

# HOMESCHOOLING PARENTS' DEMOTIVATION AND REMOTIVATION PROCESSES: A PILOT STUDY IN HUNGARY

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**Abstract:** Homeschooling, especially in a country like Hungary, where it is a legalized but not a recognized form of education, is not easy. This small-scale pilot study set out to examine the motivational dynamics of four Hungarian homeschooling parents by looking at processes of demotivation and remotivation. An interview guide was used to elicit answers from the participants. It was composed of three sections: questions on background information, questions on demotivation, and questions on remotivation. The results revealed that the participants became most demotivated mainly due to external, milieu-related influences, such as the lack of community awareness, outside pressure, negative public opinion, and facing constant criticism. In terms of remotivating attributes, the internal forces, such as some unexpected “magic” moments, satisfaction with the results, and experiences of success and enjoyment, appeared to be more influential. The results offer new insight into motivation research, as demotivation and remotivation are still relatively under-researched, and provide some basic information about the state of Hungarian homeschooling education.

**Keywords:** Hungarian homeschooling, motivation, remotivation, demotivation

## 1 Introduction

Homeschooling, once considered an unusual, “deviant practice”, is nowadays widely seen as “an acceptable alternative to conventional schooling” (Stevens, 2003, p. 90), at least in the American context, where over two million children are being educated at home (Ray, 2011). Hungary offers some opportunities for those who are dissatisfied with and disappointed in the education provided by the public-school system. Choosing to be a private student, attending a private school, or educating children at home are just a few options for parents who seek alternatives to public education. Since the authorization of the *1993 LXXIX Act on Public Education*, homeschooling is no longer a peripheral or illegal movement but has become a viable alternative for Hungarian families to follow, as the law allows parents to teach their children as private students at home. For many different reasons, many parents (see Table 1 for available information) are taking the matter into their own hands, accepting complete responsibility for their children’s educational welfare, and starting to teach them at home.

Homeschooling is not easy: families are not just challenged by the experience itself but by constant criticism (Romanowski, 2006), too. This might suggest that homeschooling, like every other human experience, has its ups and downs. It is the purpose of the current study to identify what motivates parents to homeschool and how different internal and external forces influence these families’ motivated behaviour. For this purpose, four semi-

structured in-depth interviews were conducted with Hungarian mothers who educate their children at home. By asking participants to recall their past experiences, the paper seeks to describe the dynamic changes in homeschooling parents' motivation (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015), focusing on the interaction of internal and external forces shaping their motivation, with special attention paid to demotivation and remotivation processes. The notions of demotivation, a temporary loss of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), and remotivation, the process of reviving motivation after losing it (Falout, 2012), are relatively new and have not been fully researched.

By directly asking active homeschooling parents to reflect on their own experience, this study will try to present a more accurate picture of home education, which is often shaded by myths and preconceptions (Romanowski, 2006). Furthermore, the findings might provide some new insights into motivation research, since the paper examines demotivation and remotivation in a less explored environment.

## 2 Review of the literature

### 2.1 Homeschooling as an educational alternative

Homeschooling is an option when parents decide to pull their kids out of a traditional formal educational system or private schools and provide them with education at home. Homeschooling is defined simply as a parent-led home-based education (Ray, 2017). Lines (1994) has a similar definition. She emphasizes that it is the education of school-aged children at home instead of in a conventional educational institution. However, Holt and Farenga (2003) point out that homeschooling is a “process by which children grow and learn in the world without going, or going very much, to schools” (p. 362). Their definition indicates that there are homeschooling children who might actually attend school classes. This fact was further pointed out by Petrie (1998) who defined the notion as “the full-time education of children in and around the home by their parents or guardians, or by tutors appointed by the parents or guardians” (p. 123). Her definition highlights that, in addition to parents, there are many people responsible for homeschooling, and furthermore, she uses the phrase “in and around the home”, which signifies that it is not accurate to claim that homeschooling is conducted exclusively at home.

In Hungary, two concepts are used frequently, *otthonoktatás* (homeschooling) and *otthon tanulás* (home-based studying or home education). There is a slight difference in the meaning and rationale behind these two concepts. As Gaither (2017) notes, many reject the term homeschooling as “what they are doing is qualitatively different than conventional school” (p. 14). As the actual difference between these two notions is not put into focus, the present study will use the terms homeschooling and home education interchangeably.

In line with these ideas, for the purpose of this study, homeschooling is defined as an alternative to traditional formal school formats in which parents choose to educate their children, not exclusively, but mostly at home instead of sending them to traditional public or private schools. Therefore, homeschooled children, most of the time, study at home led by their parents. Having some school lessons, taking classes from other tutors, and getting help from others are not considered exclusive here; however, parent-led education should outweigh

the time of education provided by others, so that homeschooled children and private students – who are given private lessons by several different qualified teachers – are not mixed.

Several studies have demonstrated that the reasons for choosing home education are diverse (Romanowski, 2006). Compared to this, Hungary lacks information regarding homeschooling parents' motives. The results of previously conducted studies – that aimed to gather information about the primary reasons for choosing homeschooling education (Gaither, 2017; Isenberg, 2007) – indicate that there are some reasons that frequently come into view. Most commonly, families choose to homeschool for academic, social, familial, and religious reasons. Better fulfilment of educational needs, religious reasons, poor school learning environment, and the desire to build stronger family bonds are among the most important reasons influencing parental decisions. Grubb's (1998) survey, based on self-reported data, notes that parents seem to favour homeschooling because it allows them to teach their kids proper social, moral, and religious values. Her report also pinpoints that the fear of the negative influence of peer groups and the increasing number of school crimes, such as robbery, assault, continuous mockery, guns, and drug use, belong under the key reasons that have convinced some families to choose homeschooling education. In addition, these parents are frequently “motivated by an active role construction, strong sense of efficacy for helping the child learn, and positive perceptions of life context” (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007, p. 265).

