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## REPRESENTATIONS OF STUDENT PARENTS ABOUT TRAFFIC EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

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*José Carlos Teixeira Pistilli*

CBNB/ COMAER

Rio de Janeiro - RJ

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**Abstract:** The present study aimed to probe representations from parents (representatives) of students about traffic education in the school space. This was developed in two basic education school units in the Municipal Public Network of Rio de Janeiro. 215 parents of students participated in semi-structured interviews with a semi-open questionnaire, which provides greater freedom of expression. The data were interpreted from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. Depending on the education level of the interviewees, and whether or not they had experienced any significant involvement in a conflict/traffic accident, we found different perceptions on the subject. The results obtained from the questionnaires suggest that these parents tend to recognize the importance of traffic education, as a foundation in the construction of a less violent scenario for urban spaces. Some parents expressed concern about the effectiveness of actions in schools due to skepticism based on prejudice and a myopic view of the extent and depth of the traffic problem. In contrast, the suggestions emphasize the importance of the emotional impact, so common in campaign strategies on serious traffic accidents, a key element for learning and the process of becoming aware and changing the habits of its actors. There are recurring statements about the importance of bringing together and participating all school actors and integrating traffic professionals. The relevant point of the study was the recognition of the indispensability of permanent, updated and contextualized dialogue, based on the view of the school community, about the meaning and objectives of traffic education. This way of structuring traffic education meets the ideas of interdisciplinarity so discussed and proposed for the process of improvement and concreteness of this utopia, so that, as a multidisciplinary educational instance, it fulfills its humanizing role in traffic, from the

school space.

**Keywords:** traffic education, parents of students, school.

## INTRODUCTION

Urban traffic has been transforming over many years into a space of violence, eroding the crisis of values in which society lives. Competition, individualism, intolerance overlap with the values of citizenship and attitudes of civility, solidarity and humanity. The process of barbarism that has been deepening in recent decades has, on the streets of cities, the stage for its manifestation (CLARCK & ELGELMANN, 1995; BRAGA, 1995; DAVIS, 1994; VASCONCELLOS, 1998; ZEGEER, 1998). Traffic actors, in the performance of their diverse and alternating roles, circumvent safety standards, transgress rules, blame each other, disrespect each other and do not assume their responsibilities (BRAGA, 1995). Considered historical, traffic violence results in a feeling of impotence and fear and, due to the inertia of effective actions, it commonly becomes naturalized.

Modernity allows us sophisticated technological resources in favor of traffic safety, however, we lack the educational dimension aimed at the formation of values that consist of actions, in the medium and long term, aiming at consistent results towards the practice of civility, citizenship and increasing the humanization of the streets. Traffic education in schools can and must be seen as a rich space for the development of this educational dimension. Its success, as well as that of any educational project, depends on the dedication and interdisciplinary integration of professionals from different areas of knowledge (FAZENDA, 1999; FAZENDA, 2013; PIAGET, 1973; PISTILLI & EGLER 2021) and the various actors in the school, especially those responsible for the students, whom we call the students' parents.

In this educational process, with students, a prominent role is the participation of their parents in the development of theoretical and practical activities aimed at decoding, interpreting and encouraging discussions regarding legislation and the reality experienced in the traffic environment. This is a way of establishing limits between rights and duties that allows for a better assimilation of the meaning of traffic rules and the importance of respecting them as a way of ensuring, with dignity, the mutual right to life.

In agreement with scholars in the area of traffic safety and education, we emphasize that the resolution of violence, in any and all areas, is linked to the educational dimension, on which all others are dependent (BRAGA & SANTOS, 1995; MIRANDA, 1979; WOLINSKI, 1993). Knowledge of and obedience to traffic laws, the exercise of civility, citizenship and respect for life are achieved through school education with the participation of all its actors (MARTINS, 2004). This is how the school is configured as an ideal environment conducive to creating opportunities for interdisciplinary approaches to fundamental themes aimed at the formation of civilized citizens and the awakening of their feelings of humanity. In this line of reasoning, we emphasize that any distance from the school in promoting joint participation between traffic professionals, teachers, students and their parents in discussions and systematized work on violence in urban traffic, experienced by students and their parents as protagonists of the process, postpones essential reflections on the possibilities of building a less violent city (PISTILLI & EGLER, 2021).

