TYPOLOGIES OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS FROM SECONDARY EDUCATION: A REVIEW STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this review study was to map the current state of knowledge of early school leaving typologies (ISCED 3) and to provide an overview of the findings. Using systematic mapping, ten texts published in peer-reviewed journals between 2000 and 2021 were identified and analyzed. Although the researchers applied different theoretical concepts, five significant, recurring, and distinguishable types of early departures were identified in these studies. The interest in this specific area has been growing in recent years and the number of qualitative research studies on the phenomenon is also increasing. At the same time, however, there is not enough knowledge convincingly explaining the circumstances leading to early school leaving for the individuals in the largest group – the quiet type.

KEYWORDS

dropout; early school leaving; review study; secondary school; typology

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Introduction

Early school leaving is an indicator that has been used by Eurostat since 1999 (Estêvão & Álvares, 2014). It is defined as leaving school before completing upper secondary education (ISCED 3) (Csereklye, 2008; Lamb et al., 2011; OECD, 2012). Since 2021 Eurostat frequently used the term "early leaving from education and training" (ELET), which includes pupils who leave early from school or from other forms of education or training. As "early school leaving" corresponds to the area of interest of this text, focused on the early exit from secondary education, this term is primarily used in this article. For the sake of clarity, the acronym of this term (ESL) is used to refer to students who left secondary school before graduating. Surveys conducted in Europe refer to this group of young adults as *early school leavers*. These are individuals under the age of 24 (in most systems, upper secondary school is finished between the ages of 17 and 20) who left school early, attained only the lower level of secondary education (ISCED 2), and did not receive further education (Lamb et al., 2011).[1]

Another term used in connection with the phenomenon of early leave from education and training is "school dropout," which has been defined as "leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential, most often a higher secondary education diploma" (De Witte et al., 2013). This definition is based on the concept of compulsory education, the duration of which differs among educational systems (Estêvão & Álvares, 2014). As a result of this variance, school dropout can be described in many different ways, and inconsistencies in these definitions are a common problem, because "it varies across and within countries, for different education programs (for example, for children in regular schools compared to children in special schools for children with disabilities) and over time (due to modifications of the definition and formula)" (UNICEF, 2016). For this reason, the term "dropout" is used in this paper only if it was used by the authors of the cited studies.[2]

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[1]   In 2021, 9.7% of 18- to 24-year-olds in the EU had finished their education with only a lower secondary education certificate and they had not started upper secondary school or training (Eurostat, 2021).

[2]   The wide concept of early leaving from education can be divided into two categories: formal and functional (Estêvão & Álvares, 2014). The formal definition corresponds to the concept of compulsory education as formulated by the laws of the state. A key aspect of the definition is the age at which the pupil leaves compulsory education, or the number of years of compulsory education. The functional definition is less rigorous and reflects the context of leaving education, focusing mainly on the practical effects of the education achieved in the life of the individual. School dropout is closer to a formal definition; ESL largely corresponds to a functional definition.

ESL is an important phenomenon in terms of education policies, as it has both a significant impact on the life of the individual and societal costs. In the EU, almost 60% of early school leavers are unemployed (Eurostat, 2016). In most OECD countries, graduation from upper secondary education is considered to be the minimal level of qualification as it is required for entering university and for working at most well-paid job positions. Surveys in different countries show that those individuals who do not obtain an upper secondary education are more often unemployed and experience worse health (Owens, 2004) or have lower income and economic capital (Rumberger & Lamb, 2003) than graduates from upper secondary schools.

Research into the causes of ESL is far from easy. For a long time, the prevailing perception of early school leavers as a homogeneous group led to ignoring the existence of significant differences among them (Bowers & Sprott, 2012b). The internal heterogeneity of this phenomenon was documented in the 1990s by Kronick and Hargis (1998). The authors described various types of ESL related to individual student characteristics. The validity of this study was confirmed by research by Janosz et al. (2000).

