

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS AS A DETERMINANT OF CHILDREN'S SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

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Abstract: One of the determining factors of a child's success in school is the parents' attitude towards it, and the level of parents' expectations from their child. The study explores the parent's attitudes toward a child's success in school and their expectations from them. The present study is based on reviewing the relevant literature on the topic and synthesising the key findings. The results of the study show that parents' attitudes and expectations towards the school success are determined by their education level and the importance of education in the family. The findings indicate that parents' positive attitudes towards education and the child are indicators of a child's success in school. Parents' higher expectations and aspirations were manifested in the highly educated families with higher socioeconomic status.

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Introduction

Students' academic results and their success in school have been a topic for research in educational institutions, social sciences, and among the general public for a long. The students' success and their satisfaction level in school have an impact on various areas of child development and also at the later stages of their life.

Regarding success in school, parents are demanding and have different expectations from their children. Their expectations for the academic performance of the child are influenced by several factors, e.g. parents schooling experience, the importance of education in the family values, their educational aspirations, and education level. Parental attitudes towards education shape their children's personality, their relationship to the school and school duties, and their attitude towards the authorities; all this is reflected in their academic performance.

Success in school as the subject of research

Success in school is a multi-faceted phenomenon. It is conditioned by a combination of internal, external, biopsychological, and sociocultural factors. It is related to the students' academic performance as well as to the performance requirements of the school. Therefore, it is not only conditioned biologically, but the social and cultural context in which the education takes place is equally important.

The topic of success in school has currently been the subject of many studies in Slovakia and abroad (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Ďuričková, 1999; Foglová & Tomšík, 2018; Hvozdík, 2017; Mareš, 1999; Matějček, 2000; Moed et al., 2016; Szobiová and Ďurčová, 2012).

The term success in school is used in the context of "consistently achieving a certain level of performance" (Ďuričková, 1999), "if the pupil meets the requirements of school, i.e., content and performance standards for a particular primary school year" (Mayerová, 2014). It is a complex phenomenon that is the result of several determinants. The family environment, which is the basis for a child's learning, has a key impact on the determinants influencing the pupils' school success (Čáp & Mareš, 2001; Havlík & Kořa, 2002; Hvozdík, 2017; Mareš, 2013; Mayerová, 2014; Szobiová & Ďurčová, 2012). Concerning the family environment, several factors can be identified as influencing the child's success in school, such as the parent's relationship with the school (Mertin, 2004; Sinha, 2018; Staníková, 2021), parents' level of education (Erola et al., 2016; Kaščák & Betáková, 2014), socioeconomic status of the family (Bomba, Zemančíková, 2011; Moždzyńska, 2011; Spera, 2005, In Puhrová, 2018;) parents' attitude towards education (Assari, 2018, Zhang et al. 2020; Žúborová, 2011), parents' attitudes towards child's success in school (Andersson et al., 2021; Bogunović & Polovina, 2007) and parents' expectations of the child's success in school (Almroth et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2018). Among all the identified factors, special attention will be paid to parental attitudes and expectations toward the child's success in school.

Parental attitudes towards the child's success in school

Nolen-Hoeksema et al. (2012) state that "the attitude expresses our feelings, which are closely linked to cognitive functions." According to the authors, the research on attitudes is important for two reasons.

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The first reason is that the attitudes reflect our preferences, beliefs, opinions and specify the degree of stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination. The second reason is related to the fact that attitude is a predictor of our routine behaviour. Similarly, Kollárik (1993) presents two approaches toward attitude: the ability to react quickly and a psychological focus on the stimuli of the environment. According to Rosinský (2006), the attitude "presents the individual's standpoint on a certain fact and reflects the individual's identity."

As a part of an individual's personality structure, attitudes are reflected in the performance of various social roles including the parental role. As Ziemská (1980) states, the parental attitude manifests as an emotional relationship between a parent and a child. The most important part of parental attitude is the emotional bonding between the parent and the child, which determines the direction and character of parents' thinking. According to Potočárová (2013), parental attitudes are deeply rooted in their past. However, some parents are unaware that their experiences with their parents shaped their attitude.