Homeschoolers are subject to a range of negative influences that might relate to particular learning experiences, such as the time and effort put into preparation and poor test results (Collom, 2005). They may also relate to factors in the social learning environment, like the criticism and pressure coming from the immediate or distant environment of the homeschooling family (Romanowski, 2006). Therefore, many problems homeschoolers face are not actually homeschooling problems.

The present study aims to find out whether Hungarian homeschooling families find the continuous pressure demotivating, and if they do, what kind of steps they take to remotivate themselves. As Dörnyei (2001a) emphasizes, very little is known about these processes, as previous works have been limited to emphasizing only those influences which have a positive rather than detrimental effect on motivation. As demotivation and remotivation are key constructs in this study, the next section will briefly review the existing literature related to these processes.

## **2.2 Demotivation and remotivation**

Motivation explains the reasons as to why people choose a certain action, how hard, and how long they sustain that activity (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). In other words, motivation regards three basic dimensions of human behaviour: (1) a choice of a particular action (why), (2) effort put into the action (how hard), and (3) persistence of this effort (how long) (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Research on motivation has traditionally been interested in the positive influences that generate interest in a particular action (Dörnyei, 2005). Currently, there is a shift in the motivation research trend from what causes motivation to how motivation changes. Motivation is no longer perceived as something stable but as a complex, dynamic notion that

constantly changes because of various internal and external stimuli. This is called the process-oriented approach to motivation (Dörnyei, 2001b).

Because of this process-oriented approach, a growing number of studies have been conducted on demotivation and remotivation during the last decades. There is another side to motivation that probably everyone engaged in a particular activity has encountered at some point: experiencing a transitional loss of motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 139) define the state of demotivation as the “dark side of motivation” when “external forces reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an on-going action.” The main causes of demotivation are referred to as demotives, which “instead of energizing action, ‘deenergize’ it” (Dörnyei, 2001a, p. 50). Thus, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 138) define demotives as “negative influences that cancel our existing motivation.” They further highlight that demotives could be regarded as the negative counterparts of motives caused by various external and internal forces.

It is important to note that demotivation is only a temporary state, and “it is only the resultant force that has been dampened by a strong negative component, and some other positive motives may still remain operational” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 139). This means that the process of demotivation can be retrieved. This is the remotivational process, which is defined by Ushioda (1998, p. 86) as “getting your motivation online again.” Thus, it is a process of overcoming the sources of demotivation.

In light of the above considerations, demotivation in the following will be used to refer to a state when because of various influences, motivation may gradually decrease; however, the action continues in its flow without interruption. The present study envisions demotivation and remotivation processes as cyclical ones, which consist of steps and are compared to staircases (see Figure 1). At its highest point, the person feels motivated and the lowest block represents demotivation. When a person with a motivated behaviour, because of some demotive loses their interest, they slide down the stairs. This movement represents the demotivation process.

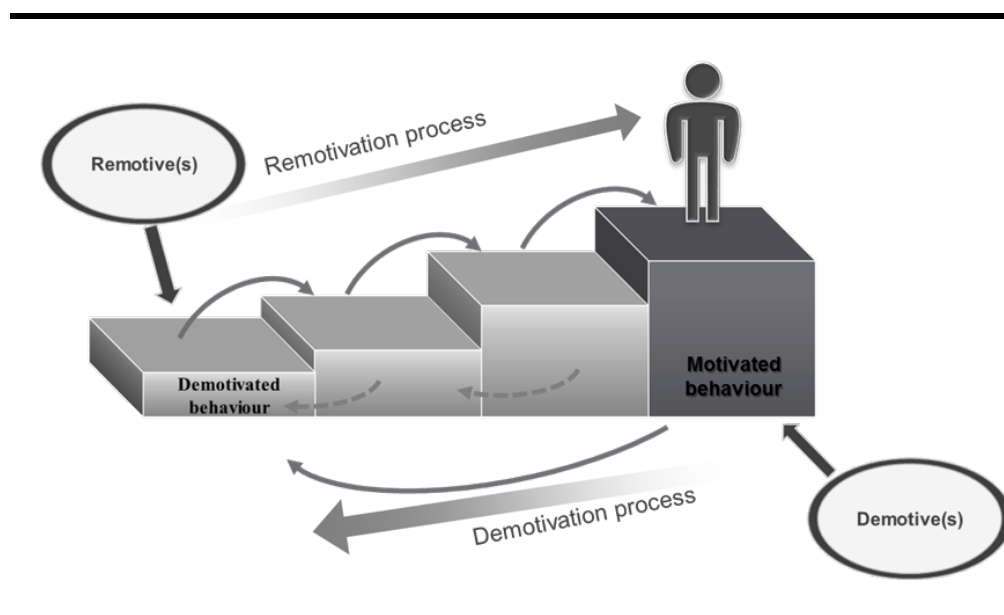


Figure 1. Graphical representation of demotivation and remotivation process  
Note. Own construction.

