

School Achievement of Primary Education Pupils in Parents' Reflection

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Abstract. In the school environment, pupils' achievement represents a specific result of their work at school. Nowadays, it is commonly expressed in terms of grades intended to indicate pupils' academic success. The main research instrument was a Focus Group based on active group interaction. The participants were parents of students of a younger school age ($n = 12$). The collected data were analysed by using the software *Ethnograph 6.0*. We displayed the research results through text tables which revealed each participant's statements, thus clearly summarising the research findings. The research results showed that the concept of school achievement represents the primary indicator of pupils' success. Parents perceive their children's behaviour and activity in class, or the fulfilment of school duties in the context of home preparation, as other indicators of school achievement. Parents' perception of their children's achievement is determined by the tendency of society and teachers to express pupils' achievement in 'numbers', i.e., grades, and to see them as criteria for school success. From the parents' point of view, school achievement is an indicator of a child's performance and is a strong predictor of their future, which explains why parents perceive achievement through this point of view.

Keywords: parents, school achievement, pupil of younger school age, focus group.

Pradinio ugdymo mokinių pasiekimai mokykloje: tėvų refleksija

Santrauka. Mokyklos aplinkoje mokinių pasiekimai atspindi tikslus jų darbo mokykloje rezultatus. Šiandien jie dažniausiai vertinami pažymiais, kuriais siekiama parodyti mokinių akademinę sėkmę. Pagrindinis šio tyrimo instrumentas buvo aktyvios grupinės sąveikos fokusinė grupė. Dalyviai buvo jaunesniojo mokyklinio amžiaus mokinių tėvai ($n = 12$). Surinkti duomenys analizuoti naudojant programinę įrangą „Ethnograph 6.0“. Tyrimo rezultatus pateikti tekstinėse lentelėse, jose atskleidžiami kiekvieno dalyvio teiginiai ir aiškiai apibendrinami tyrimo radiniai. Tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad pagrindinis mokinių sėkmės rodiklis yra jų pasiekimai. Kaip kitus mokyklinių pasiekimų rodiklius tėvai suvokia savo vaikų elgesį ir aktyvumą pamokose arba su pasiruošimu namuose susijusį mokyklinių pareigų vykdymą. Tėvų suvokimą apie vaikų pasiekimus lemia visuomenės ir mokytojų polinkis mokinių pasiekimus išreikšti „skaičiais“, t. y. pažymiais, ir juos laikyti mokyklinės sėkmės kriterijais. Tėvų požiūriu, mokymosi pasiekimai yra vaiko veiklos rodiklis ir stiprus jo ateitį prognozuojantis veiksnys, ir tai paaiškina, kodėl tėvai vertina pasiekimus būtent iš šios perspektyvos.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: tėvai, mokymosi pasiekimai, jaunesniojo mokyklinio amžiaus mokinys, fokusinė grupė.

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Introduction

The issue of pupils' achievement and success is a long-standing topic in educational institutions and scientific circles, as well as an item deserving major social awareness. Pupils' school success, expressed in terms of their achievement, determines the experience of the childhood period. It determines pupils' satisfaction and influences their later phases of their life. As Jan Kellera and Lubor Tvrďý (2008) remind us, school success was the key to entering society as early as in the 1950s. According to Čechová et al. (2006), education and school success are general norms in our society that are highly valued. Čerešníková (2006) states that their acceptance (primarily by parents) is a manifestation of a particular social conformity and social expectations.

1. Pupil's School Achievement and its Determinants

We use the term 'school achievement' when it is school performance reflecting the knowledge, abilities, and skills of pupils, which tends to be expressed by teachers by classification, verbal assessment, or a combination of assessments (Dubayová, 2008; Průcha et al., 2013; Mayerová, 2014). It is commonly operationalised through grades, standardised test scores, or other forms of performance assessment reflecting pupils' mastery of the curriculum (Steinmayr et al., 2014).