According to the World Health Organization (W.H.O., 2013), Brazil ranks 4th in deaths resulting from traffic. In contrast, we find Sweden, which has a very low traffic death rate and is among the countries with the safest urban traffic. This country, far from

a simple coincidence, implemented Traffic Education work in pre-school, for children from four years of age, following the entire educational process, including university. Given this scenario, we intend to expand spaces for discussions within schools with effective participation of teachers, students and their country about the importance of implementing the Traffic Education subject in the school curriculum starting from Elementary School. It is worth remembering that in the period between childhood and adolescence, our elementary school students experience processes of transformation towards maturity, motivated by the energy of curiosity, enchantment and, above all, receptivity to information and activities that have a link with their lives. It is pertinent to mention, within this situation, that Traffic Education in Elementary Education is ensured both by article 76 of chapter VI of Law 9503 of the Brazilian Traffic Code (BRAZIL, 1997), and by article 11 of resolution no. 638 of the Council National Transit Authority (BRAZIL, 2016).

The present study focuses on the importance of safe traffic, based on topics established in legislation (BRAZIL, 2016), such as: 1. Knowledge of and respect for Traffic Laws; 2. Awakening to ethical and moral values, civility and citizenship and 3. Respect/protection of life and the environment.

The motivation for carrying it out is due to the fact that, for the best success of this attempt, it is essential that parents of students participate in the construction of traffic education work with the various school actors and, in particular, with their children., because, in this direction, we will have expanded the horizons of its implementation in a richer way in schools (GOMES, 2016). Certainly, this scenario points out, as an important result, less violent traffic and, therefore, more civilized, more citizen, that is, inhabited by

people aware of the importance of education, kindness, solidarity, loving-kindness in traffic, from the preschool period until adulthood.

## METHODOLOGY

The present work was developed in municipal public schools in Rio de Janeiro located in the Ilha do Governador neighborhood, together with parents (representatives) of students who responded to the invitation to participate, spontaneously, in an interview on topics related to traffic education. Contacts for conducting interviews were established in person when entering and leaving school, during class breaks and school meetings.

Data collection took place during school hours throughout 2017. Semi-structured interviews were carried out using a semi-open questionnaire (Figure 1), as it is an effective instrument in qualitative research, facilitating the freedom of expression of interviewees in the presentation of their points of view (LUDKE & ANDRÉ, 1996). Therefore, we chose to use a questionnaire capable of allowing a predominantly qualitative mixed approach to the interviewees' responses, which works with meanings, values and attitudes, which corresponds to a deeper space of relationships, processes and phenomena that cannot be reproduced to the operationalization of variables" (MINAYO, 1994).

When applying this questionnaire to parents/guardians of students, we intended to identify: 1. The level of education achieved by the interviewee (even if they did not complete it); 2. Any type of involvement in a conflict/traffic accident and its degree of severity; 3. The interviewee's perception of the importance of traffic education in the school space; 4. The interviewee's perception of the responsibility that students' parents/guardians must have towards the traffic education process. We suggest that parents/

guardians carry out tasks related to traffic education, such as: participation in meetings, monitoring students' homework, presenting proposals, collaborating in publicity, among other activities; 5. The interviewee's perception of the expectations of success of this work as an instrument for humanizing traffic; 6. The interviewees' perception of the importance of working in traffic education, the following topics established in the legislation: 6.1. Knowledge of and respect for Traffic Laws; 6.2. The awakening to ethical-moral values, civility and citizenship and 6.3. Respect/protection of life and the environment.