In parallel with Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011, p. 138) findings – “demotives are negative counterparts of motives” – it seems logical to use the term remotive(s) for influences which help people to overcome a demotivated period. The main distinction of motives and remotives is seen in the fact that motives generally motivate people even during the demotivated period, while remotives are unforeseen changes, some unexpected events, which give a sudden boost to direct and guide the remotivation process, through which the person can gain their motivation back. When some remotives interfere, people start to slowly build up their motivated behaviour again, step-by-step, which is the process of remotivation. On the way up to the top of the staircase, the person might suddenly be subjected to further negative effects and become demotivated again. The present paper attempts to study this dynamic interplay of homeschooling parents' demotivation and remotivation processes in the Hungarian context, with the aim of finding answers to the following research questions:

1. What causes demotivation in Hungarian homeschooling parents?
2. What characterizes the remotivation process of Hungarian homeschooling families?

### **3 Research method**

This pilot study adopted a qualitative method design involving face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. The main reason for choosing this approach is closely related to the personal nature of the topic being researched. As Sherman and Webb (1988) emphasize, the main aim of qualitative studies is to “understand experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it” (p. 7).

The reasons for conducting this small-scale pilot study are twofold. First, the findings might provide new insights into motivation research, as demotivation and remotivation are still considered to be relatively under-researched areas (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Second, because of the lack of Hungarian research and the highly restricted nature of potential homeschooling informants, this pilot study aims to test whether homeschooling families are approachable and willing to cooperate or not (to be able to discover problems before a potential, larger-scale investigation). This section outlines the construction of the semi-structured interview guide and describes the participants and the recruitment process.

#### **3.1 Context**

*Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education* makes it clear that homeschoolers belong to the category of private students. In Hungary, these students are supervised by an authorized school and have to pass exams annually. Until 2019, the authorized school's headmaster made the final decision regarding students' private status, taking into account the child welfare service's approval. As of September 2019, the private students status has been replaced by an individual work schedule. In addition, instead of headmasters, a governmental authority, the Educational Authority, decides whether a child can acquire this status.

School year	Number of private students
2014/2015	7417
2015/2016	6990
2016/2017	7613
2017/2018	7673
2018/2019	8046
2019/2020	9545

Table 1. Number of private students in Hungary  
Source of data: Central Statistical Office.

Since the private student status was legalized in 1993, the number of home educated students has grown rapidly. The actual number of homeschoolers, since they are classified as private students, is unknown; however, according to the previous years' annual country reports on education the number of private students in the system is showing a growing tendency from year to year (see Table 1 for available data). However, the preliminary data from October 2020 shows that the number of students with an individual work schedule is 5214, which indicates an almost 50% drop compared to 2019, mainly due to the above mentioned new regulations.

Although Hungarian parents' interest in homeschooling has increased recently, it is still challenging to gather Hungarian data. Even though the number of followers of home education is slowly rising, public opinion is divided and diverse, which might be caused by the fact that there is little research focusing on homeschooling education in the Hungarian context (see Eggendorfer & Kopp, 2018).

### 3.2 Participants

The participants of the interview study were selected by purposive sampling (Dörnyei, 2007). The sample consisted of Hungarian families enrolling their children in homeschooling education. The only inclusion criterion for participants was to have at least six months of homeschooling experience. The reason for restricting homeschooling experience to a minimum of six months was twofold. Firstly, as Griffith (2010) suggests, it takes several months to "deschool", that is, to leave the school system behind. It is a mental process family members go through after being removed from a formal schooling environment. Secondly, it has to be ensured that they have had enough time to develop their own personal homeschooling style and be able to reflect on it. The first two participants were recruited from and through online social media, and later these initially contacted families were asked to provide contacts for additional homeschooling families who also fit the study's criteria. A series of four interviews were conducted by the researcher between March and April in 2019.

Four homeschooling mothers were recruited (see Table 2) to participate in this study, who show considerable variation in age, marital status, profession, number of children, and years of homeschooling experience.

Name	Gender	Age	Marital status	The highest level of education	Number of children	Number of years homeschooling
1. Eszter	Female	49	Married	University	1	3
2. Kitti	Female	37	Divorced	University	1	7
3. Anita	Female	53	Divorced	University	5	8
4. Orsolya	Female	41	Married	University	3	3

Table 2. Overview of the participants' biographical data

Before the interviews, all the interviewees were informed about the topic of the study and assured that the gathered data would be used only for this investigation. The interviewees are ensured anonymity in the paper by the use of pseudonyms.

The participants' ages ranged from 37 to 53 years with their average age being 45 years. In terms of marital status, Eszter and Orsolya are married, and two other participants (Kitti and Anita) are divorced. It is important to note here that the study itself is not gender-related; it is a mere coincidence that all the participants are females. The educational background of the participants is congruent as all the participants earned a university degree. Out of the four interviewees, three hold a teaching degree and two are English language teachers. None of them is a full-time stay-at-home parent, as they are all employed. Eszter is a business-woman, while Kitti teaches in a primary school. Anita works as a translator and teaches in a language school. Orsolya works as a homeschooling adviser.

