Taken together, these perspectives indicate the importance of providing students with diverse opportunities to exercise responsibility in different contexts. The findings also highlight the significance of using varied educational and assessment practices rather than relying exclusively on a single method for developing or evaluating responsibility. Responsibility is likely to become more meaningful when students are not merely instructed to be responsible but are given authentic opportunities to undertake tasks, make commitments, cooperate with others, and experience the consequences of fulfilling or neglecting their obligations. Consequently, cultivating student responsibility requires a coordinated and synergistic effort among parents, teachers, and school administrators. Establishing greater consistency between expectations at home and school, providing age-appropriate individual and collective responsibilities, and employing diverse educational and assessment practices may contribute to the development of students who demonstrate greater commitment, regularity, and accountability. Overall, the study emphasizes that responsibility should be treated not simply as an individual trait to be measured, but as an educational capacity that can be progressively developed through purposeful interaction among the student, family, classroom, and wider school environment.

Authors' Contributions: First Author**,** Contributed to the research design, development of the overall research framework and methodology, and oversight of the scientific coherence of the manuscript.

Second Author**,** Contributed to the research methodology, data collection, and analysis in accordance with the research objectives. Third Author, Contributed to drafting the initial manuscript, critically revising its scientific content, and editing the final version.All authors participated in reviewing and approving the final version of the manuscript and accepted responsibility for its final content.

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Ethical Approval: This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Alzahra university**,** Approval No. 28956. All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.