Article

Parents' Expectations about Educational Institutions during the Pandemic: Results of Nationwide Questionnaire Research in Poland

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Abstract: (1) Background: The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the problem of combining work and private life. The pandemic conditions have turned out to be particularly difficult for parents who, due to changes in the organization of the education system, have been forced to reconcile their professional duties with the raising of childcare. Thanks to the recommendations for cooperation between schools and parents proposed in this study, it will be possible to reduce the risk and uncertainty of achieving common goals of the education system. (2) Methods: In the preparation of nationwide research, a questionnaire was provided to a sample of 10,331 respondents, including 7800 professional parents, in a trial form before a transition to the study of children. (3) Results: The analysis of the data showed that educational institutions should shape their activities based on cooperation with the family environment of children. (4) Conclusions: Educational institutions can help working parents in times of increased uncertainty. Parents reported that in caring for children, it would be helpful to operate educational institutions in stationary mode. Moreover, they expect increases in extracurricular and extra-curricular activities.

1. Theoretical Framework

The COVID-19 pandemic, which gained momentum around the world in early 2020, has changed almost all aspects of life. Every day, lives had to be adapted to the real threat of a dangerous and then-unknown virus. Having no effective protection against this threat, people had to isolate themselves in their homes; if people had to go outside, they had keep physical distance from others, wear masks, and disinfect or wash their hands as often as possible. COVID-19 has become a permanent part of everyday life, and we just have to learn to live with it (Davey 2020), especially since 263.5 million COVID-19 infections worldwide have been confirmed so far (World Health Organization 2021). Thanks to the intensive efforts of outstanding scientists, the first vaccines appeared at the very end of 2020. The invention of the vaccine gave hope for the suppression of the epidemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected not only health but also economic and social issues, including difficulties in trade in goods and services (Minondo 2021), restaurant activities (Norris et al. 2021), travel restrictions (Gupta et al. 2021; Arshad et al. 2021), and education (Yıldırım et al. 2021). The coronavirus pandemic has left its mark on nearly all organizations that were forced to immediately respond. As a result, many institutions have changed their modes of work because they moved to remote work whenever possible, and now (as universal vaccinations are available) they are wondering which work practices from the period of this lockdown they should maintain or abandon (Tagliaro and Migliore 2021). In addition, studies (Rožman and Tominc 2021) have shown that the coronavirus pandemic has adversely affected the mental health of workers.

At the same time, the pandemic caused both schools and colleges to start providing online or hybrid/mixed education (Bordoloi et al. 2021; Gautam and Gautam 2021; Nikou and Maslov 2021; Nishan and Mohamed 2021), which created several challenges (Rizvi and Nabi 2021). It should be emphasized that the pandemic came as a shock to most countries around the world. It has limited the educational opportunities of many students, especially in low and middle-income countries. Some students have had limited access (or did not have it at all) to appropriate remote learning tools (computer with a camera and microphone), and some have had limited space, which made it difficult to focus (e.g., siblings in the same room and online lessons in different classes). Moreover, it is obvious that students have feared for their and their loved ones' health and life, which has made it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies (Reimers 2022). All of this has resulted in increasing difficulties and educational inequalities (Eyles et al. 2020; Donnelly and Patrinos 2021; Liu 2021).

The pandemic and related lockdowns that have locked students at home and forced them to learn online have also been challenging for teachers and school principals. The prevailing legislative chaos; uncertainty of tomorrow; concern for the health and life of one's self, family, and pupils; and high social requirements have effectively hindered both teaching and, in the case of school principals, efficient school management (Reimers 2022).

It is also worth paying attention to the very important role of parents of children learning online. Parents at home have had to take over some of the responsibilities that teachers had performed before the pandemic. It should be noted that despite certain social changes including women taking up paid work, it is still women who are assigned the need to perform most (if not all) household duties, as well as physical and emotional care aimed at meeting the needs of members of the family, which has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis (Bahn et al. 2020). Much research on parents' lives has shown that it is women who are much more burdened with household chores (despite having paid work at the same time) than men, both before the pandemic (Fortin 2005; Pettit and Hook 2009) and during COVID-19 (Savage 2020; Women versus the Coronavirus).

For example, studies from the US and Europe have shown that online workers now spend an average of about 15 h more per week on homework than men (Krentz et al. 2020).