The interviewees' homeschooling experience and their number of children vary greatly. Eszter has one child, a 13-year-old daughter who has been enrolled in homeschooling education for three years. She tried the public education system before homeschooling. Kitti has a nine-year-old daughter who has never experienced the public educational system and has been homeschooled for seven years. Anita has five children – four girls and a boy – out of which four are taught at home. The family's oldest daughter was homeschooled for a few years, but at the time of the interviews she was attending a secondary school. Anita's family has eight years of experience in homeschooling. Orsolya has three children, but only two are school-aged. They have been studying at home for three years.

### 3.3 Methods of data collection

The interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face (in one case via Skype). The average length of the interviews was 40 minutes, with the longest one lasting for an hour. The semi-structured interview, as the main data-gathering device, turned out to be extremely helpful "to learn, first-hand, about people's perspectives on the subject chosen as the project focus" (Davies, 2007, p. 29).

### 3.4 Instrument

The interview questions (Appendix A) were written in Hungarian, as the interviews were conducted in the official language of the country. It is important to note that the quotes from the interviews in this paper were translated into English by the author and the translations were double-checked by a colleague. The questions were developed specifically to serve the purpose of the present study. The semi-structured interview guide initially consisted of five demographic and 15 motivational related questions, which were compiled based on the review of existing homeschooling and motivational literature.

The first version of the questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic questions, basic homeschooling related questions, and content questions. First, questions about the interviewees' background and homeschooling experience were asked to establish rapport. Next, the content questions were addressed which were further divided into four thematic sections grounded on Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) definition of motivation. Based on their theory, motivational behaviour concerns the "direction and magnitude of human behaviour, that is: the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it, the effort expended on it" (p. 4). Furthermore, they consider "satisfaction a major component of motivation" as well (p. 128).

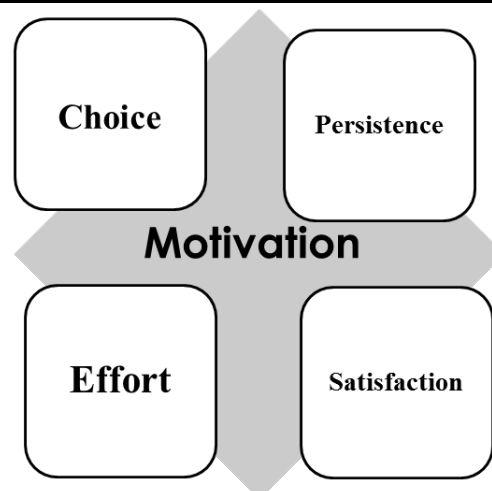


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the content questions  
Based on Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011)

The content questions, therefore, focused on several topics: (a) the participants' reasons to choose homeschooling, (b) homeschooling experience, (c) effort put into homeschooling, (d) satisfaction with the homeschooling results and achievements (see Figure 2). As demotivation and remotivation are brought into focus, the interview guide was constructed (see Table 3 for sample questions) in a way that three questions were addressed in relation to each component (choice, effort, persistence, and satisfaction). For each component, a general, homeschooling experience related question, a demotivational, and a remotivational question were addressed (see interview questions in Appendix 1).



	<b>Persistence</b>	<b>Effort</b>
<b>General question</b>	How would you characterise your enthusiasm during the years?	How much time do you really have to devote to homeschooling?
<b>Demotivational</b>	Could you characterize the things which make you question your decision to homeschool?	Tell me about a time when you felt down!
<b>Remotivational</b>	How do you try to bring your enthusiasm back?	How do you react when you do not have time and energy to prepare?

Table 3. Interview question examples

The piloting process of the interview schedule comprised a series of three interconnected steps. The first step, asking colleagues, was carried out to get feedback on the interview questions to improve them before the actual usage. Three colleagues checked the questions and provided comments on the first version. Second, during the interviews, the researcher took notes and marked the problematic questions, and furthermore, assessed whether each question elicited a broad range of responses. The questions were modified twice, and the final version of the interview questions was tested with two additional interviewees. The final version consisted of seven demographic, four basic homeschooling related and 12 content questions.

### 3.4 Methods of data analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts yielded 38,549 words of data, which were analysed by the researcher for emerging themes. The analysis of the transcribed interview data was built on the traditions of the constant comparative method proposed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) with the help of the Atlas.ti 7.5.7 qualitative data analysis software. After the basic coding of the text, the codes were grouped into code families, thus the analysis tried to identify themes or patterns in the first cycle codes. As the next step similarities and differences were accumulated into emerging themes. Summing up, the analysis relied on the continuous comparison of the newly identified codes with the already established ones. Themes were considered emerging when they were mentioned by at least three of the four interviewees.

## 4 Results and discussion

Demotivation and remotivation in homeschooling education were investigated with three main foci: (a) the reasons (i.e., the demotives) underlying demotivation; (b) the reasons (i.e., the remotives) facilitating remotivation; and (c) homeschooling families' experiences in overcoming demotivation (i.e., the remotivation process). Before presenting these latter results, the first subsection will briefly summarize the parents' primary reasons for choosing home education. Information about the families' primary motives is considered important as these findings provide a starting point for the whole study. A demotivated person, for example, is someone who felt motivated but has lost it for some reason, and remotivation aims at getting back to the original motivational pattern.

#### 4.1 Primary reasons for choosing home education

Hungarian families choose homeschooling for a number of different reasons. The study divided the main rationales for choosing homeschooling into 4 categories: a) public education related issues, b) flexibility, c) individualization, and d) family reasons.