Although current studies identifying the reasons for dropout all suggest that there is no single factor leading to ESL but rather a combination of circumstances (Bowers et al., 2012; Lamote et al., 2013; Rumberger, 2011), research findings on the significance of these (especially school) factors and predictors are not always consistent. There are, therefore, a number of classifications with different and often overlapping terms (Krstic et al., 2017). Research into the typologies of these classifications contributes to clarifying the research field of the heterogeneous phenomenon of ESL. A well-designed typology can describe the various features of the problem, can aid in understanding these features, and can thus enable the design of effective interventions (Etzion & Romi, 2015; Janosz et al., 2000). However, a larger survey comparing the typologies of ESL is not currently available. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to search for existing typologies of ESL available from specialized databases, to analyze them in detail, and to create an overview of the findings on the categories of students who leave secondary education early.

1 Methodology

The method of systematic mapping of relevant research work was selected. The ambition was to create a study encompassing all research focusing on ESL available from databases and to analyze this work with the aim of drawing conclusions that will "help orientation of further research in the area" (Mareš, 2013, p. 430).

The aim of this review study is to provide a broader summary of all relevant empirical research that (1) addresses the issue of ESL (ISCED 3); (2) is in the research area of the typology of ESL; and (3) are peer-reviewed qualitative, quantitative, or review texts in English, regardless of the country of origin. The process of selecting sources for analysis was divided into several phases, following Fink's strategy (2020).

1.1 Search for documents

Three existing databases were used for the search: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The primary research[3] showed a significant increase in the amount of literature involving ESL from upper secondary education after 2010. The Scopus database offered 6,953 results before 2010 (1938–2009) and 9,662 texts published after 2010; Google Scholar found 21,900 documents written before 2010 (1938–2009) and 18,200 results from 2010−2020. The search was therefore narrowed by a combination of keywords representing the studied phenomenon (*dropout typology*; *early school leaving typology*). All types of documents (articles, conference papers, reviews, and book chapters) were included in the systematic mapping of texts that was conducted in June 2021, without limiting the time span. Scopus[4] found 51 documents, WoS[5] 19 results, and Google Scholar[6] 94 texts corresponding to this combination.

1.2 Sorting and selection

The documents were further sorted. By eliminating duplicates, the selection was narrowed to 73 items. After reading the abstracts and conclusions, papers not meeting the objectives of this particular review study (those whose topic was an ESL typology) were discarded. This filtering identified 11 relevant publications from peer-reviewed journals. After obtaining full versions of the texts (nine articles were obtained directly from the databases and two texts were provided by their authors on request via the ResearchGate social network), one Spanish-language article (Julià Cano, 2018) was discarded due to language unavailability. The subject of this review study is thus ten articles

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[3]   In the primary research, the keywords "dropout" OR "early school leaving" AND "secondary education" OR "high school" were used.

[4]   The search was defined by the operators: ALL ("dropout typology" OR "early school leaving typology" AND "secondary education" OR "high school").

[5]   The search was defined by the combination of operators TS = (dropout typology OR early school leaving typology) and TS = (secondary education OR high school).

[6]   The search was defined by the operators: ("dropout typology" OR "early school leaving typology" + "secondary education" OR "high school").
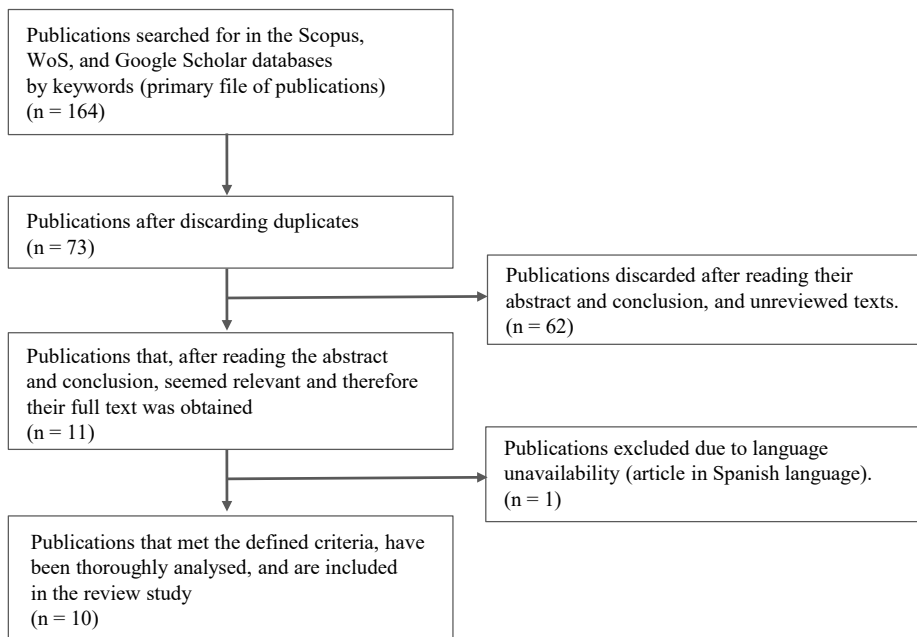
Figure 1
Resource search flowchart