1. What is your education?
2. Have you experienced any notable involvement in any type of conflict/traffic accident? If so, how serious is it? (little, medium or a lot). Comment your answer.
3. Mark on the line from 0 to 10, with a vertical line, the importance of Traffic Education in the school space. Comment your answer and give suggestions.
<hr style="width: 100%;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>0</span> <span>10</span> </div>
5. Mark on the line from 0 to 10, with a vertical line, your expectations for the success of this work as an instrument for humanizing traffic. Comment your answer and give suggestions.
6. Mark on the lines, from 0 to 10, with a vertical line, the importance of each topic, below, in Traffic Education work. Comment on the answer and give suggestions.
6.1. Knowledge of and respect for Traffic Laws
<hr style="width: 100%;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>0</span> <span>10</span> </div>
4. Mark on the line from 0 to 10, with a vertical line, the responsibility that parents of students must have with Traffic Education work. Comment your answer and give suggestions that you consider appropriate.
<hr style="width: 100%;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>0</span> <span>10</span> </div>
<hr style="width: 100%;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>0</span> <span>10</span> </div>
6.2. The awakening to ethical-moral values, civility and citizenship.
<hr style="width: 100%;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>0</span> <span>10</span> </div>
6.3. Respect/protection of life and the environment.
<hr style="width: 100%;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>0</span> <span>10</span> </div>

Figure 1 – Questionnaire applied to parents of school students

In questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the questionnaire, the Bipolar Linear Semantic Differential Scale was used, consisting of a 10 cm straight segment to record the marks from 0 to 10 given by the interviewees. We highlight the fact that the interviewees were able, throughout the interview, in writing or verbally, to express themselves freely, thus being able to elaborate their criticisms and suggestions.

## RESULTS

Based on the markings made by the interviewees on the lines forming questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the questionnaires, always having references to their personal data, obtained through questions 1 and 2, we present, linked to some of their representations (statements) on Traffic Education, the numerical results of the study.

Regarding question 3, the average marks of the interviewees on the line presented in the questionnaire, summarized in table 1, show signs that parents/guardians of students, in general, regardless of education level or degree of involvement in conflicts/accidents of traffic realize the importance of Traffic Education in the school space. We observed an increase in the perception of the importance of Traffic Education as measured by the level of severity of their involvement in a conflict/traffic accident, followed by their highest level of education.

Personal data of interviewees		Medium values
Education	Elementary School	7,8
	High School	8,0
	University level	9,3
Involvement in conflict/accident	none/ of little severity	7,3
	medium severity	8,5
	very serious	9,5

Table 1 – Importance of Traffic Education in the school space

We thus have indications that the emotional factor due to involvement with conflicts/accidents, in accordance with psychology and neuroscience scholars, are more significant factors in the process of becoming aware of the people studied (ALMEIDA, 2003; LIMA, 2007). In this regard, the following statement from an interviewee is pertinent when he states that “if it is not out of love, it is through pain that we learn and if people think they will never go through the tragedy of an accident, when the time comes, then it is too late”. There were those who said: “prevention is better than cure and that is why the school needs to take charge of education, starting with its students”

Regarding question 4, regarding the interviewees’ perception of responsibility for Traffic Education, the averages of the marks on the line presented in the questionnaire are summarized in table 2. Such averages are numerically lower than the averages obtained in the previous question, indicating that depending on the degree of involvement with conflict/accident, the values tend to remain without significant fluctuation and also indicate that the numerical values decrease as a result of the increase in education.

This situation may be indicative of skepticism and/or prejudice that prevails, more strongly among people with more education, when they position themselves in relation to the quality of programs, educational campaigns or even the lack of commitment on the part of the school and its actors, especially parents of students. This situation could be a reflection of the alienation of the meaning of Traffic Education. This hypothesis could be reinforced in the words of those who stated that “I am very doubtful whether all this effort will yield results as I do not see efficiency in the campaigns as they look like a platform for politicians”. In this line of criticism, another stated that “the parents of students who are not interested in this or any other subject



other than picking up crumbs at school or using it as a deposit for their child are worse off". Another stated that "when parents are interested, they don't even know how to see the meaning of the interest in the subject, out of pure alienation or even stupidity". In light of these arguments, it is worth remembering the importance of carrying out work to deconstruct negative stigmas against schools and their actors, which will certainly be of great value in improving expectations of success in work on Traffic Education within and outside schools. school walls.