As Gavora (2021) adds, school achievement expresses the degree of conformity of the pupil's performance with the established criteria. It classifies the pupil with marks that represent a substantial value concentrate. The school achievement reflects the pupil's overall effort, knowledge and skills, motivation, interest, diligence and discipline in institutional education. Pshenicyna and Lepinskich (2021) emphasise the close link between school achievement and pupil performance. According to the authors, the school performance of a pupil is the degree of mastery of knowledge, skills and abilities set by the general goals of education. It becomes the parents' and teachers' main evaluation criterion for the child's education. Duvalina and Karachun (2019, p. 38) write that school performance is "an indicator of a pupil's competence, as it reflects the success of mastering the curriculum, as well as the success of the child's adaptation to the conditions of school". According to Saikia and Saha (2025), academic achievement is not merely a measure of knowledge acquisition or exam results; it is a multidimensional construct encompassing a learner's cognitive growth, emotional resilience, social development, and the ability to apply knowledge meaningfully in real-life situations.

In the school environment, pupils' achievement is perceived as a specific result of their work. In the conditions of the Slovak Republic, following Article 55 of Act 245/2008 Coll. on Education (School Act), the evaluation of a pupil in the context of education is carried out according to the level of achievement by verbal evaluation, classification, or their combination. By formative assessment, the pupil's school achievement is evaluated verbally in the following grades: a) achieved excellent results; b) achieved good results; c) achieved satisfactory results; and d) achieved unsatisfactory results. More commonly, however, summative assessment is preferred, which is the pupil's overall assessment at

the end of the first and second semesters in the compulsory subjects, graded as follows: a) '1' – excellent, b) '2' – commendable, c) '3' – good, d) '4' – sufficient, and e) '5' – insufficient (grades in Slovak educational system).

A pupil's school achievement is a multifaceted phenomenon determined by various external and internal factors. International research similarly emphasises that academic achievement is influenced by a complex interaction of cognitive, motivational, family and school-related factors (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Wang & Degol, 2016; Konold et al., 2018).

This perspective corresponds with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory of human development, which emphasises that children's development and learning outcomes are shaped by the interaction between individual characteristics and multiple environmental systems, particularly the family and school contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Within the internal determinants, the child's school success is influenced by biological dispositions, i.e., health condition, child's abilities (Ďuričková, 1999), school maturity (Slezáková & Tirpáková, 2006; Bakieva & Grebneva, 2014; Helus, 2015), personal qualities of the child (setting life goals, perseverance, attitude to learning, responsibility, resistance to failure, self-confidence), performance qualities, such as the level of concentration, attention, thought processes, the pupil's distinct cognitive and learning style (Mayerova, 2014), activation of cognitive motives – motivation to learn, the desire to be successful (Pshenicyna & Lepinskich, 2021). According to Ďuričková (1999), the social or emotional maturity of the child appears to be an equally significant determinant, indicated by the willingness to cooperate, the need for fulfilment, prestige, and self-assertion. On the other hand, motivational immaturity (the child is intrinsically insufficiently motivated for school activities, while manifesting 'psychological unpreparedness' for schooling) or intellectual immaturity (the child is unable to understand and correctly fulfil the teacher's requirements) negatively affect school achievement (Duvalina & Karachun, 2019).

According to Čerešníková (2006), a similarly crucial determinant of a pupil's school activity is the satisfaction of physiological needs – such as food, sleep, and rest. Tired, sleep-deprived, and/or hungry pupils cannot concentrate on school work, get quickly exhausted, have a lower tolerance to stress, tend to be irritable, are more emotionally unstable, and are prone to negative evaluation (including of themselves).

At the beginning of schooling, a child's school readiness, characterised by attaining specific abilities and skills essential for school work, also significantly determines school achievement. A child's readiness for the role of a schoolchild is a multidimensional construct manifested in several domains. The child's readiness to learn, which reflects the child's developmental level and ability to cope with the demands of teaching, plays an important role. Cognitive abilities, language skills, level of graphomotor functions and regulation of attention, memory or emotions are essential determinants (Vágnerová & Lisá, 2021). According to Čechová (2006, p. 10), social readiness, which the author describes as "the ability to integrate into the classroom and at the same time to accept the role of a pupil", is also vital. School readiness, therefore, is an essential factor influ-

encing children's early academic success and later educational trajectories (Duncan et al., 2007).