Public education related issues involve the dissatisfaction with the education system in Hungary. Homeschooling parents think that Hungarian education is too old-fashioned, operating on similar principles as schools that existed hundreds of years ago. Knowles (1989) notes that “home schools are often an expression of intense dissatisfaction with public school outcomes” (p. 393). Schools concentrate “on teaching students an out-dated and unnecessary school curriculum”, they are “centered around standardized tests”, and in addition, “use numbers to grade students, and create a class rank” (Anita). From a very early age, students identify themselves with a number and focus on their rank in the classroom. Homeschoolers acknowledge that school grades rarely reflect intelligence, as the school system tries to squeeze as many facts as possible into the students’ minds. That student is given the title of excellent who can cite a great deal of facts. As the participants highlighted, the quantity of the memorized information – and not the quality – is what determines academic success at school. This type of education, teaching bare facts, is seen as ineffective.

Another reason for choosing home education over the school system is freedom and flexibility. Multiple participants expressed concern over the fixed views about what counts as learning. “If you ask people what comes to mind when they hear the word learning, the first answer is likely to be school”, Orsolya began her answer. As it turned out, the interview participants hold a different view on this issue, namely, that everything is a learning experience. Therefore, homeschooling parents think learning is not limited and confined to the classroom environment. In fact, the most “powerful learning experiences happen outside of the classroom, by experiencing things, by creating and formulating something for yourself” (Kitti). Homeschooling parents believe in a more practical way of education. They desire to provide the best educational experience for their children, and so many of them take the responsibility to teach them at home.

The participants unanimously believe that each child is a unique individual with special characteristics. Participants chose homeschooling because it allowed them to adapt the learning material to these specificities, taking into account the children’s personal learning needs, preferred learning styles, as well as their interests and abilities. They can rely on a preplanned, prepackaged curriculum designed for homeschoolers or they may choose to prepare their own material. Homeschooling parents try to apply various methods to fulfill the needs of their children. Eszter believes that homeschooling “promotes the natural: physical, psychological, cognitive and social development of my child.” The conditions are given, thus the lessons are not limited to their home only. There are no pre-defined topics and processes in homeschooling, there are no restrictions on the resources they want to use, there is no limit on where to learn, when, and how. Homeschoolers explore topics and issues that stimulate their children’s interest. They have their own computers, electronic devices, and other resources, which contribute to a diverse way of teaching and learning. Working outdoors, taking field trips, and visiting various museums, belong among the commonly used homeschooling approaches. Thus, all participants in this study decided to homeschool in order to have an increased involvement in their children’s learning and development.

Many parents chose homeschooling to strengthen family bonds. Close parental bonds and a loving, safe atmosphere were frequently emphasized. The participants feel that homeschooling helped them to create and maintain a much stronger relationship with their children. Anita highlighted that “I am not an overprotective mother, but I wanted to have a much stronger relationship with my own children.” This parental involvement includes the desire to provide moral instruction. Kitti expressed that she wanted to protect her daughter from the negative peer pressure and the bad influences present in the public school environment. As she noted “I want to protect her from the negative influence of her classmates. I do not like the way the 7<sup>th</sup> graders already talk about sexuality.” To sum up, the participants’ emotions turned out to constitute a major influence on their decision-making.

#### 4.2 Demotivation process and demotives

To answer the first research question, the participants were asked to share some of their homeschooling stories and experiences when for some reason they questioned their own decision. Therefore, the time factor was taken into account while dealing with the demotivation process. Homeschooling parents were asked to recall their experiences, particular events from the past to elicit information.

In this current study, demotives were grouped into six categories, which based on their nature were classified into two groups: internal and external demotives (based on Williams & Burden, 1997). Internal demotives are the homeschooling parents’ interior forces that reduce motivation in homeschooling, including confidence deficiency, uncertainty, failed expectations and the lack of free time and energy, whereas external demotives relate to external drives comprising immediate or distant milieu-related demotivating influences, unpredictable life events, major life changes, and other external demotivating factors (see Table 4).

<b>Internal demotives</b>	<b>External demotives</b>
Confidence deficiency	Milieu-related influences
Uncertainty	Unpredictable life events
Belief(s)	Major life changes
Lack of free time	Other external factors
Lack of energy	

Table 4. Internal and external demotives

External demotives incorporate all the milieu-related demotivating influences including lack of community awareness from the close (family and friends) and distant (other people, officials, teachers) environment of the homeschooling family. The pressure from the outside in the form of preconceptions and the negative opinion of the mothers’ own family and friends are considered demotivating. As one of the interviewees emphasized:

It is really painful for me that my parents do not accept the fact that we are homeschooling. When we started the whole thing, my mum told me not to visit them as long as we do not put our daughter back to school. (Eszter)

Therefore, the constant criticism, the huge amount of misconceptions, and the continuous rejection contribute to loss of motivation. For instance, Anita said:

Homeschooling in Hungary is a road rarely taken, there are many questions and ambiguities, it constantly changes... I questioned it a lot, and I still question it these days. I do not know whether there will be a time when I can say with certainty that it is good. (Anita)

As we are talking about human beings, there are some other events that shape the motivation of homeschooling families. These include unpredictable life events, such as a sudden illness, injury, or a death of a loved one. As Kitti explained: "One of my students died in January, I had to do a language exam in order to teach and these lowered my motivation so much that I am still trying to recover."