in English, all published in peer-reviewed journals. The oldest analyzed text is from 2000, the latest typological studies were published shortly before the start of our data collection, i.e. in the first half of 2021. The procedure of sorting publications (according to Mareš, 2013, p. 442) is shown in Figure 1.

1.3 Analytical process

The goal of the analysis of selected empirical studies was to find answers to the following questions: (1) What research methods are used in creating ESL typologies? (2) What is the research sample? (3) What theoretical concepts are the proposed typologies based on (is the typology a follow-up to something)? (4) What analytical categories are used to construct the typologies? (5) Which categories (types) of ESL do the typologies identify? The main characteristics of the analyzed texts are summarized in Table 1; partial findings are presented below.

2 Studies of typologies of early school leaving

2.1 Research methods and research sample

Six of the ten studied texts come from the North American region. These are quantitative studies processing data from large, often national, databases (Bowers & Sprott, 2012a, 2012b; Fortin et al., 2006; Janosz et al., 2000; McDermott et al., 2017, 2018). In terms of the methods used in the quantitative research aimed at creating typologies, multidimensional analyses (growth mixture modelling; latent class analysis) dominated; in one case the "turning points" are identified by correlation analysis (McDermott et al., 2018). A mixed design, namely the combination of a questionnaire survey and follow-up semi-structured interviews, was chosen by Israeli researchers (Etzion & Romi, 2015). The review shows that qualitative ESL studies have appeared to a greater extent only in recent years, and in the European region, in Austria, Finland, and Croatia (Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020; Ogresta et al., 2021; Pikkarainen et al., 2021). According to Hunt (2009), qualitative studies can provide a more holistic and deeper insight into students' own perspectives on and interpretations of their experiences connected with ESL. To achieve this, researchers use one of the types of qualitative interviews. The first two of the three analyzed qualitative studies tried to address the research issues regardless of respondent ethnicity and background (Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020; Ogresta et al., 2021), in the most recent of the analyzed studies, the researchers focused on a specific group of Finnish residents, predominantly Romany prisoners (Pikkarainen et al., 2021).

Table 1
Description of the main characteristics of the analyzed texts (country; sample; theoretical underlying concept; objectives)

Author and year of publication	Country	Sample (Number; Age; Other characteristics)	Theoretical underlying concept	Objectives
Janosz et al. (2000)	Canada	467 early school leavers selected from respondents in longitudinal studies: (a) of delinquency of Canadian high school students in 1974 ($n = 166$) (b) of psychosocial adaptation of Canadian children from families with moderate and low SES levels from 1985 ($n = 301$)	–	(1) To build empirically a typology of early school leavers based on the characteristics of individual school experience (2) To test the reliability of the typology by replicating the classification on two different longitudinal samples. (3) To test the predictive validity of the typology.
Fortin et al. (2006)	Canada	810 Canadian students at the start of high school (12–13 years old) of whom 235 students at risk of ESL were identified using the Decision questionnaire (Quirouette, 1988), these were then studied using a combination of a questionnaire, analysis of school documents, and teacher evaluations.	–	(1) To identify subgroups of students who are at risk of dropping out of high school at its start. (2) To compare different subgroups of students at risk with students who are not at risk of leaving school early. (3) To test the validity of the typology.
Bowers and Sprott (2012a)	USA	5,400 students from the dataset *Education Longitudinal Study 2002* identified on the basis of their grades	–	(1) To assess the extent to which different ESL typologies were present in the national dataset. (2) To estimate the effects of known variables for ESL on each of the subgroups.