Other studies conducted in the USA, UK, and Germany (Adams-Prassl et al. 2020) have also confirmed that during the coronavirus pandemic, it has been working women who care for children and support them in online education. Further results of the research on women/mothers working in Great Britain (Adisa et al. 2021) showed that due to the lockdown and the need to work online while taking care of the house, they were much more burdened than before the pandemic. It was women who did most of the housework, and it was mostly women who assumed the role of assistant teachers, helping their children to learn remotely. In addition, it was found that the performance of both professional and family responsibilities in a place such as home significantly hinders the maintenance of awork–life balance and differentiating roles (employee–mother). It was found to be even more difficult to maintain a work–family balance; it is worth recalling that this is a concept that aims to limit work so that this time can be allocated to the family (Greenhaus et al. 2003). The work–family balance is very difficult to achieve, especially by women (Sundaresan 2014; Adisa et al. 2021) who are doubly burdened with the roles of the employee and the mother. This is because, despite the entry of women into the labor market, they still function in the patriarchy, which makes it very difficult for them to achieve a generally accepted work–life balance (Adisa et al. 2019).

In addition, one should pay attention to the so-called single parents for whom it has been extremely difficult during the pandemic (Rahman 2021).

In Poland, as in other countries, this situation has been particularly burdensome for women who are culturally more burdened with caring for children (while taking up gainful employment) than men. In connection with such a double burden (i.e., paid work and supporting children in distance learning), one may start to wonder: what are the expectations of parents towards educational institutions in times of a diverse pandemic? It

is worth noting that parents are a very important element of the school environment; they are important stakeholders, and their role is even more significant during lockdowns and limitations, when they often become the real assistants of virtually available teachers.

As such, a few important questions arose.

1. Can schools help parents bring up school-aged children and how?
2. What are parents' expectations of schools and educational institutions?
3. Do schools respond to contemporary parents' expectations in times of increased uncertainty and risk in times of a pandemic?

The main aim of this article was to present the expectations of parents regarding educational institutions, especially in times of a pandemic, and to show how these institutions respond to the new and changing needs of parents regarding schools. The authors of this article assumed that parents are persons who, in principle, exercise parental responsibility for their minor children—in particular, the obligation and right of parents to take care of the child's person and property and to raise the child with respect for their dignity and rights. Therefore, they are both persons related to their child in the first degree and persons who legally care for minor children. In connection with the above, the terms of the parent and the person providing care are used interchangeably in the article.

In this article, the conclusions were based on the national results of research carried out in Poland among 10,331 respondents, including 7800 professionally active parents with children to raise. The survey was conducted from 16 March to 2 April 2021 via the LibrusPortal[1].

The results and conclusions of this research maybe interesting for educational institutions, people managing such organizations, and teachers and parents. They may also be important for determining the directions of changes in the education system and creating public policies.

2. Research Methodology

In this section, the research problem is presented in the form of the main question and research goals (divided into epistemological and utilitarian). Then, the methodology of collecting and analyzing the collected empirical material is described. Finally, the research group is introduced.

2.1. Problem, Questions, and Research Goals

As a result of the analyzed literature, a research problem emerged, which can be defined in the form of the following question: what are the expectations of caregivers of children and adolescents regarding educational institutions in times of a pandemic?

Therefore, the following objectives were described:

- Three epistemological goals:
  1. To present the expectations of parents in terms of educational policy in times of a pandemic;
  2. To show if and how schools respond to new and changing needs of parents regarding educational institutions.
  3. To present parents as important stakeholders of the school.
- Two utilitarian purposes:
  1. To identify potential areas of cooperation during a pandemic between school and parents.
  2. To provide recommendations for practitioners involved in education management and public policy design.

Therefore, the main goal of this article was to present the expectations of parents regarding educational institutions during the pandemic, to show how these institutions respond to new and changing needs of parents regarding schools, and to prepare practical and implementable guidelines for conduct addressed to the managers of educational institutions and the entire education system.

2.2. Methodology of Collecting and Analyzing Research Materials

The authors of this study used the method of a diagnostic survey called the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) internet survey, i.e., a type of survey conducted with the use of a properly prepared standardized questionnaire made available to respondents. Therefore, the respondents filled in and sent the questionnaires themselves, and the process was supervised by a computer system based on the server–respondent contact. The legitimacy of the method used was proven by the fact that the studied community was dispersed and characterized by a large variety of socio-demographic characteristics. The questionnaire was made available through the Librus Portal, which made it possible to reach a wide group of parents with school-aged children.

In the study, 10,331 users of the Librus Portal and the electronic journal participated. At the beginning of the questionnaire, two filtering questions concerning professional activity and raising children were asked. Respondents who answered negatively to at least one of the questions were redirected to the record and answered only questions about gender, age, place of residence, and education. In this way, a group of respondents was selected that was of interest to the researchers. Out of 10,331 respondents, 7994 people (77%) were professionally active and 7800 respondents were professionally active and had children to raise. This last group was thoroughly analyzed.