The average scores on question 5 of the questionnaire, summarized in table 3, referring to the expectations of success of this work in combating traffic violence, are indicative that a considerable portion of the interviewees have this expectation. We verified an upward growth curve for this expectation, depending on the increase in the interviewee's education level. The same happens when the numerical values increase as the severity of the interviewee's involvement in a conflict/accident increases.

Personal data of interviewees		Medium values
Education	Elementary School	6,8
	High school	6,3
	University level	5,5
Involvement in conflict/accident	none/ of little severity	6,8
	medium severity	6,3
	very serious	6,8

Table 2 – Parental responsibility in Traffic Education work

Personal data of interviewees		Medium values
Education	Elementary School	6,8
	High School	7,8
	University level	8,3
Involvement in conflict/accident	none/ of little severity	7,5
	medium severity	7,8
	very serious	9,3

Table 3 – Expectations of success of Traffic Education work

Besides, in relation to table 3, we infer that the increase in education and, mainly, the increase in the level of severity of involvement in conflict/traffic accidents contribute to the level of expectation of success on the part of the interviewees in relation to the work of Education for the traffic. Based on psychology and neuroscience studies, the emotional impact reinforces learning (ALMEIDA, 2003; LIMA, 2007). This concept, we believe, has influenced parents who have experienced traffic conflicts/accidents to participate in Traffic Education work, which is possibly directly related to increased awareness on the subject.

Regarding question 6, the average marks on the questionnaire line, by the interviewees, are summarized in table 4. We can see that the final total average of marks attributed to topics 1, 2 and 3 reached the numerical value of 8,two. This numerical indicator shows the importance given by respondents, in general, to the three topics presented in the aforementioned question. We observed that these interviewees give more importance to topic 3 (respect/protection of life and the environment), whose total average is 8.7, followed by topic 1 (knowledge and respect for Traffic Laws), whose average is 8. 4. The numbers presented are a sign that the emotion provoked by painful experiences may be contributing to an awareness of the importance of knowing/respecting traffic laws (topic 1) and, in particular, to an awareness of the importance of respect for life and the environment (topic 3). These findings make sense when we think about the death statistics set out in the introduction to this study. The following statements from interviewees are relevant: "People truly learn to respect traffic rules when they feel the pain of losing someone close to them or when they have the after-effects of an accident that will never be erased from their soul."!"; "A minute of haste

will take the life of the reckless person or the reckless person will take the life of an innocent person who could be a person or an animal.”

It must be noted that differences in education levels do not significantly interfere with the perception of the importance given to the 3 topics (as expressed by the total averages 8.1, 8.1 and 8.6). On the other hand, the higher the level of severity of involvement with conflict/accident, the more significant the growth curve of the perception of importance given to topics (growth expressed by total means 7.5, 8.3 and 8.7), yet another indication of the importance of the emotional factor in the perceptions of the interviewees.

## DISCUSSION

The results obtained in the present study, based on the representations of the interviewees, show the importance they give to the work of Traffic Education in the school space. They point to the potential we have with students' parents to leverage fundamental work that supports the implementation of actions in schools aimed at raising citizen awareness and respect for life and the environment.

The growth in the interviewee's perception of the importance of teaching Traffic Education in schools proved to be more pronounced when directly measuring the degree of severity of their involvement in a conflict/traffic accident. Suggestions emphasized the importance of learning through emotional impact, so common in campaign strategies on serious traffic accidents and a key element in the process of raising awareness and changing the habits of its actors. Such inferences are supported by psychology thinkers who convince us that emotion has the capacity to produce memory and, consequently, learning (ALMEIDA, 2003; LIMA, 2007). The emotional impact can and must be very well applied in Traffic Education, especially in schools among teachers, students and their parents (BRAGA

& SANTOS, 1995; MARTINS, 2004). In this regard, we highlight some pearls that give the most emphatic tone to this problem of violence in the traffic environment: “only the shock of misfortune makes people learn”; “scenes of traffic accidents must be shown every day on television and also in schools and only in that way would many people change their way of being in the crazy traffic of this city”; “with painful scenes and memories that communication happens, that the message is transmitted! This is how people are attracted to talk about the most important things about citizenship and respect for traffic laws”; “it has to start at school, a lot of frank conversation, straight talk, everyone together, exchanging bad and good experiences”.