Bowers and Sprott (2012b)	USA	1,470 early school leavers selected from a dataset of 15,400 students from 750 high schools in the US	—	(1) To identify ESL types using a nationally (US) representative data set. (2) To describe the specific characteristics that identify the types of ESL. (3) To compare the reasons given by the students as reasons for leaving school early (2 years later) with different types of ESL.
Etzion and Romi (2015)	Israel	282 subjects ages 12–18 years old from institutions for youth at risk; control (contrast) group of 217 adolescents	—	(1) To classify youth at risk into relatively homogeneous groups according to a complete set of personality and behavioral variables.
McDermott et al. (2017)	USA	1,942 early school leavers ages 18–25, 971 women, 971 men; deliberate overestimation of women with respect to the planned analysis[7]	Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), Push/pull perspective (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011)	(1) To study the typologies of push/pull and protective factors that were present in high school students at risk of ESL. (2) To verify the extent to which these factors predict an early school leaver's return to school in early adulthood.
McDermott et al. (2018)	USA	1,047 early school leavers, ages 18–25 years old, from an online panel of a research agency; deliberate overestimation of women with respect to the planned analysis	Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), Push/pull perspective (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011), Integrative stress process (life course theory of drop out) (Dupéré et al., 2015)	(1) To find which turning points for ESL identify an early school leaver. (2) To state whether there are any differences in ESL's turning points with respect to the profile of their past experience.

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[7] If the data was collected on a proportional basis, the sample would have included too few women to conduct an extensive data analysis by different subgroups.

Study	Country	Sample	Theoretical concept	Objectives
Nairz-Wirth and Gitschthaler (2020)	Austria	25 early school leavers, 16–25 years old, 9 female, 16 male	Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 1984)	(1) To create a typology of ESL
Ogresta et al. (2021)	Croatia	20 early school leavers, 16–21 years old, 7 female, 13 male	Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), Integrative stress process (life course theory of drop out) (Dupéré et al., 2015)	(1) To detect the causes of ESL in Croatia. (2) To formalize these causes into an ESL typology for the Croatian context.
Pikkarainen et al. (2021)	Finland	11 early school leavers, 5 female, 6 male, (at the time of the research, the respondents were in prison)	Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2020)	(1) To find which life events, circumstances, and personal experiences early school leavers associate with ESL. (2) To identify the paths leading to ESL in the early school leavers' communications.

2.2 Underlying theoretical concepts

When explaining the causes and the course of ESL, the authors of the analyzed studies used the following theoretical concepts: ecological systems theory; push/pull perspective; integrative stress process (life course theory of drop out); concepts of habitus and capital; and self-determination theory. These theories, which will be described in more detail in the following paragraphs, can be distinguished with respect to whether the dropout is observed in the context of the long-term perspective of the student's career, or whether it is treated more as a current isolated consequence of life changes. Most often researchers view the phenomenon by combining both perspectives (long-term and current).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory allows researchers to study the role of parents, schools, teachers and peers in the process of making the decision to leave school early. The long-term career perspective emphasizes that a dropout should be perceived as the consequence of a sequence of events, not as the impact of a single event or a student's characteristics (McDermott et al., 2017). The multifactorial nature of the phenomenon stems from personal, family, and school contexts in which the factors do not act in isolation but intertwine within the numerous ecologies of an individual's life. At the same time, researchers take

into consideration those contexts that are most directly related to dropout (Ogresta et al., 2021). In combination with the push/pull perspective, the ecological model is a convenient starting point for a systematic examination of the effects of individual factors in different contexts (McDermott et al., 2018). Push/pull theories emphasize that students are discouraged from further studies especially by school-related factors (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011).

The integrative stress process (the life course theory of dropout) (Dupéré et al., 2015) explains dropout as a consequence of the coalescing of several events triggering the process of leaving school. This can be, for example, the chronic absence of students with long-term illnesses or mental health problems (Dupéré et al., 2015; Fortin et al., 2006) or a type of social infection when close friends leave school (Dupéré et al., 2021). This configuration of stressors can include both immediate factors and factors that may not appear serious but that persist throughout life and can make a student more at risk of failing at school (Dupéré et al., 2021).