Parental attitudes towards the child's success in school success are largely determined by their own experience with their school, family value orientation, and educational aspirations (Slezáková & Tírpáková, 2006) as well as by institutional factors, i.e., ideas and ideals of the social institutions followed by the family like school, church, politics state, and culture (Čerešňíková, 2006). Based on the approaches discussed above, Matoušek (2003) states that the parents' attitude towards the child's success in school is also shaped by the desire to achieve supremacy, and thus by idealising the academic achievement as a feeling that "my child is the best". The importance the parents attach to education is also one of the determining factors, which often depends on their level of education (Buis, 2013; Čáp, 1999; Ludeke et al., 2021; Lukáč, 2015) as well as on their profession (Havlík & Kořa, 2002). As Mareš (1999) stated, "the essential determinant of parental attitudes is the standard of living of the family".

Research findings (Bogunović & Polovina, 2007; Carrazza, 2021; Mohr-Schroeder et al., 2017) focused on a child's relationship to education confirm that the parents' attitude towards education is an important determinant of success in school. Furthermore, the research carried out by Žúborová (2011) shows that positive attitude of parents towards the child is an indicator of success in school success, as it makes the child emotionally balanced and independent.

According to Moravík (2017), parental attitudes towards the child's success in school also influence the child's effort to succeed. If success in school is not significant for parents, it is likely that the child will lack the basic motivation, i.e., the need for recognition. Vágnerová (2000) points out that the parents' negative attitude towards education creates undesirable attitudes and beliefs in the child, such as disrespect for school, lack of motivation for school activities, and school duties. Learning is not valued by the child, and school becomes unnecessary. As Žúborová (2011) states, such a parental attitude can ultimately cause academic failure. According to Čerešňíková (2006), parents' negative attitudes may also be a result of their fears. The parents may have unpleasant schooling experiences without any experience of success in school. They may fear that the same thing may happen to their child.

Parents strongly desire for the success of their child in school, which has a significant impact on parental attitudes towards the child and his/her education. According to Yang and Shin (2008), the child's success in institutional education is understood as the personal progress of parents. As Opravilová (2016) points out, it is important to realise that parental attitudes are reflected in their children's attitudes (e.g. attitudes towards education, teacher, and school) through specific real-life situations like How do parents talk about school at home, what value do they attach to education, what academic results do they expect from their child, and their personal schooling experience etc. The child's attitude towards the school environment can also be influenced by parents' academic performance, like they may attend a course or enhance their education with some educational opportunities. Parents' perception of the need for education shapes the child's attitude towards the school and education through expectations and conditions imposed on the child.

Parental expectations and success in school of the child

Every parent has certain expectations from their child, translated into their upbringing style and level of demands on the child. Sollars (2021) states that parents' expectations determine children's performance, from primary education to further studies. According to Almroth et al. (2019), it is appropriate if the expectation of parents and children are same based on the mutual communication. According to the study, it is important to use parental expectations with parental warmth and understanding because only

then can a positive effect be achieved. On the other hand, a parent-child discrepancy in expectations can adversely impact the child's mental health.

Several factors influence parental expectations of their child's academic success in school. According to Slezáková and Tirpáková (2006), these factors include parents' education and motivation level to encourage their child. Parents' belief that the child has inherited all genetic traits of their parents and grandparents is an additional determining factor (Matějček, 2000). Other determinants of parental expectations include parents' opinions towards school function (Gavora, 2010), their employment status, income, and family lifestyle (Anýžová, In Hamplová and Katrňák, 2018). Yamamoto and Holloway (2010), as well as Sinha (2018) rank the educational qualification of the parents among the important determinants of parental expectations.

According to Mortimer and Lee (2021), the degree of expectations is influenced by intergenerational transmission. For example, if both grandparents attended university, in that case, the success can be expected to be passed on to future generations, associated with higher expectations from the child's education within the wider family environment.