The survey was nationwide and was conducted from 16 March to 2 April 2021.

2.3. Research Sample

Significantly more women than men took part in the study. Out of the 7800 people analyzed in detail, 7063 (91%) were professionally active women with children.

In terms of age, the most numerous age group comprised people aged 41–50, who accounted for 47.9% of respondents; those aged 31–40 accounted for 46.7%; those aged 51–60 accounted for 2.97%; and those aged 21–30 accounted for 1.87%. The smallest percentages were people under 20 (0.3%) and over 60 years of age (0.18%).

Among professionally active parents, 81% had higher or higher vocational education (bachelor's degree), 15% had secondary education, 2.8% had basic vocational education, 0.5% had basic education, and 0.3% had junior high school education.

People with higher education usually had two children (56%) or one child (28%). We found that 48% of people with secondary education had two children and 36% had one child. People with primary education usually had one child (28%) or more than five (20%).

Most people lived in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants (34.3%), followed by those who lived in villages (25.5%), those who lived in cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants (18.3%), and those who lived in cities with between 251,000 and 500,000 inhabitants (5.5%).

The survey was conducted throughout the country, and the highest percentages of respondents were as follows: 26.2% lived in the Mazowieckie voivodship, 12.5% lived in Małopolskie, 8.9% lived in Lower Silesia, 9.5% lived in Greater Poland, 8.8% lived in Silesian, and 6.9% lived in the Łódzkie voivodship. The smallest number of people came from the Opolskie and Świętokrzyskie voivodships, respectively, at 0.6% and 1.21%, those these were also the smallest voivodships.

3. Results

It should first be noted that the vast majority of the respondents' children attend public schools (90%). Private/community schools were more often mentioned by residents of the largest cities. Most often, they were reported to be used by children of parents with higher education.

There was no consensus among parents in the assessment of the organization of the work of schools or educational institutions during the pandemic, and a very large discrepancy in the answers was noticed. Every fifth parent indicated that school neither facilitated nor hindered childcare during the pandemic (20.1%); 38.4% of parents assessed the activities of the school as facilitating the care and performance of professional work (24.1%—definitely facilitates; 14.3%—rather facilitates); and 33.6% of parents believed

that the activities of the school made it difficult to care for their children. These results were definitely caused by different schools adapting to changing pandemic conditions. Educational establishments have dealt with adaptations to the new epidemic situation in very different ways, mainly by conducting distance, hybrid, or stationary education while having to comply with numerous restrictions. The forms and tools of communication used between teachers, students, and parents have also been different and varied.

When it comes to assessing the operation of schools from the perspective of the possibility of combining professional work with childcare, it was noted that along with an increase in life experience, childminders negatively assessed the activities of educational institutions. For people of up to 30 years of age, 37.5% of the respondents assessed the activities of care and educational institutions as definitely making their lives easier. For people over 50, only every fifth guardian expressed such an opinion. Neutral assessments were inversely assessed depending on age. We found that 27.2% of older people (over 50) reported that schools neither helped nor made it difficult, and only one in ten parents under the age of 30 believed that the school did not affect their professional life and childcare. Parents aged 30–50 most often indicated that school and care organizations made it difficult to combine professional work with childcare (31–40 years old—20.2%; 41–50 years old—19.6%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Assessment of the operation of educational and upbringing institutions from the point of view of caring for child/children (age) (n = 7800). Source: Authors' calculations. Note: Pearson's chi-square test for "Age" resulted in 116,541; df 18.