Typologies based on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital emphasize the relationship paradigm: Habitus (a set of dispositions) is a relationship concept internally connected with the capital that an early school leaver has. The mechanism of completing or not completing school is thus explained by the "inheritance" of success or failure that an individual achieves in education. The intergenerational transfer of educational achievement remains an important factor in ESL, especially in students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020).

In self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2020), ESL is understood as the search for one's own self-determination, i.e. as a way of fulfilling needs that were not met in education. Early school leavers therefore seek to fulfil their needs through alternative sources and leave the school that frustrated them for an environment where they can better meet their needs (Pikkarainen et al., 2021).

Table 2
Description of the main characteristics of the analyzed texts (data processing; analytic categories; results)

	Data processing (Data collection tool; Analytic method)	**Analytic categories (Variables)**	**Results (Created ESL typology)**
Janosz et al. (2000)	Secondary analysis of ESL data from longitudinal research studies	3 axes of school characteristics (low–high): (a) Behavioral maladjustment; (b) Commitment; (c) (Study) achievement.	(a) Quiet; (b) Disengaged; (c) Low-achiever; (d) Maladjusted.
Fortin et al. (2006)	Combination of questionnaires; Cluster analysis	Three contexts associated with school dropout risk: (a) Personal context (poor academic performance, inappropriate behavior, lack of social skills and presence of depression); (b) Family context (quality of the family climate measured by the social and environmental characteristics of the family); (a) School context (teachers' attitudes and the classroom social climate).	(a) Anti-social covert behavior type; (b) Uninterested in school type; (c) School and social adjustment difficulties; (d) Depressive type.
Bowers and Sprott (2012a)	Secondary analysis of data of a longitu-dinal study from 2002 (NCES, n.d.); Growth mixture modelling	(a) Grades; (b) Origin and demographic characteristics of students and schools; (c) Students' behavior; (d) Variable structures of the school.	(a) Mid-decreasing; (b) Low-increasing.[8]
Bowers and Sprott (2012b)	Secondary analysis of data of a longitu-dinal study from 2002 (NCES, n.d.); Latent class analysis	(a) Dichotomically scaled variables (quality of teaching, negative feelings, safety/fight, fairness, fondness for school); (b) Continuously scaled variables (results of standardized tests, grades, absence from school, difficulties at school, etc.); (c) Demographic data (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.).	(a) Quiet; (b) Jaded; (c) Involved.

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[8]   The authors created a typology of study paths for all US high school students from the Education Longitudinal Study 2002 dataset. From the sample of 5,400 respondents, the authors identified, in addition to two types of ESL (mid-decreasing; low-increasing), two categories of students who successfully completed their studies (mid-achieving; high-achieving). However, in light of the topic of this review study, these groups are no*t further mentioned in the text.*

Etzion and Romi (2015)	Questionnaire; Semi-structured interview	(a) Emotional adjustment; (b) Behavioral adjustment; (c) Social adjustment; (d) Personal adjustment; (e) Life satisfaction; (f) Deviant behaviors; (g) Suspensions from school.	(a) Suspended; (b) Sociabilists; (c) Alienated; (d) Loners.
McDermott et al. (2017)	Questionnaire; Latent class analysis	(a) Protective factors (protective factors of the school, family, peers, and individuals); (b) Push/pull factors.	(a) Quiet (presence of protective factors and absence of push/pull factors); (b) High adversity (adversity of circumstances, presence of protective factors and a number of push/pull factors); (c) Instability (presence of instability in factors related to social relationships and school or housing).
McDermott et al. (2018)	Questionnaire (online); Correlation analysis of identified turning points and profiles of experience from previous research (McDermott et al., 2017)	Seven categories of turning points: (a) Mobility, (b) Family; (c) Peers; (d) School engagement and environment; (e) Health; (f) Crime; (g) Multiple categories.	(a) Quiet; (b) High adversity; (c) Instability.
Nairz-Wirth and Gitschthaler (2020)	Narrative (biographic) interview; Habitus type generation method (Bremer & Teiwes-Kügler, 2010)	Resources available to the respondents: (a) Subjective perspective ESL; (b) Economic resources; (c) Cultural resources; (d) Social resources.	(a) Ambitious; (b) Status-oriented; (c) Non-conformist; (d) Disoriented; (e) Resigned; (f) Escapist; (g) Caring.
Ogresta et al. (2021)	Semi-structured interview; Qualitative content analysis; Cluster analysis	–	(a) Poor academic achievers; (b) Quiet; (c) Maladjusted; (d) Stressed.
Pikkarainen et al. (2021)	Narrative (biographic) interview	Three basic psychological needs according to self-determination theory (SDT): (a) Competence; (b) Relatedness; (c) Autonomy.	(a) Withdrawing; (b) Struggling; (c) Carrying burdens.