Children's emotional maturity significantly determines their functioning in the school environment. Čechová (2006, p. 10) explains it as "the ability to survive in school without traumatising and significant emotional problems for several lessons (sudden and frequent mood swings, tearfulness, apathy, aggressiveness cause problematic adaptation to school)". A child's adaptation to the demands of school is not automatic; many adaptation difficulties may accompany this process. Based on many authors' works (Vágnerová, 2000; Kurincová & Slezáková, 2009), we outline the following categories of difficulties:

- arising from the family environment: different family values and norms of behaviour, different family lifestyles, inconsistency in upbringing and approach to the children, their learning, inadequate parental expectations. School is used as a punishing power – that is where they teach you how to behave;
- resulting from individual characteristics and experiences: barriers in language communication, level of cognitive processes, religious orientation – differences in the understanding of male and female roles, self-acceptance, relationship to oneself, to one's body, health condition;
- arising from the school environment: classroom relationships and the level of acceptance or tolerance.

A pupil's school achievement is also interfered with by external factors, i.e., factors related to the pupil's socio-cultural environment. Here, we mean the school environment, with its micro-environment (school plan, demands, teachers' action(s), school equipment, cooperation with parents), management of educational activities – differentiation of tasks, choice of methods and strategies, the number of pupils in the class, methods of motivation, evaluation and control (Ďuričková, 1999). The quality of school education, in the context of economic, didactic and social paradigms, also influences the pupil's school achievement. As Štefl (2018) points out, the quality of school education is constantly deteriorating, whether due to degree inflation, low teacher salaries, a decline in the perception of authority, the value decay of society in the context of corruption and demoralisation, over-liberalisation of schools and curriculum cancellations, the dishonesty of education in the media world, the politicisation of schools as a means to manipulate the population, the incompetence of ministers in charge of education, the constant reforms, the penetration of private schools and their autonomy, and the unpreparedness of pupils for future life in a dynamic world of progress.

Closely related to the child's entry into school is the process of adaptation, in which, according to many authors (Kurincová & Slezáková, 2009; Kaščák, 2009), the family environment plays a key role in helping the child cope with the new environment. In the complex of external determinants influencing a pupil's school achievement, the family environment has a crucial impact, which is the basis for any child's learning (Mareš, 2013; Mayerová, 2014; Hvozdič, 2017). International research similarly confirms that the family background and socioeconomic status represent important predictors of pupils' academic achievement. A meta-analysis by Sirin (2005) identified a significant re-

relationship between a family's socioeconomic status and students' academic outcomes, highlighting the role of parental education, occupation and economic resources. More recent research has reached similar conclusions. Liu et al. (2022) confirmed that the socioeconomic background remains an important factor associated with academic achievement across primary and secondary education. Their findings also suggest that the relationship between the socioeconomic status and academic achievement is relatively stable across different educational systems, and may even strengthen throughout the course of schooling, indicating the cumulative influence of family background on children's educational outcomes.

Within it, pupils' school achievement significantly depends on parents' educational attitudes (Žúborová, 2011) and the overall educational environment of the family – demographic, psychological, cultural and economic conditions, lifestyle, value orientation, upbringing models, the stimulus of conditions in interaction with educational action (Bakošová, 2008), the parents' relationship with the school (Mertin, 2004), the number of children in the family (Mertin, 2004; Čerešníková, 2006), the birth order of the child (Fergusson et al., 2006; Puhrová, 2018), the parents' education levels and the socioeconomic status of the family (Spera, 2005), the parents' social status, family cohesion, the number of siblings, the size of housing – where the family spends its time, and where the child learns (Tománek, 2007). Havlík and Kořa (2002) consider language barriers (the use of the mother tongue) as a determinant factor stemming from the home environment. Pshenicyna and Lepinskich (2021) emphasise that a child's academic success is also largely influenced by the family atmosphere. What happens in the family (emotional connections between parents and children, the climate of the family environment, the child's personal assimilation process, the establishment of rules, the transmission of cultural values) influences children's self-esteem, their ability to adapt to the school environment, as well as their behaviour in society and their performance at school. Recent research also indicates that perceptions of parental attitudes, and particularly emotional acceptance and parental involvement, are closely associated with pupils' academic achievement. However, the strength of these relationships may vary across sociocultural contexts (Tikhomirova & Malykh, 2024).