The analysis of the data also showed that there were slight discrepancies between women and men in the assessment of the operation of educational institutions from the point of view of providing care for children. Almost every fourth female respondent (24.6%) believed that the centers helped in caring for children and facilitated the reconciliation of family and professional life. This was the opinion of every fifth man (19.8%) (Figure 2).
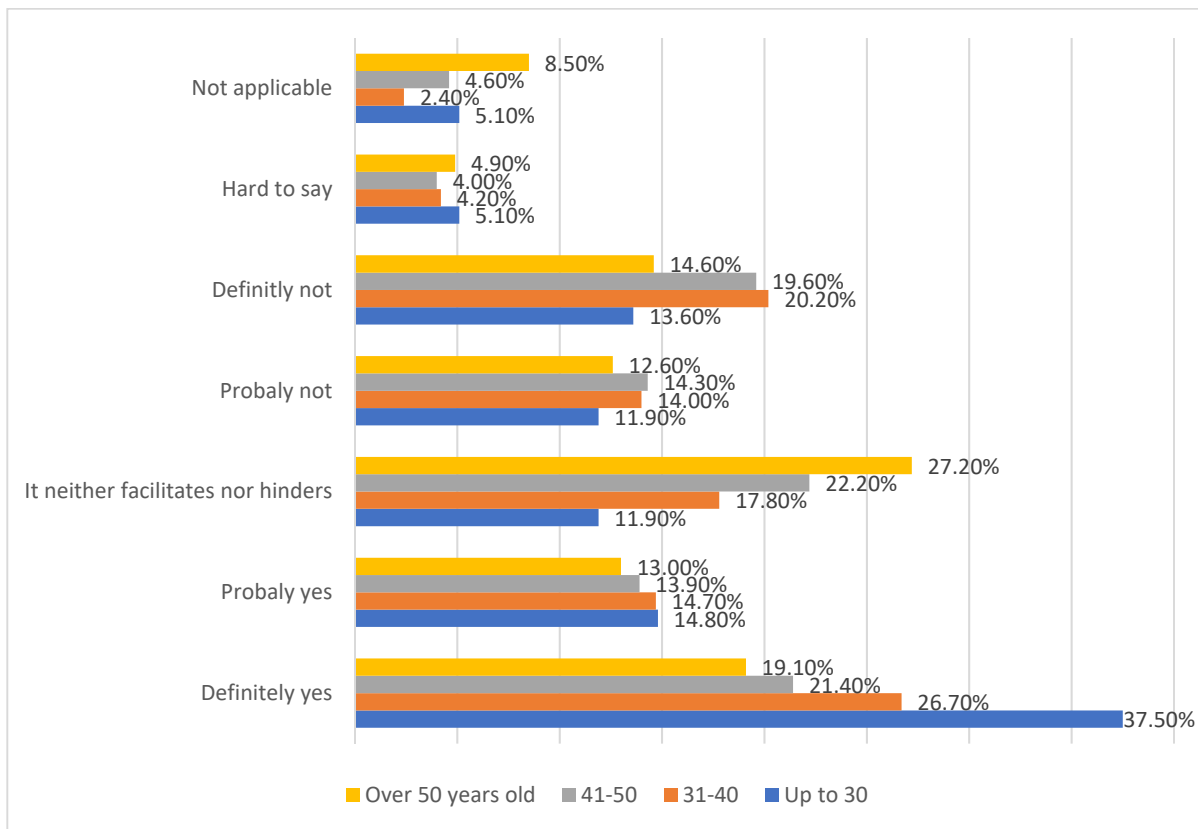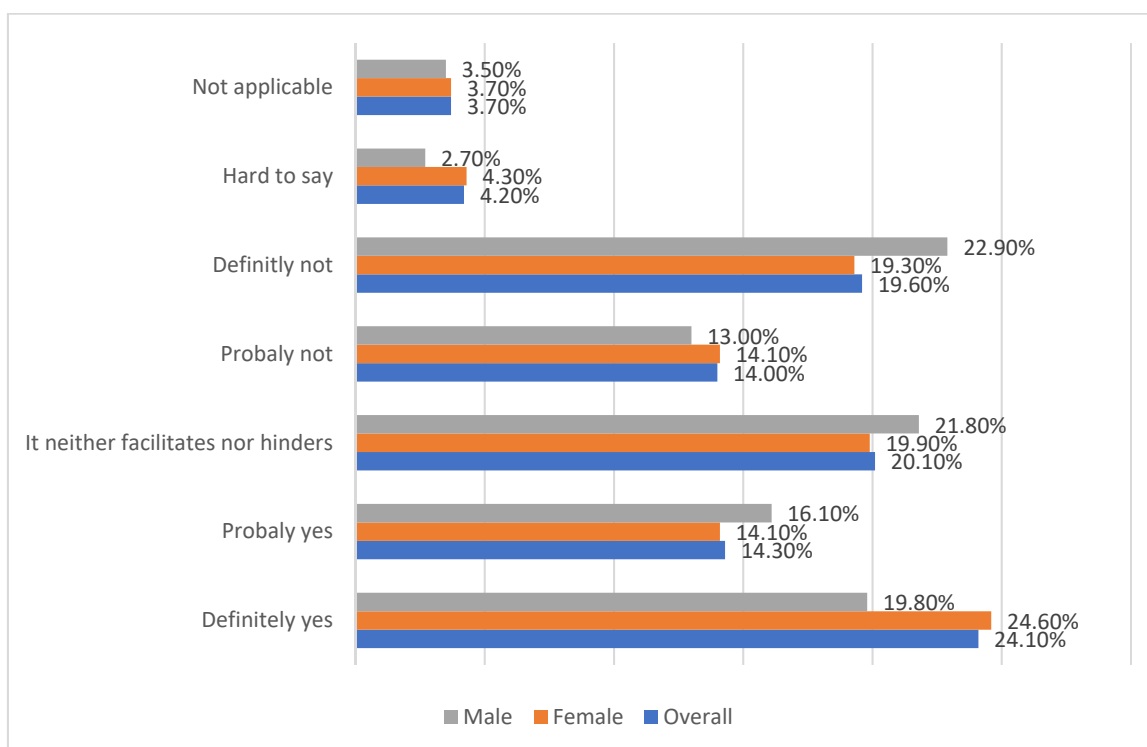
Figure 2. Assessment of the operation of educational and upbringing institutions from the point of view of caring for children (gender) (n = 7800). Source: Authors' calculations. Note: Pearson's chi square test for "Sex" resulted in 18,960; df 6.