2.3 Types of early school leaving

If a typology is to be clinically useful, it must maximize the differences between the groups and minimize the intragroup differences (Janosz et al., 2000). A strategy that is suitable for grouping the overlapping types identified in the studies into categories is their classification according to the main characteristics of ESL and subsequent grouping according to the mutual correspondence of these features. Across the studies, five sufficiently significant, repetitive, and distinguishable group characteristics were found from which five ESL categories were derived. These are presented in Table 2 and described in more detail below. The designation of the groups is based on the original research by Janosz et al. (2000).

Table 3

Correspondence of ESL types in the studies

	Quiet (causes that are hard to identify)	Disengaged (disinterest in school, low school engagement)	Maladjusted (problems with behavior)	Low-achiever (academic difficulties)	Disadvantaged (unfavorable life situation, significant social and health difficulties)
Janosz et al. (2000)	Quiet	Disengaged	Maladjusted	Low-achiever	–
Fortin et al. (2006)	Uninterested in school type	–	School and social adjustment difficulties type; Antisocial covert behavior type	–	Depressive type
Bowers and Sprott (2012a)	Mid-decreasing	–	Low-increasing	–	–
Bowers and Sprott (2012b)	Quiet; Involved	Jaded	–	–	–
Etzion and Romi (2015)	Suspended	Loners	Sociabilists; Alienated	–	–
McDermott et al. (2017)	Quiet	Instability	High adversity	–	–
McDermott et al. (2018)	Quiet	Instability	High adversity	–	–

Nairz-Wirth and Gitschthaler (2020)	–	Status-oriented; Disoriented; Escapist	Non-conformist	–	Ambitious; Caring; Resigned
Ogresta et al. (2021)	Quiet	–	Maladjusted	Poor academic achievers	Stressed
Pikkarainen et al. (2021)	–	Withdrawing	–	–	Carrying burdens; Struggling

Quiet. The quiet types show only a few problems on the outside; their school performance is around average. They have no behavioral problems and go unnoticed until they decide to leave school (Bowers & Sprott, 2012b; Fortin et al., 2006; Janosz et al., 2000; Ogresta et al., 2021). This is worrying as there seem to be very few indicators that would explain the circumstances leading to the decision to leave school. According to Bowers and Sprott (2012a), the dropout of these students is not primarily caused by difficulties at school but by underestimating the social aspects of school, resulting in weak social ties to the school community. This group of students do not build sufficient *social networks* at school, which is a condition for getting *social support* (Kebza, 2005). In case of difficulties, they do not find enough support at school (Bowers & Sprott, 2012a; Ogresta et al., 2021). These students are prone to rapid declines in performance as a consequence of external factors (Fortin et al., 2006; Janosz et al., 2000) and gradual breaking away from school (Bowers & Sprott, 2012a). In comparison to other types of ESL, the quiet types share the most characteristics with successful graduates. In contrast to the other types of early school leavers, however, they show a slightly higher level of depressiveness (McDermott et al., 2018; Ogresta et al., 2021) and more often declare experiencing boredom in lessons (Fortin et al., 2006; McDermott et al., 2018). The quiet types are the most numerous group in all studies: one third (Fortin et al., 2006; Janosz et al., 2000) to one half (Bowers & Sprott, 2012b; McDermott et al., 2017) of respondents.