The sibling position also influences the demanding expectations of parents from their child's education. Parents set different expectations from their first-born child, who is considered a more sensible and responsible child, and the academic performance of the oldest child sets the standards for academic performance in the family (Matoušek, 2003; Slezáková & Tirpáková, 2006). Fergusson et al. (2006) also attach the importance to birth order of the child, while the probability of obtaining higher education is attributed to the first-born children for whom higher expectations are set. According to Mertin (2004), parental expectations of the child's education also depend on the number of children in the family. The author states that parents with a single child have higher educational expectations from their child.

The gender of the child is also a determinant of the parents' educational expectations. As stated by several authors (Kurincová, 2009; Opravilová, 2016; Sinha, 2018), boys are expected to have poor academic performance than girls; school failure is tolerated more among boys. Glick and Sahn (2000) and Koshy et al. (2017) analysed differentiated expectations of mothers and fathers. Mothers tend to have higher educational expectations, especially from their daughters. By doing this, the mother is trying to secure her daughter's future with the prospect of a better job in the labour market, which can be achieved especially with a university degree.

Parental expectations are also influenced by the family's socioeconomic status indicating a family's position in the society. Higher demands on the child's education are reflected in the effort to provide all the means to achieve success in school, e.g., by providing several books and educational resources to the child at home (Liu et al., 2018). In the context of the child's academic results, Guo et al. (2018) found that high parental expectations correlate with the parent's education and income levels.

Butler and Le (2018) point out that parents with high socioeconomic status tend to have higher expectations from their child's education, especially in English, than parents with lower socioeconomic status. However, parents' high expectations are also exist in families with lower socioeconomic status. The result is in line with the findings of Chen and Chou (2020) and Poonam (2021), according to which low-income families have set high expectations for the child's academic results to enhance bright career opportunities for the child in the future. Strataki and Petrogiannis (2021) found high educational expectations of Greek Romani mothers from their children because level of education is considered as the foundation for a better future.

Factors like family's social status, parents schooling experience, and the family size determine parental expectations about their child's success in school. These determinants set the level of parental expectations ranging from excessively high to very low.

Kraus (2001) points out the high expectations of parents. According to the author, many parents desire for "high marks". A lot of them try to fulfill their dreams at the expense of the child's ambitions. The pressure of the society also conditions the high parental expectations regarding their child's education. A great emphasis is put on success, which promises a guarantee for a good life by securing good employment opportunities. Parents are under pressure and demand good academic performance from their children and pay attention to their education. Otherwise, the children will not find appropriate employment and "they will not live a good life". The school is perceived as the key to a good future. Keller and Tvrđý (2008) pointed out that as early as the 1950s, academic success was seen as the key to

the successful entry into society. An attractive job position came hand in hand with education, which ensured a stable and quality income. At present, however, a university degree cannot guarantee a better job position for a person. Nor can it be said that only second-rate opportunities await for people without education. Obtaining a diploma has become a trend in society. It is believed that only the highest level of education can protect a person from social degradation.

The present is full of ambiguity about a child's future. Čerešňíková (2006) draws attention to the fact that parents often perceive good academic results as a norm in society, representing an effort to meet the social requirements of children's education as a prerequisite to survive in the society and/or the labour market. Helus (2004) emphasises that parents impose their high aspirations on their children to compensate for their failures or unfulfilled goals.

Educated parents with a university degree have high parental expectations and aspirations (Keller & Tvrđý, 2008; Sak & Saková, 2007). This is supported by the research findings carried out by Kaščák and Betáková (2014) in the field of early childhood education. The results show that the difference in the education level of mothers impacts their approach to their children's education. Less educated mothers transfer the responsibility of their children on school as they are unable to support their child in doing homework and studying at home. Mothers with secondary education or university diploma present a positive attitude towards their children's education, which also determines the child's approach to fulfilling school responsibilities. According to Anýžová (In Hamplová & Katrňák, 2018), parents with higher level of education value success and power to a greater extent. The same hold for higher demands on their child's academic success. Sak and Saková (2007, In Sak et al.) state that a "higher level of education attained by one of the parents determines the social prestige of the family and the position in society, which may affect the level of parental expectations from their child's education." Hamplová (In Hamplová & Katrňák, 2018) adds that high parental expectations with university degree are determined by the job position and financial security of the family it guarantees.