The organization of schoolwork was reported to make it easier to combine professional work with childcare, most often for people with lower than secondary education (27%) and residents of cities with 50,000–500,000 inhabitants (25.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Assessment of the organization of the work of a school or other care and educational facility to facilitate combining professional work with caring for a child/children (education and domicile) (n = 7800).

	Education				Domicile			
	Less than Secondary Education	Secondary Education	Higher Professional Education	Higher Education	Village	City up to 50,000	City 50,000– 500,000	City over 500,000
Definitely yes	27.0%	26.8%	24.6%	23.4%	24.4%	23.5%	25.9%	23.2%
Probably yes	11.2%	12.2%	14.5%	14.9%	14.0%	14.0%	14.4%	14.5%
It neither facilitates nor hinders	18.0%	20.1%	19.3%	20.2%	20.9%	19.6%	20.2%	19.5%
Probably not	14.7%	11.9%	15.3%	14.3%	13.8%	14.6%	13.3%	14.3%
Definitely not	13.7%	18.2%	18.4%	20.4%	18.2%	20.3%	18.6%	21.0%
Hard to say	6.8%	5.4%	4.6%	3.7%	4.5%	4.3%	3.2%	4.4%
Not applicable	8.6%	5.3%	3.4%	3.2%	4.0%	3.6%	4.5%	3.0%

Source: Authors' calculations. Note: Pearson's chi square test for "Education" resulted in 71,131, df 18; that for "Domicile" resulted in 23,951, df 18.

In the survey, parents indicated various solutions that could facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life by the entire education system and individual institutions. For the vast majority of parents, the greatest help turned out to be the full functioning of educational and educational institutions in a residential form (71.5%). Nearly 40%(38.3%) of parents also indicated that schools could extend the offering of additional and caring

activities in the facility. In addition, the caregivers were interested in extending the working time of the nursery/kindergarten during the week (15.9%) and the work of the centers in flexible hours in order to adapt to the work of parents to a greater extent (17.1%). Moreover, every tenth respondent was interested in developing a network of cooperating institutions that jointly organize care for children (10.9%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Solutions by the education system that could help in reconciling work and private life during the pandemic (gender and age) (n = 7800).

	Gender			Age			
	Overall	**Female**	**Male**	**Up to 30**	**31–40**	**41–50**	**Over 50 Years Old**
Extending the working time of nurseries/kindergartens/schools on Monday–Friday	15.9%	15.4%	20.6%	29.0%	19.6%	12.2%	6.5%
Opening institutions on non-working days, e.g., on Saturdays, and providing institutional care for children	5.7%	5.4%	8.3%	8.0%	6.7%	4.8%	3.3%
Possibility of work of care and educational institutions in flexible working hours adapted to the work of parents	17.1%	16.6%	22.0%	23.3%	18.1%	16.3%	11.4%
A wider offering of extracurricular and caring activities on the premises of the facility	38.3%	38.7%	34.5%	29.5%	39.3%	38.3%	28.9%
Full opening of schools to full-time education	71.5%	72.3%	63.5%	62.5%	75.7%	68.6%	57.3%
Organizing a network of cooperating childcare facilities	10.9%	10.9%	11.1%	13.1%	11.0%	10.8%	9.8%
Nothing can be changed	3.3%	3.3%	4.1%	5.1%	2.2%	4.0%	8.5%
It's hard to pinpoint	5.3%	5.1%	7.1%	6.2%	4.2%	6.1%	7.7%
This does not apply to my situation	6.3%	6.1%	7.3%	6.8%	4.5%	7.4%	14.6%
Summing up the data	7800	7063	737	176	3645	3733	246

Source: Authors' calculations. Note: Pearson's chi square test for "Sex" resulted in 76,032, df 9; that for "Age" resulted in 354,970, df 27.