Disengaged. This type of ESL reflects students who are indifferent to the educational process. These students are "expected" to leave school. They do not like school, have difficulty getting along with teachers and other students, find lessons uninteresting, see little value in education, and show high absenteeism (Bowers & Sprott, 2012b; Janosz et al., 2000). According to US researchers (McDermott et al., 2017, 2018), some at-risk students adopt the declared indifference to school from their parents and share this attitude

with the family, as a result of which the school becomes a rather marginal institution of vague importance to them. Insufficient identification with the school can also be caused by frequent moving or by low parental interest in their children and their education. However, lower school engagement may not always result in school failure. While Bowers and Sprott (2012b) described the grades of these students as significantly below average, according to Janosz et al. (2000) they achieve slightly above-average. Therefore, the reason for school dropout may not primarily be the negative inner attitude of the actor towards education. Leaving school can also be a secondary consequence of rejection by the school and classmates that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds usually face. For these students, leaving school can be an effort to break free from a hostile environment (Pikkarainen et al., 2021).

Maladjusted. The maladjusted share a low level of school commitment with the group of disengaged. However, they differ from them in their delinquent behavior (Fortin et al., 2006; Janosz et al., 2000), which they manifest at school (e.g., conflicts with teachers and classmates, non-compliance with school rules, bullying) or outside of it (e.g., vandalism, theft, petty crime). Their school results are usually below average, they have difficulties at the academic, behavioral, and motivational levels (Janosz et al., 2000). In many cases, they have to repeat the year due to excessive absenteeism that is usually connected with poor school results, (McDermott et al., 2017). The causes of ESL of this group are usually internal (Ogresta et al., 2021), and therefore it is difficult to reverse the process of expulsion from school or leaving school early by interventions. McDermott et al. (2017) characterized this group as adolescents who face "high adversity," especially (their own) delinquent behavior, foster care, or homelessness. McDermott et al. (2017) claimed that this group of early school leavers have the highest chance of returning to school and completing their education if given sufficient support.[9] However, in McDermott's research, only 3.28% of respondents[10] fell into this type; this is an isolated research finding.

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[9]   According to the analysis by McDermott et al. (2017), 66.6% of students included in the *high adversity* type completed secondary school (14.3% of them also completed a university degree).

[10]   These were 63 participants of the 1,942 involved early school leavers.

Low achievers. A general characteristic of this group of early school leavers is the inability to meet the academic requirements of the school, resulting in a lack of success in education (Janosz et al., 2000). These students state that poor school results are the reason for leaving school early. Study failure is a combination of adverse internal and external circumstances. As internal causes, these early school leavers speak of their lack of effort and lack of motivation resulting in absenteeism and poor school results. As negative external factors, they often refer to low parental interest in their education or logistical difficulties in commuting to school (Ogresta et al., 2021). Although only a few typologies treat this group as a separate type, quantitative analyses of data (Bowers & Sprott 2012a; McDermott et al., 2018) show that repeating a year (mainly due to poor school performance) is a relatively accurate predictor of ESL.

Disadvantaged. During their school attendance, these students face highly stressful life events that become the key turning points in their school career. These events include serious mental and health problems (Fortin et al., 2006), taking care of a relative, need to start working due to loss of family support (Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020), and discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity (Pikkarainen et al., 2021). Although this group consists of students with varying degrees of school commitment, their achievements and behavior do not generally deviate from the average (Fortin et al., 2006) until a significant adverse event leading to negative changes (loss of interest in school, decline in school performance, repeating a year, behavioral problems, alcohol or drug abuse, and feelings of helplessness) occurs in their lives, triggering the process of ESL (Ogresta et al., 2021). According to Austrian researchers (Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020), in their interviews these young people declare positive attitudes toward education and try to compensate for their low social capital by returning to the education system later or by establishing relationships with people with high academic ambitions.