Within the family environment, several factors influence the development of children's personalities, their current and future standard of living, and, therefore, their school achievement and success. Among them, parents' attitudes towards school performance play a crucial role; these largely depend on their own experiences with school, the family's value orientation and educational aspirations (Slezáková & Tirpáková, 2006), but also on the institutional factors, i.e., the ideas and ideals of the institutions preferred by the family: school, church, state policy, and culture (Čerešníková, 2006). Another determining factor is the importance a parent attaches to education (Lukáč, 2015) and the family's standard of living (Mareš, 1999). Whereas, Vágnerová (2000) points out that the parents' attitude not supporting the meaning of education shapes undesirable attitudes and beliefs in the child, such as (lack of) formal respect for school, lack of motivation for activities and for fulfilling one's learning obligations; here, learning does not

become a personal value, and school is a source of unnecessary obligations. At the same time, the parents' attitude towards the child's school performance influences the child's effort for success. If school performance is meaningless to the parent, the child's essential motivation, i.e., the need for recognition, will likely be absent (Moravík, 2017). As stated by Gréta Žúborová (2011, p. 45), "positive attitudes of the parent lead to indicators of good school performance, the child becomes emotionally balanced and independent. Favourable parental influence positively develops confidence in one's abilities, ultimately reflecting the pupil's school performance".

It is of importance to note, as Opravilová (2016) points out, that parents' attitudes are reflected in children's attitudes (whether these are attitudes towards education, towards the teacher's authority, or school) through specific real-life situations – how parents talk about school in the home environment, what value they place on education, what kind of school performance they expect from their child, and what is their personal experience of the school environment. Koçak et al. (2021) state that behaviours, expectations, and involvement are denoted by significant effects on academic achievement.

According to Sengönül (2022), parental involvement at home and at school, such as parents' reading to their children at home, providing encouragement and support for learning, maintaining high aspirations and expectations for their children's education and academic success, while establishing communication, and discussing school issues with their children, all have positively impacted the academic achievement of children.

Parental involvement has been consistently identified as one of the strongest predictors of children's academic success. Meta-analyses show that parents' expectations, communication about school and engagement in learning activities significantly contribute to improved academic outcomes (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2012; Özyıldırım, 2024).

One form of parental involvement that has received particular attention in international research is the concept of academic socialisation. According to Hill and Tyson (2009), academic socialisation refers to parents' communication about the importance of education, the expectations they express regarding school success, and their efforts to encourage children's educational aspirations. It also includes discussions about learning strategies, linking school knowledge with children's interests and future goals, and helping them understand the broader meaning of education. Such forms of parental engagement contribute to children's motivation to learn and to the formation of positive attitudes towards school and academic achievement.

By shaping the child's perception of the importance of education, parents influence the child's positive or negative attitude towards school through the expectations they place on the child. Parents' expectations for school achievement depend on factors such as their family's socioeconomic status, their own educational experiences, and the family size. At the same time, parental expectations are considered an essential predictor of children's academic achievement and educational aspirations (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

According to Slezáková and Tirpáková (2006), those factors are the parents' educational attainment and motivation to stimulate their child. Matějček (2000) believes that these factors also include a parental belief that the child has inherited all the genetic

dispositions of the parents and grandparents. Other determinants of parental expectations appear to be parents' views on the function of school (Gavora, 2021), their job status, family income and lifestyle (Anýžová, in: Hamplová & Katrňák, 2018). The sibling position also impacts the parental demands on the child's educational trajectory. Parents set different demands on first-born children, who are automatically placed into the role of the more sensible and responsible child; in other words, the older sibling becomes the norm for school performance. The parents' attitude towards school performance also depends on the child's gender (Matoušek, 2003; Slezáková & Tirpáková, 2006; Kurincová, 2009; Opravilová, 2016). On the other hand, parental expectations that are too low seem equally undesirable regarding child development.