The wider offering of additional and caring activities in the facility was important for parents aged 31–40 (39.3%), and the extension of the nursery/kindergarten/school working time from Monday to Friday was important for people aged up to 30 years old (29%) (Table 2).

Fewer people with lower education (64%) were in favor of opening facilities in the stationary system. We found that 72.5% of people living in villages and 72.6% of people living in small towns with up to 50,000 inhabitants were interested in full-time education (Table 3).

In the context of the changes taking place in the functioning of the entire education system, it was interesting to establish what roles, according to parents, educational and upbringing institutions should play. Parents believed that schools should mainly provide education for children (92.4%) in the basic working time of institutions (73.6%). Moreover, a significant proportion of parents (85%) believed that educational institutions should also organize extracurricular activities for children. There was no consensus among parents regarding the care of children during the extended working time of schools/institutions. Half of the parents (49.9%) believed that institutions should look after their children for extended working hours, and one-fourth (26.4%) reported the opposite opinion. A significant proportion of parents (68.3%) did not see the need for schools to operate on non-working days, e.g., on weekends (Table 4).

Table 3. Solutions by the education system that could help in reconciling work and private life during the pandemic (education and domicile) (n = 7800).

	Education				Domicile			
	Less Than Secondary Education	**Secondary Education**	**Higher Professional Education**	**Higher Education**	**Village**	**City up to 50,000**	**City 50,000–500,000**	**City over 500,000**
Extending the working time of nurseries/kindergartens/schools on Monday–Friday	17.6%	15.4%	16.6%	15.8%	19.0%	14.2%	15.5%	14.6%
Opening institutions on non-working days, e.g., on Saturdays, and providing institutional care for children	7.9%	7.4%	6.5%	5.1%	4.8%	6.6%	6.2%	5.5%
Possibility of work of care and educational institutions in flexible working hours adapted to the work of parents	18.0%	19.9%	16.1%	16.6%	17.3%	18.0%	17.5%	16.3%
A wider offering of extracurricular and caring activities on the premises of the facility	23.7%	30.4%	38.2%	40.7%	36.5%	35.6%	37.2%	41.7%
Full opening of schools to full-time education	64.0%	75.2%	73.2%	70.8%	72.5%	72.6%	72.4%	69.5%
Organizing a network of cooperating childcare facilities	11.5%	10.2%	11.4%	11.0%	9.0%	10.7%	10.3%	12.8%
Nothing can be changed	5.8%	2.8%	2.2%	3.5%	2.6%	3.5%	3.2%	3.9%
It's hard to pinpoint	7.2%	4.3%	5.0%	5.4%	5.0%	5.2%	4.5%	6.0%
This does not apply to my situation	7.6%	6.1%	5.4%	6.3%	6.3%	6.5%	6.1%	6.2%
Summing up the data	278	1200	740	5582	1986	1425	1713	2676

Source: Authors' calculations. Note: Pearson's chi-square test for "Education" resulted in 129,008, df 27; that for "Domicile" resulted in 88,198, df 27.

Table 4. Expected scope of activity of the school/facility (gender and age) (n = 7800).

	Sex			Age			
	Overall	Female	Male	Up to 30	31–40	41–50	Over 50 Years Old
Basic education	92.4%	92.5%	91.3%	86.4%	93.3%	92.3%	85.0%
Additional extracurricular activities	85.0%	85.5%	80.9%	67.0%	86.0%	85.2%	79.7%
Basic-time care	73.6%	73.5%	74.9%	65.9%	75.5%	72.7%	64.6%
Care over an extended period of time	49.9%	49.6%	52.2%	46.0%	53.9%	47.0%	36.6%
Care on days off (e.g., at the weekend)	9.7%	9.5%	11.4%	15.9%	10.9%	8.2%	8.9%
None of the above	2.8%	2.6%	4.9%	10.8%	2.3%	2.7%	6.5%
Overall	7800	7063	737	176	3645	3733	246

Source: Authors' calculations.

People with higher education generally reported more expectations regarding the scope of operation of the school/facility than people with secondary and lower education. However, those with high education less frequently expressed the expectation of care on days off (Table 5).

