

## **Current advances on school refusal and other attendance problems: An international perspective. Introduction to the Special Issue**

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The school attendance problems affect a larger number of students worldwide than desired. Important negative effects on academic, social and personal development are associated with this phenomenon. The aim of this special issue is to present the most recent advances in this field of research from an international perspective. For this, this special series has six investigations framed in the context of Spain, France, the United States, Japan, Malaysia and the Netherlands. Among the main contributions, the works compiled here have managed to reflect on the school refusal behavior reaching three levels of analysis: (1) legal and political level, (2) personal level of the child or young person affected and (3) family level. Based on the findings obtained, it is concluded that promoting prevention and reducing the school attendance problems are activities that have no limits geographically. It is a purpose shared by all the studies that make up this special issue to encourage reflection and promoting new lines of research.

*Keywords:* School attendance problems, school absenteeism, school refusal.

*Avances actuales en el rechazo escolar y otros problemas de asistencia: una perspectiva internacional. Introducción al monográfico.* Los problemas de asistencia a la escuela afectan a nivel mundial a un número de estudiantes mayor a lo deseado. Importantes efectos negativos sobre el desarrollo académico, social y personal se asocian a este fenómeno. El objetivo de este número especial es presentar los avances más recientes en este campo de investigación desde un enfoque internacional. Para ello, este monográfico cuenta con seis investigaciones enmarcadas en el contexto de España, Francia, Estados Unidos, Japón, Malasia y Países Bajos. Entre las principales aportaciones, los trabajos aquí recopilados han conseguido reflexionar sobre el comportamiento de rechazo hacia la escuela desarrollando tres niveles de análisis: (1) nivel legal y político, (2) nivel personal del niño o joven afectado y (3) nivel familiar. A partir de los hallazgos encontrados, se concluye que fomentar la prevención y reducir los problemas de asistencia a la escuela son una intención que no tiene límites geográficamente. Es un propósito compartido por todos los estudios que conforman este número especial incitar a la reflexión del lector y promover nuevas líneas de investigación.

*Palabras clave:* Problemas de asistencia escolar, absentismo escolar, rechazo escolar.

School attendance problems (SAP) are a universal phenomenon with multiple associated causes (personal, family, social or educational) and different forms of manifestation (Havik, Bru, and Ertesvåg, 2014, 2015; Kearney and Fornander, 2018; Reid, 2008). The interest in preventing and developing care measures for children and young people with SAP is increasing worldwide. In the last decade, there has been a considerable increase in the number of publications on this topic in non-English speaking countries with contributions from Spain (González et al., 2016), Chile (González et al., 2018), Ecuador (González et al., 2018), France (Gallé-Tessonneau and Gana, 2018), Japan (Maeda, Hatada, Sonoda, and Takayama, 2012), Germany (Reissner, Knollmann, Spie, Jost, Neumann, and Hebebrand (2019), The Netherlands (Brouwer-Borghuis, Heyne, Sauter, and Scholte (2019) or Malaysia (Balakrishnan and Andi, 2019). However, a greater cohesion of criteria at the time of identification, evaluation and intervention remains necessary (Elliot and Place, 2019; Heyne, Gren -Landell, Melvin, and Gentle-Genitty, 2019).

The origin of this special issue is due, on the one hand, to the European Journal of Education and Psychology's interest in disseminating studies on current issues of scientific interest in the field of Education and Psychology. In fact, this journal has already published previous research on the state of the art about school refusal behavior (Inglés, González, García-Fernández, Vicent, and Martínez-Monteaugudo, 2015) or on an empirical level (Gómez-Núñez et al., 2017), but never before a monograph about it. On the other hand, it should be noted, in turn, the willingness and interest shown by some members that make up the international group known as International Network for School Attendance (INSA, <https://www.insa.network/>), after promoting the launch of this special issue in its first meeting, a workshop entitled 'School Absenteeism-Universal Problem Seeks Gold Standard Solutions' that took place in March 2018 in Leiden, The Netherlands. This event was attended by twenty experts and researchers on this issue from eleven different countries. Specifically, the founding members of INSA are: David Heyne (Netherlands), Carolyn Gentle-Genitty (USA), Malin Gren Landell (Sweden), Glenn Melvin (Australia), Brian Chu (USA), Marie Gallé Tessonneau (France), Kristin Gärtner (Norway), Carolina González (Spain), Trude Havik (Norway), Jo Magne Ingul (Norway), Daniel Bach Johnsen (Denmark), Christopher Kearney (USA), Gil Keppens (Belgium), Martin Knollmann (Germany), Aaron Lyon (USA), Naoki Maeda (Japan), Volker Reissner (Germany), Floor Sauter (Netherlands), Wendy Silverman (USA), Mikael Thastum (Denmark), and Bruce Tonge (Australia).

The aim of this special issue is to present the compilation of six works that share the same topic, the SAP, but that have been developed in six culturally different contexts. This special issue integrates works framed in the following countries: Spain, the United States, France, the Netherlands, Japan and Malaysia. Among the main contributions, it should be noted that the studies compiled here have managed to reflect

on the problem of school attendance, reaching three levels of analysis: (1) legal and political level, (2) personal level of the child or young person affected and (3) family level.

At the legal and political level, a review is offered of the political and legal measures that have been proposed in the Netherlands to identify problems of school attendance. After the analysis of the protocols applied in this country, a wide discussion is offered on the strengths and weaknesses of this system, inviting the reader to reflect on the preventive nature of these measures and their functionality in other countries and/or cultures.

At the personal level of the child or young person affected, this monograph includes four works carried out with samples from Spain, France, Japan and Malaysia that analyze the features that characterize this population. To do this, the two European investigations, conducted in Spain and France respectively, have focused on identifying profiles of students with SAP and analyze their relationship with other variables. On the other hand, the two researches carried out in the Asian continent offer, on the one hand, a study about the characteristics that define students with SAP according to the patterns of oriental culture that govern this problematic school behavior in Japan. On the other hand, the validation of an instrument on self-efficacy in school situations is presented which can be useful for the reader interested in knowing instruments that serve to evaluate variables of interest associated with rejection behavior at school in Malaysia.

At the family level, a study is presented with an American sample that analyzes the predictive nature of a series of parental characteristics (anxiety, depression, psychological control and family adaptation) on the incidence of school attendance problems in children. The results of this research scientifically support previous postulates that warned of the negative repercussion of certain family factors on school attendance, making the reader reflect on the relevance of the family context in the development of SAP.

The social and educational importance of this problem is marked not only by the negative consequences associated with the academic level, due to its inevitable sequels of school failure and early school dropout (Balakrishnan and Andy, 2019; Carroll, 2011), but also because of its impact on the social level by contributing to the emergence of situations of marginality, exclusion, delinquency and illiteracy (Dembo et al., 2016 Reid, 1999). It is considered that rejection behavior at school is a problem as old as the school institution itself. However, in a society where training is becoming increasingly important for access to the work world, problems of school attendance increase the risk of social exclusion and socio-economic marginalization.

The appearance of this problem has no limits in terms of sex, age or country, that is why this reality affects and worries any educational system in the world that considers regular attendance at school an indicator of quality. In this monograph, the

idea about preventing and reducing school attendance problems appears to be a shared purpose at an international level. Consequently, it is expected that, based on the findings shared in this monograph, reflections will be stimulated among researchers and professionals interested in this field.

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