Major life changes turned out to be one of the most important causal forces for demotivation. These are some private but external events, such as getting divorced, loss of a family member, and constant moving, which all reduce the parents' motivation. Many of these potential demotives the participants had to face in the past required them to make changes in their ongoing lives, and it took participants a while to adapt to the changes. These life events all changed the direction of their lives, affecting the homeschooling process as well.

Potential demotives come in many shapes and forms, some having a greater impact than others on participants' motivation. The lack of homeschooling resources and work problems are one of the less severe demotives. In the Hungarian context there are no books, course books, and pre-planned curricula to help parents and children cope with homeschooling. It takes families extra time, money, and energy to find useful, quality resources. As described earlier, all the interview participants are employed, so bringing work problems home sometimes is inevitable. Urgent deadlines, impossible workload, and stress might all lower the participant's motivation.

Throughout the next few paragraphs, the focus shifts from external demotives to internal ones. The confidence-deficiency emerging theme includes all the self-related notions, such as self-confidence problems. It turned out that homeschooling parents question themselves a lot: they question whether they are suitable for the task and whether homeschooling was a good choice. Because there is no universal answer to all homeschooling problems, they often question their decision, they feel that they are doing things wrong, and they do not trust themselves. According to Redmond (2015), the way people see themselves is influenced by one's immediate or distant environment. Our self-image is not innate, but it is acquired through different experiences and interactions with others. Therefore, it is important to consider the external feature's role in the formation of self-image.

The participants' beliefs – their views, opinions, expectations – all shaped their homeschooling experience, often in a negative way. These fixed, preset thoughts and ideas about homeschooling and all the failed expectations often caused demotivation. All the

interviewees highlighted the enthusiasm and excitement they felt, especially during the first months or so. The participants perceived these unmet expectations as failures. Eszter put it this way:

What I've realized over the years is that I have to trust my children and simply not have expectations. When we started homeschooling, I imagined all the language exams we would obtain. As it is, none of that happened. I forced my daughter to take a language exam for children. She hated it. You have to let these go and find some kind of balance... so that everyone is satisfied.

The participants had very ambitious ideas and visions, and when things did not turn out the way they had expected, they felt disappointment.

Another internal attribution which often demotivates parents is the lack of free time; as preparation takes a lot of energy and is highly time-consuming, the mothers do not have time to meet their own needs. As another participant, Orsolya, remarked: "Since homeschooling takes a lot of time and energy, I often have to sacrifice the things I want to do." It is important to note here that these demotives have different intensity on families and based on the data it is not possible to determine which demotives are easier to overcome than others.

#### 4.3 Remotivation process and remotives

Based on the parents' past reflection it is apparent that homeschooling is like a "roller coaster ride", as they all experienced its ups and downs in the past but successfully regained their motivation. This subsection presents the key internal and external influences which facilitated the parents' remotivation and tries to find an answer to the second research question.

Internal remotives	External remotives
Satisfaction with the results	Milieu-related influences
Determination	Unpredictable life events
Reframing thoughts	Major life changes
Efficacy management	
Enjoyment	
Lifestyle factors	

Table 5. Internal and external remotives

The same external influences that may reduce the participants' motivation might also help participants to get their motivation back after feeling down. Major life changes and unpredictable life events can be positive as well as negative. A new marriage, childbirth, and financial gain all give new life to homeschooling. A special type of unpredictable life event,

the so-called “magic moments”, was frequently emphasized by participants. Orsolya, for instance, explained in the interview: “Yes, sometimes I feel that homeschooling is too demanding, but then something amazing happens, which keeps me there... it is an awesome feeling!” Families find these moments highly remotivating. When they feel down, something unexpected and surprising happens, which persuades them to continue, not to give up. These include some unforeseen events, mainly related to the homeschooled child, as the child says something or does something which in the parents’ perception occurred because of their homeschooling education. Anita, who combines and complements her children’s English language learning with the Latin and Greek languages, shared the following memory during the interview:

We used to visit a singing class. Once we were served tea, and my son asked the woman about the tea flavour. The lady told him that she wasn’t sure about it. My son read the label “multifruit” on the box of the tea and was able to translate it. He could explain that it was a tea with several kinds of fruit. That was exactly what I wanted to achieve with my children... to understand the words from their intellect. It was a huge sense of achievement for him and for me as well. (Anita)

Parents stated that they get energy from the above-mentioned “magic moments”; they give them encouragement and inspiration that they are doing well. Another example of that is as follows:

When I feel like giving up, and I question my abilities, something happens, like when she counted 2 x 125 at the shop without dealing with the multiplying of big numbers; this ensures me that we are in the right place and we are doing fine. (Eszter)

Therefore, the satisfaction with the results is another remote for homeschooling families. The results highlighted that satisfaction is related to the children’s knowledge as well as their motivated behaviour concerning learning and general well-being. While they feel demotivated they just look at their child. The fact that they are happy, smart, open, and curious helps them to overcome difficult times. The participants emphasized that even though they are the parents and should teach their children, they are not the one in control. As homeschooling is child-driven and interest-driven, the children learn a great deal of new information alone. Orsolya shared the following moment when she knew they were doing great:

My older son was a 2nd grader when he became so fond of animals that he read like 80 books in the library, and this passion was taken over by my daughter as well. It is amazing to watch my children talk about all the Latin names of animals. Even though I teach them, I have nothing to do with their achievements. To this day, they draw from this knowledge. Last year we were in Austria. We visited a zoo and each animal information sign was written in German, but they started to list the animals, their natural habitat, what they are eating. So many years have passed, yet their knowledge was still the same... it is because they followed their own interests and felt passionate about the topic. I felt so proud. (Orsolya)

An additional internal remote for these families is that they are determined not to give up, a determination which manifests itself more strongly when feeling demotivated. The following comment clearly illustrates this: “It is like a tightrope walk – you will not tell the

dancer to bounce back or stop when she is in the middle of the rope... you do not back down; homeschooling is a similar thing” (Kitti).