Table 5. Expected scope of activity of the school/facility (education and domicile) (n = 7800).

	Education				Domicile			
	Less than Secondary Education	Secondary Education	Higher Professional Education	Higher Education	Village	City up to 50,000	City 50,000–500,000	City over 500,000
Basic education	81.7%	92.1%	92.8%	92.9%	91.9%	92.8%	92.1%	92.8%
Additional extracurricular activities	60.4%	78.8%	84.7%	87.6%	82.4%	85.2%	83.1%	88.1%
Basic-time care	64.4%	71.6%	74.5%	74.4%	73.7%	74.4%	72.5%	73.9%
Care over an extended period of time	34.9%	43.9%	50.8%	51.8%	51.9%	47.4%	46.5%	51.8%
Care on days off (e.g., at the weekend)	18.3%	12.1%	10.8%	8.6%	9.4%	11.2%	9.8%	8.9%
None of the above	9.7%	4.2%	2.3%	2.3%	3.2%	2.1%	3.4%	2.6%
Overall	278	1200	740	5582	1986	1425	1713	2676

Source: Authors' calculations.

4. Conclusions

School prepares children and adolescents to function in society in many different ways. At the same time, many social, economic, and demographic changes force education systems to adapt to the needs reported by various participants/stakeholders. Parents are a group of stakeholders in the education system, and they often actively and consciously participate in the life of many educational and upbringing institutions. Collaboration and good relationships between parents and educational institutions are important components of the education system. A good education system should integrate the school environment with the family, which cannot be achieved without the participation/involvement of parents. Determining the needs and expectations of parents for educational institutions seems to be a natural process.

In this research, parents mainly reported the need for educational entities to adapt to the new working conditions and private lives of their children's guardians. Educational establishments could not function in isolation from the changes that were exacerbated during the pandemic. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, educational institutions have repeatedly been forced to change the organization of their work. Particularly, schools constantly have had to and will have to quickly adapt to situations and constantly implement new teaching methods and tools. However, these changes should keep pace with

changes in the labor market and the functioning of families. New pandemic conditions have triggered processes that will intensify with time. The changes in the labor market will be significant here as they concern, inter alia, an increase in unemployment, changes of the workplace, adapting employees to changes by changing and raising qualifications or acquiring new competencies, and decreases in the disposable income of individual families and employees. Changes in the labor market will go hand in hand with changes in the functioning of families and changes in the division of responsibilities in the field of caring for children and learning youth.

This research has shown the expectations of parents regarding the education system and childcare facilities. Guardians agree that the activities of educational institutions should be fully open to stationary studies. Both parents and children badly suffer from social isolation and online learning. The imposition of top–down regulations limiting the stationary operation of a school and educational institutions has significantly hindered or limited the performance of the professional duties of working parents, especially working mothers. Schools should organize their activities in such a way as to limit the operation of schools in the online system as much as possible.

The dominant view among parents is that schools must above all provide basic education at all levels. Moreover, a significant proportion of parents expect the education system to provide their children with extensive development through additional extracurricular activities of expanded scope of activities. It can be concluded that parents would like the education system to take over some of the duties performed by parents after compulsory education. In this regard, individual institutions could develop their activities depending on their material and non-material resources. Of course, the issue for discussion is how to finance and organize this type of activity, but this was been the authors' subject of research.

Half of the surveyed parents indicated that educational and care facilities should operate over an extended period of time. On this basis, it can be concluded that parents need additional time to perform their professional work or necessary other activities. Public institutions that provide childcare only during primary education, especially, could consider organizing extended childcare periods after compulsory school hours. It can be assumed that most parents would be interested in leaving their children at school for an extended period of time given the preparation of offers of interesting and developmental educational activities. It is worth pointing out that this does not have to be the sole domain of schools; it should be considered that other entities organizing such activities and time for children should be allowed to operate at schools. Extending the scope of activities and time of educational institutions could be of great support for parents (not only in times of a pandemic).

It is also worth pointing out that parents did not want to shift their parental responsibilities to the school or the entire education system. Only every fifth respondent (17.10%) expected that school and care facilities would adjust the time of operation of the facility to the working time of parents. Every twentieth parent wanted educational institutions to function during their free time, e.g., on weekends. Parents more often reported adapting their work to the operation of individual organizations in the education system. Parents expected significant support in terms of extending the duration of the functioning of educational institutions, which did not exclude the need to spend time with the family at other times and the implementation of caring roles by the parents and guardians of children.