We highlighted that, when talking about the responsibility that students' parents must have with Traffic Education work, some interviewees questioned and expressed restrictions on the effectiveness of extracurricular educational actions in schools. The results point to ways of reversing obstacles, resistance, and demotivation among parents, especially those with greater education versus those with less education, regarding the teaching of Traffic Education at school, which are based on unfounded prejudices, on myopic views of the extension, depth and severity of the traffic problem.

The level of education proved to be a determining factor in raising awareness and valuing the importance of education as a transmission mechanism, knowledge and school knowledge for traffic educational actions. For various reasons, highlighting socio-economic reasons, we infer that parents with more education tend to have a greater degree and longer time of involvement and participation in their children's lives, including school, and value dialogue as an essential instrument in education. Among the most frequent and emphatic statements are those

Topics	Education			Involvement in conflict/accident			Partial Total Averages
	EF	EM	EU	None/little severity	Medium severity	Very serious	
Knowledge/respect traffic laws	8,8	8,3	8,3	7,5	8,5	9,0	8,4
Ethical-moral values, civility and citizenship	7,8	7,5	8,0	7,0	7,3	7,3	7,5
Respect/protection of life and the environment	7,5	8,5	9,3	7,8	9,0	9,8	8,7
Partial of Total Averages	8,1	8,1	8,6	7,5	8,3	8,7	8,2 (Final Total Average)

Table 4 – Valuation of topics covered in Traffic Education

EF = Elementary School, EM = High School, EU = University education.

that recognize the importance of permanent, updated and contextualized dialogue, based on the view of the school community, about the meaning and objectives of Traffic Education. This way, we remember those who said: “Without dialogue between schools and parents, Traffic Education will not get off the ground”; “The school alone teaches, but with the help of students’ parents things work better and there are a lot of people thinking like this and we just need to organize so that we can arrive together.”

The question raised by interviewees about the importance of dialogue finds strength in the thoughts of those who defend it throughout the school learning process as an opening to new knowledge, which underpins any process of building knowledge at school and outside of school (BICALHO AND OLIVEIRA, 2012; FAZENDA, 1999; PISTILLI & EGLER, 2021). The expansion and enrichment of dialogue between parents of students and between them and other school actors becomes a fundamental point for overcoming obstacles in the collective construction of the educational process, which is increasingly complex and interdisciplinary (FAZENDA, 1999; MORIN, 2002).

## CONCLUSION

The present study presents parents of students as a group of people with interest and with the potential to assume their share of contribution in the scenario of bringing school and society closer together, the foundation of Traffic Education work in the school space and fundamental for its inclusion in the grid. school curriculum, as provided for in legislation both in the field of traffic and education.

The results obtained point to pedagogical paths that emphasize the importance of learning through the process of becoming aware of the seriousness of the problem of traffic violence as a fundamental point for changing the habits of its actors. The representations of interviewees convince us that Traffic Education can only fully establish itself as a privileged space for valuing, encouraging and legitimizing different practices in teaching work, when its objectives are well defined and understood by the school community. This path requires the practice of permanent updated and contextualized dialogue about the meaning and objectives of Traffic Education. This form of structuring meets the ideas of interdisciplinarity so discussed and proposed for the process of improvement and concreteness of this utopia, starting from the school space. It can serve as a basis for the debate on the need to bring



together bodies responsible for programs aimed at traffic safety and education with the school, with the latter playing a leading role.

Finally, we reiterate the importance of giving a voice to students' parents so that this collective construction becomes viable across a broader spectrum of visions and satisfactions that differ from the desires of these actors. This implies educating for harmonious coexistence in traffic, in order to ensure the mutual right to life with dignity, in

and from school and its community, so that the real needs and interests of each location in our city can be considered. This is how we understand the indispensability of bringing the parents of students to their responsibility in participating in the construction of Traffic Education so that its success is expressed in the best and broadest confrontation of the different faces of violence, historically present, in everyday traffic.

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