Parents' high school performance expectations often negatively affect children's emotional experiences. On the one hand, as Helus (2004) points out, excessive expectations, regardless of the child's capabilities, can create a learned helplessness syndrome. These children feel that their school failure is a permanent and unchangeable thing. In another of his works, the author adds that the child is constantly under a permanent burden, under constant pressure (Helus, 2015). Children gradually learn to hide their desires and fear losing their parents' love forever if they do not meet the set expectations (Matějček, 2000; Helus, 2004). The child often loses motivation and effort to learn, while hatred of the school environment develops, and anxiety and depression arise (Medina, 2011). The child acquires predetermined behaviour – such as “you are an excellent pupil who always knows everything”. After failing to achieve the requirements, the child develops a feeling of inferiority or, on the contrary, overconfidence (Ziemska, 1980; Kopřiva et al., 2008).

Marek Blatný (2017) emphasises that parents' employment statuses are also crucial because they influence the pupils' school performance, future direction and social functioning in the labour market. Similarly, Długosz (2017) writes that the higher is the parent's job position, the higher are the parent's expectations for the child's education, study plans, and later career. Łukasiewicz-Wieleba provides an interesting perspective (2019), by arguing that it is not about a parent's occupational position but rather about the specific skills a parent possesses in a given occupational field. Thus, the parents have the potential to recognise the child's abilities quickly and consequently can be in the position of the ‘first teachers’. They have the opportunity to create the conditions for the child's development in the subject area, thus moving towards achieving success.

These findings show that school achievement is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon shaped by multiple determinants. Similarly, Xing (2023) states that academic performance is not determined by a single factor but rather by a combination of genetic influences, social environment, and other factors. Among these, the family environment plays a particularly important role in shaping students' academic performance and achievement. The family environment is a crucial external determinant because it significantly influences pupils' differentiated educational outcomes. However, parents' perceptions of pupils' school achievement, its importance, and the pupils' perceptions differ.

Studies conducted across different sociocultural environments have highlighted the roles of parental attitudes and the family microenvironment as important factors in stu-

dents' academic achievement (Tikhomirova & Malykh, 2024). These findings also provide an impulse to examine how parents perceive school achievement within the context of the Slovak educational environment. This perspective is also reflected in international research, which consistently emphasises the crucial role of family background, parental expectations and parental involvement in shaping children's academic achievement across different educational and cultural contexts.

2. Methodology of Research

School achievement expressed by grades is currently the primary indicator of pupils' school success; it is one of the indicators of their qualities, abilities, knowledge, and skills, which also corresponds with the subjective level of this concept in the perception of parents, teachers and pupils themselves. In our research, we focused on the perception of the concept of school achievement from the point of view of parents of pupils in primary education. In the research, we surveyed the following points:

- *How do parents perceive the very concept of school achievement?*
- *What indicators of school achievement do parents identify as significant?*
- *How do parents perceive the impact of school achievement on their children's lives?*

The research aimed to determine *how parents of younger school-age pupils perceive the concept of school achievement and how, in their opinion, it affects different areas of the child's life*. We also investigated whether there is a difference in the parents' perception of school achievement based on their professional characteristics.

We conducted primary research data collection through applying a qualitative empirical strategy. For our research, we chose the *Focus Group* Discussion method. Unlike other group sessions, the aim is not to arrive at one solution but, instead, to discover as many different opinions and ways of thinking about the topic as possible. The advantages of this method include inexpensive data collection, active interaction between the participants, quick insight into the issue and diversity of opinions. It is recommended that the groups should be relatively homogeneous, especially concerning 'prestige' or 'status' factors such as profession, social class, or age (Millward, 2012). In our research, the homogeneity of the group lay in the age of the child: we surveyed parents of children of younger school age.

The analysis of the collected data was organised, coded and grouped by using the software *Ethnograph 6.0* for qualitative data analysis and subsequent descriptive and interpretive analyses. Hendl (2008) classifies the above-outlined software as one of the software systems used for data coding (code-retrieving). To interpret the findings, we used the technique of textual table construction which reveals the statements of individual participants, thus summarising the research data thoroughly.