Based on our analysis, two potential areas of cooperation were identified during the pandemic between schools and parents. One area concerns the extended operation time of educational institutions. The education system should provide opportunities for extending the working time of schools and kindergartens to adapt to the needs of parents, especially those with extended working times. Parents expressed that they expected educational entities to operate longer in residential systems. The second area concerns the scope of operation of individual educational institutions. Parents would especially like schools to offer extra-curricular activities for children. Actions should be taken to create the possibility of developing additional extracurricular activities by various educational institutions or

other educational entities operating on the premises of schools. Both levels of cooperation between schools and the guardians of children would require systemic solutions from the point of view of creating educational policy and, more importantly, modification of the methods and methods of financing individual activities of educational institutions. The implementation of the changes presented above could help schools to respond to the contemporary challenges and expectations of parents, which have been modified and highlighted in a period of increased uncertainty and risk.

5. Recommendations for Practice

This study presents the expectations of parents regarding educational institutions during the pandemic. It was indicated that as a result of the pandemic, the education system underwent many changes. Changes in the functioning of families and problems with maintaining a balance between private and professional life were noted. It was indicated that educational institutions should shape their activities based on cooperation with the family environments of children, especially in times of increased uncertainty and risk. Based on the analysis, it should be indicated that schools can help working parents. Parents expect that educational institutions will not only operate in extended period of time but also increase the scope of basic education and organize extracurricular activities available within the education system. Polish parents reported expecting that the educational and care-and-upbringing system at various levels will take care of children, especially during a pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, parents noted an increased number of professional and family responsibilities, which led to expectations of help in organizing care and education to a greater extent, especially by mothers. Being aware of the consequences of remote learning and parents' needs and expectations, public authorities in Poland (even during the "fourth wave" of the epidemic at end of 2021, when tens of thousands of cases and hundreds of deaths were recorded) decided to pursue education in stationary mode. The education system should correct its activity in such a volatile environment, but this requires actions on both the macro-economic and micro-economic levels. The following recommendations are advised for the education system and individual institutions.

5.1. Education System/Macroeconomic Levels

1. Provision of legal regulations in the field of extended operation of facilities.
2. Organization of the financing system for the extended operation of institutions.
3. Organization of the material base for the extended operation of institutions.
4. Preparation of extended institutional care programs for children and youth.
5. Developing/planning the offering of additional/extra-curricular activities adapted to the curricula at different levels of education.
6. Support for the development of entities organizing extracurricular activities on the premises of institutions.
7. Support for the development of entities organizing extended institutional care in facilities (including local cultural institutions, fitness clubs, and private educational entities).
8. Organization of a system of professional psychological and coaching care for children and their parents operating at schools.
9. Organization of a professional psychological and coaching care system for teachers.
10. Development and implementation of a training system for parents in the field of children's education.
11. Development and implementation of a system for creative spending of time with children for parents and their guardians.
12. Legal regulations in the field of distance and hybrid learning (partly remote with stationary elements) during a pandemic.
13. Legal regulations for teachers specifying the rules of work during a pandemic, temporary lockdown, or quarantine/isolation.

5.2. Individual Educational and Care Facilities

1.   Organization of extended operation time of school and care facilities.
2.   Intensification of the activity of a school pedagogue and/or psychologist, who should offer consultations for parents in to individually support the family system in terms of effective education.
3.   Providing material resources (e.g., housing) and human resources (e.g., teachers and guardians).
4.   Planning additional activities for children in a given educational institution.
5.   Examination of the needs of children for extracurricular and extra-curricular activities.
6.   Examination of the parents' needs in terms of extended operation time of the educational institution.
7.   Examination of the parents' needs in terms of extracurricular/extra-curricular activities for children ofa given institution.
8.   Organization of extracurricular and extracurricular activities offered by external companies (entities).
9.   Establishing cooperation with local cultural centers to offer a more diversified range of extracurricular activities for children and youth.
10.   Establishing cooperation with local fitness clubs to offer a more interesting range of additional activities in the field of physical education.
11.   Establishing cooperation with local universities to diversify the offered extracurricular activities and arouse the curiosity of children and youth.
12.   Organization of distance and hybrid learning, considering the importance of children, parents, and teachers.
13.   Organization of institutional care during a pandemic, including lockdown.

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Notes

[1]   The Librus portal is a nationwide comprehensive tool supporting school employees, students, and parents on various levels, e.g., providing information on grades—electronic diaries, school management, contacts between the school and parents and students, educational platform, etc.; www.librus.pl (accessed on 29 November 2021).

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