3 Summary and discussion

The presented review study analyzed texts from 2000 to 2021. The existing literature shows that interest in the specific topic of ESL has been growing in recent years. According to some authors, the reason for this trend may be the growing awareness that an appropriate typology sufficiently clarifying the reasons for and processes of ESL is a relevant starting point for intervention programs (Etzion & Romi, 2015; Janosz et al., 2000). The aim of this paper was therefore to systematically map the current studies of ESL typologies and to create an overview of the research findings. The original plan, however,

was not easy to accomplish. The main and substantial limitation of the work is the low number of analyzed texts. There are many studies (e.g., Bowers et al., 2012; De Witte et al., 2013; Lamb et al., 2011) and government reports (Eurostat, 2021) that describe aspects and predictors of school dropout/ESL/ELET, but only a few studies in which authors have created ESL typologies. One reason could be that the topic is under-researched. Another possible reason could be that the search method did not reveal all the existing studies. The articles analyzed in this review mainly refer to the same previous typological studies that are evaluated in this paper (especially the article by Janosz et al., 2000). The search for relevant texts showed their narrow geographical scope. Almost all the studies came from the North American and European regions, although the dropout phenomenon (especially the research of its predictors) is of scientific interest in other parts of the world as well (e.g., Adelman et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2015). The question therefore remains whether ESL typology research is such a specific topic that it has not yet received global attention, or whether it is difficult to find quality English-language studies from non-Euro-American regions.

The results of the review study show that early school leavers are a heterogeneous group. The oldest reviewed study (Janosz et al., 2000) identified four types of ESL based on an analysis of the school characteristics of two independent groups of respondents. This typology was based on three school axes: behavioral maladjustment, commitment, and (academic) achievement. Later studies (Bowers et al., 2012; Fortin et al., 2006) broadened this view and sought an explanation for ESL in the combination of factors related to young people's learning experiences, emotional and mental well-being, behavior and, in some cases, family background (McDermott et al., 2017, 2018; Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020; Ogresta et al., 2021). They showed that not all students who drop out of school had low academic performances.

Several factors significantly influencing the dropout process were identified: school results, school commitment, problematic behavior, mental health, and family support. However, there is no consensus among researchers as to whether internal (e.g., personal and social) or external factors (e.g., environment) give more accurate predictions. Janosz et al. (2000) considered internal factors to be crucial in identifying at-risk students; Bowers and Sprott (2012a), on the other hand, showed in a secondary analysis of data from 5,400 American high school students that ESL can be more accurately predicted from external factors, such as repeating a year, or grades and teacher assessment. Although these variables may predict academic failure for some types of ESL (Bowers & Sprott 2012a; McDermott et al., 2018), the dropout process appears to be a complex phenomenon that arises from a combination of multiple factors (Dupéré et al., 2015). These can "affect different students in different ways, or even affect the same student at different times in different

ways" (Tesseneer, 1958, p. 143) often linked to socioeconomic status (Bitsakos, 2021; Van Praag et al., 2020). These conclusions suggest that factors from different contexts, affecting students during their adolescence (e.g., home environment, school, and peer and social relationships), should be considered when creating typologies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is related to another limitation of this work – the designation of the groups is based on the original research by Janosz et al. (2000). The question is the extent to which the creation of typologies could reinforce the stereotyping of their members. Some papers have shown that stigmatizing labels like *low-qualified* or *failed* are used in both educational practices and policies (De Witte et al., 2013; Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020). Classifications of the types could be therefore associated with attaching labels to early school leavers and to their stigmatization (De Witte et al., 2013; Lamb et al., 2011).

An interesting finding is the different perceptions of the dropout process by researchers and the actors themselves. While researchers (especially the authors of quantitative studies) tend to focus on respondents' long-term adverse life circumstances and view the dropout as a long-term process of alienation from school (McDermott et al., 2018), students describing their school leaving experience look for explanations in short-term "critical" events and often perceive their dropout as the result of a sudden adverse change in their lives – a turning point (Dupéré et al., 2015).

At the same time, the review study shows that there is not currently sufficient knowledge to convincingly explain the circumstances leading to ESL of individuals from the most numerous and most frequently identified type of ESL: the quiet dropout. These students share many characteristics with successful graduates and their study paths do not differ significantly from those of ordinary students. Although some studies show that these individuals are more prone to psychological problems (McDermott et al., 2018; Ogresta et al., 2021) and have difficulty managing the negative effects of the environment (Fortin, et al., 2006; Janosz, et al., 2000), the exact causes and mechanisms of their school leaving are unknown. Thus, it seems that studies focusing on the relationship between mental health and the risk of ESL could be a promising research direction (Fortin et al. 2006; Ogresta et al., 2021).

Acknowledgements

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