However, parents' high expectations regarding academic results often negatively affect children's emotional experiences. Helus (2004) points out that high expectations, regardless of the child's abilities, can result in learned helplessness syndrome. The child feels that his/her school failure is a permanent and consistent state. The child is under constant pressure (Helus, 2015), gradually learns to hide his/her desires, and is afraid that if he/she does not meet the set expectations, he/she will lose the love of his/her parents forever (Helus, 2004; Matějček, 2000). As a result, the child often lacks motivation and puts no efforts into learning. In this way, hatred for the school environment is developed, and anxiety and depression mount (Medina, 2011). After failing to meet the parent's expectations, the child feels inferior or underconfident (Kopřiva et al., 2008; Ziemská, 1980).

However, Sollars (2021) states that high parental expectations do not always have a negative effect on the child. Their positive effect can be seen in the context of the child's actual potential. Huey (2018) found out that high parental expectations contribute to positive self-perception, i.e., the child believes in the expectations of parents and tries to improve constantly. According to Lindberg (2021), the most important prediction of academic success is determined by high parental expectations because they motivate the child, i.e. children strive to be successful and make their parents happy. However, these expectations should not be unrealistic. They have to be appropriate to the child's potential. It is important for parents to monitor the child's school development and adapt their demands according to the child's capabilities. High parental expectations may result in strengthened support and encouragement in school, which may positively influence a child's behaviour (Almroth et al., 2019).

Many negative impacts on the child are brought about by high parental expectations. On the other hand, too low parental expectations appear to be equally undesirable for the child's development. Thus, one side of the coin is represented by an ambitious upbringing, while the other side is an upbringing with low expectations for the education of children.

Many determinants are causing unrealistic educational aspirations of parents. As stated by Hascoët et al. (2021), one of the causes is the unfavourable socio-economic situation of the family. Slicker et al. (2021) found out that parents in the lowest income households (below the poverty line) and parents with a lower level of education (lower than university education) tend to have lower expectations from the child's education. Lower expectations are reflected in their participation in educational activities at home, which may negatively determine the child's academic results. Gale et al. (2021) reported that

parents might also have negative schooling experience. Therefore, they set low expectations of the child's academic success, e.g., parents have experienced racial inequalities in education and, therefore, lose hope in their children's abilities and chances.

In Roma families, the value of education is generally low, which is also related to the low level of expectations for the child's school success. Research in Slovakia points to the underused potential of children of Roma origin. According to Michálek and Veselovská (2016), education has the lowest value in the Roma community. Merhaut (2019) states that Roma families set lower expectations for girls' education, which is influenced by established Roma traditions, i.e., a woman is not intended to have a job and providing financial support for the family, but her role is to raise children and take care of the household. Educational practice, as well as many research findings (Hlebová, 2018; Luptáková, 2008; Rosinský, 2006) point to a low self-understanding of the school success of Roma pupils. The low self-image of a Roma pupil is related to low parental expectations because the child adapts to the requirements set for his/her school performance.

According to Mhaidat and Oudat (2021), reasonable expectations most favourably correlate with the child's school success as they become their driving force.

Conclusion

The present study on the influence of the family environment on the success of pupils at school is gaining new relevance in our society with noticeable social inequalities in the field of education. It has been proved that the academic results of students are significantly dependent on certain characteristics of the family. The impact of these determining characteristics is so strong that it results in different levels of academic performance among students. The family creates conditions for the child's emotional, mental, character, volitive, and cultural development and is reflected in a child's life, opinions, attitudes and personality traits. It sets the preconditions for the child's prospects of success or failure in school. The family environment also impacts the child's motivation to learn by creating suitable learning conditions and developing positive attitude towards schooling etc.

The quality of the family environment, however, it is difficult to measure, is an important determinant of successful schooling and foreshadows the shape of an individual's educational path. Eventually, the quality of the family environment defines the possibilities for a child's personality development.

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