Parents, while demotivated, try to change their thinking, reframe their thoughts. They take advantage of their ability to control their thoughts. They try not to think negatively; they try to see everything in a positive light. They talk about problems, they ask others to help them and they do not blame anyone but are always looking for alternatives to be better. As Kitti emphasized: “We have realized so many times during these years that not everything works out... just do not hesitate, do not cry, look for alternatives, seek new ways.” Eszter added that “it is important to realize when you need extra help.” When lacking the knowledge and confidence to teach certain subjects, they turn to the Internet to educate themselves and to fill in gaps in their knowledge. At these times online courses, trainings, tutorials, and development programs can be a huge help for homeschooling families. In addition, they reach out to others – other homeschooling families, professionals, tutors – for help to educate their children.

Efficacy management involves monitoring and evaluating the homeschooling progress. Parents are constantly reflecting, trying to learn new things about themselves and improve. Knowing their weaknesses and strengths helps them to overcome problems. The interview participants constantly remind themselves that demotivation is only a temporary state, and one has to know oneself to overcome these periods. According to Orsolya, “You have to be aware of your abilities. If something doesn’t work, if something is out of control, we look for solutions together.” That is the reason why parents mentioned that they put the power of self-knowledge and self-awareness into homeschooling. They try to be honest with themselves.

Other remotives for these parents are enjoyment and pleasure. The parents feel good when learning new things and developing, so they frequently remind themselves that they enjoy studying and lesson preparation. Even Deci and Ryan (1985) point out that pleasure and enjoyment felt during a particular activity are essential components of intrinsic motivation. As Anita explained: “I really enjoy learning new things, preparation takes a lot of time and effort, but it is worth it, my brain develops... I really like it when an old piece of information comes back.” Another helpful strategy frequently used by participants is interest enhancement. When they feel demotivated, they try to turn homeschooling into a game in order to motivate themselves and their children.

Last but not least, strategies to manage a demotivated period include lifestyle factors such as doing something else, getting enough sleep, and relaxation techniques. When they feel demotivated, they just pause for a while and take a break from homeschooling. They shift their attention away from homeschooling to something they really enjoy; they spend time doing things they love, and try to find a way back to their real self. This was echoed by Eszter:

When I feel burned out, I go cycling, I do some exercises, I am with my partner... so I try to pay attention to myself, to my needs. I try to gather energy from things I like and people I feel close to. (Eszter)

The latter finding seems to fit with Falout, Elwood, and Hood’s (2009) investigation which dealt with the demotivation and remotivation of Japanese EFL Students. They concluded that there are two reactive factors these students engage in while being

demotivated: help-seeking and enjoyment-seeking. Even though the contexts of these studies are different, some important parallels might be drawn, and further investigation would be needed to compare the main similarities and differences.

The above findings classified demotives and remotives based on their nature only, so internal and external ones. However, it is clear that another classification is possible and needed to fully understand the remotivation and demotivation process. It turned out that the time factor must be taken into account as well. Figure 3 illustrates how demotives and remotives could be modelled on at least two axes: (1) short-term to long-term and (2) internal to external.

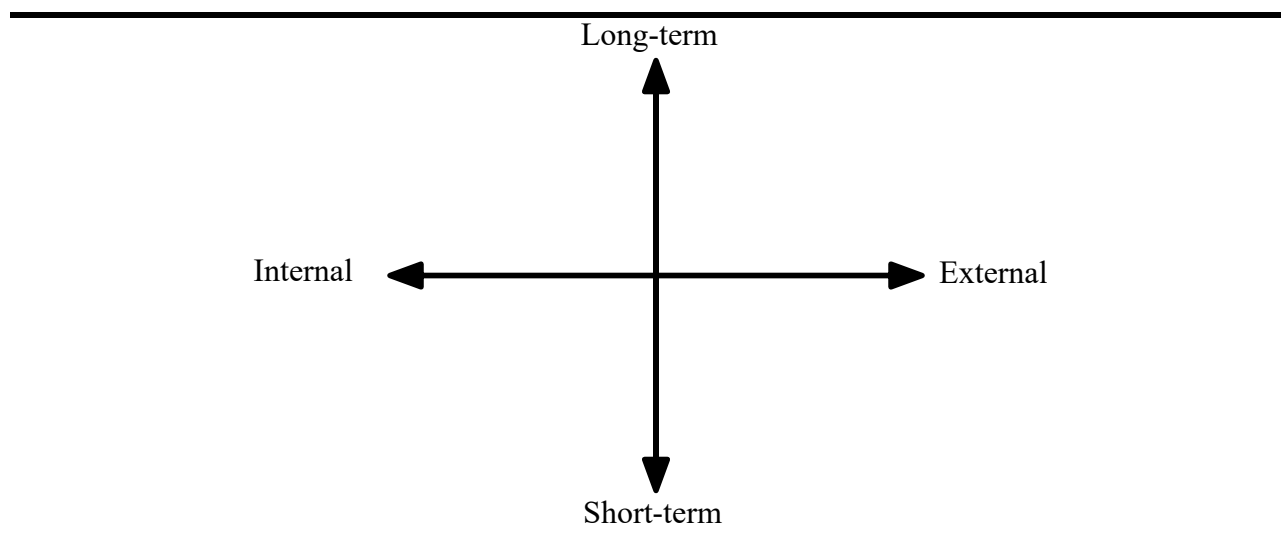


Figure 3. Graphical representation of demotives and remotives classification

The time axis – short-term to long-term – can be viewed in two ways:

- (1) The degree of impact: Different demotives and remotives affect people to different degrees, depending on whether that particular demotive or remoteive is internal or external and whether it influences the person in the short-term or the long-term. Demotives which are external turned out to have a longer lasting impact on motivation than internal ones alone. Remotives work the same way: Some remotives produce a long-lasting effect, while others have only a lower impact on the person. Internal remotives tend to have a more enduring and long-term effect compared to the external type.
- (2) The degree of occurrence: In both cases, the time axis might also refer to whether a remoteive or demotive is something new or short term or has been around for a longer time. Based on this classification, two types of demotives and remotives can be distinguished: (1) those which are new or happen unexpectedly in a short period, and (2) those which generally, repeatedly demotivate or remotivate people over a long time.

There are some people who cope with demotivation more effectively and recover from a demotivated period more quickly than others. The findings suggest that demotivation and remotivation are very complex processes and many other aspects might be involved in the



degree of their influence, and therefore they should be more carefully examined in a different study.

## 5 Conclusion

This study intended to investigate the demotivation and remotivation processes of homeschooling parents. As highlighted, homeschoolers face a number of issues related to the process of homeschooling, are criticized for a number of different reasons and, in addition, they all have their own unique list of challenges. Just as there are a number of influences that have a positive effect on homeschooling parents' motivation, there are also those that have a detrimental effect, so homeschoolers are subject to a range of negative influences. Consequently, the present study aimed to find out whether homeschooling families find the continuous pressure demotivating; and if they do, what sort of steps they take to remotivate themselves. The main findings can be summarized as follows:

In the interview data nine demotives were identified, grouped into external demotives: (1) milieu-related influences, (2) unexpected life events, (3) major life changes, and (4) other external factors; and internal demotives: (1) confidence-deficiency, (2) uncertainty, (3) belief(s), (4) lack of free time, and (5) lack of energy. These demotives are events or conditions that may lower a person's motivation. It turned out that families use a variety of coping strategies, such as reframing their thoughts, talking about the problem with others, efficacy management, and help-seeking to remotivate themselves. Positive, unpredictable life events and major life changes are considered important external demotives, while internal forces, such as determination, enjoyment, pleasure, and satisfaction with the results, are considered to be the most salient when discussing remotivation. Focusing on activities that are important to the parents is another way to regain motivation.

To sum up, external demotives and demotives are situations and events that happen to a person, while others are self-induced. These are the internal demotives and demotives. The research findings suggest that while talking about the homeschooling parents' demotivation process, external influences weigh much more than internal factors, thus external forces affected the demotivated behaviour of the families more than the internal ones. In contrast, the remotivation process was influenced by internal forces at a much higher rate than by external ones. The results showed that people respond to demotives and demotives differently. As it was proposed, it might be worth viewing them along two axes: (1) source or nature of demotives and demotives – internal to external, (2) the overall effects of demotives and demotives – short-term to long-term.

Finally, perhaps the biggest limitation of using in-depth interviews is also their main strength for this field of research. That is, the participants only described a limited number of past experiences when they felt demotivated, so further investigation is needed to get an overall picture of the main demotives and demotives. Another important limitation of this study is the small sample size, as the study explored the experiences of a small number of participants (N=4). An increased sample size would improve the credibility of the findings. The results of this study might not only influence and shape the image of home education in the Hungarian context but might be a good starting point to expand our knowledge of demotivation and remotivation more generally, too.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview questions in English

1. How old are you?
2. Where do you live?
3. What is your marital status?
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
5. What do you do?
6. How many kids are in your family?
7. How many are homeschooled?
8. How long have you been homeschooling?
9. Why did you decide to homeschool your children?
10. Could you describe your homeschooling style?
11. Please describe one of your days

#### Choice

1. How do you try to stay motivated to continue homeschooling your children?
  - a. What are the most important driving forces for you?
2. Could you characterize the things which make you question your decision to homeschool?
  - a. Why do you think so?
3. How do you react to these?

#### Effort

4. How much time and energy do you really have to devote to homeschooling?
5. What do you do when you feel burned out?
  - a. Tell me about a time when you felt down!
6. How do you react when you do not have time and energy to prepare?

#### Persistence

7. How would you characterise your enthusiasm during the years?
  - a. Why and how did it change?
8. What do you do when you lose your enthusiasm?
9. You have been homeschooling for x years now, can you recall a time from your homeschooling experience when you questioned your decision?
  - a. Could you characterize the things which make you question your decision to homeschool?
  - b. How did you react?
  - c. How did you try to bring your enthusiasm back?

#### Satisfaction

10. How would you characterize your homeschooling results?
11. Are you satisfied with the results?
12. What would you do if you were not satisfied with the results?