In the context of the stated aims and outlined research questions of our qualitative research, we have chosen a criterion-based case selection for the selected focus group research method. We focused on parents of younger school-age children, who were differentiated according to the type of profession, to determine whether there is a difference

in the perception of school achievement based on occupational characteristics (in the context of the theoretical background of the issue analysed above).

The research involved 12 parents of younger school-age pupils ($n = 12$). Parents working in the education sector belonged to the first group ($n = 7$); they were marked as Group 'a'. We placed parents working outside the education sector ($n = 5$) in group number two, which we labelled Group 'b'. Thus, if we report the statement of participant P1a, this is participant number one from the first group.

During the implementation phase, we conducted two partial-focus group investigations (discussion meetings) with parents of younger school-age pupils. The first focus group consisted of parents of younger school-age children working in education, whereas the second group consisted of parents working outside the education sector.

3. Results of Research

In the context of the above-outlined research aim and questions, we investigated how parents perceive the concept of school achievement, and how it affects different areas of their children's lives. We collected audio data and transcribed it into plain text by using the qualitative data analysis software *Ethnograph 6.0*. We created a project called *Basic Concepts*. We subjected the written record to text fragmentation and created a selective protocol.

The results presented here are part of a broader research project exploring the links between school achievement and family environment. This paper presents partial findings regarding parents' perceptions of pupils' school achievement. In interpreting the participants' statements, we focused on the following questions: "*How do you perceive the concept of school achievement? How does school achievement manifest itself in a child's life?*". We created a codebook (Appendix 1), and four categories (Ka7-Ka10) emerged in the subject area, to which we assigned 52 codes (K39-K90). The subject of the following interpretation represents the resulting categories: *Definition of school achievement (Ka7)*; *Indicators of school achievement (Ka8)*; *Impact of school achievement on the child (Ka9)*; *Assessment of school achievement (Ka10)*.

In the first part of the discussion, we investigated how the research participants perceived the concept of *school achievement and its indicators*. Table 1 shows a more detailed analysis of the statements through the obtained categories and codes.

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it is clear that parents perceive school achievement as a form of evaluation of their children (K72; P5b), their knowledge, and the overall school performance. According to parents, the main criterion of school achievement is the child's knowledge, in which the level of understanding is not measured, but the emphasis is on the level of 'mechanically' remembered knowledge (K52; P7a). As the participants' statements show, the demands which parents set on the children and their school activities are, in their opinion, reflected in the pupils' school achievement (K83; P4b). Parents' statements emphasise that the school system perceives pupils "just as numbers" (K88; P1b); therefore, the value of school grades plays a significant role. Participants also justify the importance of school achievement because it has value in society; in their words, "it is taken seriously" (K84; P4b).

Table 1. School achievement and its indicators

Category	Identification of participant and code			
<i>Definition of school achievement</i>	K52; P7a	K88; P1b	K47; P5a	K84; P4b
	We do not look at these kids for what they want. We perceive how they 'crammed' the topic. Even if it is not right, it is reality.	In our country, pupils are only about numbers.	It is not just about grades; they take it all into account.	<i>School achievement is taken seriously everywhere in various testing and measurements.</i>
	K72; P5b		K83, P4b	
	Evaluation of the work that the pupil was devoted to.		It is related to the demands on the child.	
<i>Indicators of school achievement</i>	K48; P5a	K45; P4a	K63; P2b	K75; P4b
	Everything is included in school achievement.	It can be observed most closely in the lessons at school.	These are grades.	The grade is an assessment of the child.
	K49; P5a	K46; P4a	K43; P4a	K40; P4a
	It is not just about the grades but, overall, how the pupil works.	It is a manifestation of the pupil's behaviour.	How pupils behave in class.	How active pupils are, how they report and engage in the lessons.
	K50; P1a	K68; P4b	K69; P4b	K70; P4b
	Activity does not mean good school achievement. It is not a guarantee.	The child's relationship to the subject.	How a pupil is doing with the subject.	How much a pupil likes that teacher.
	K44; P4a	K39; P4a	K41; P4a	K42; P4a
	A pupil is not quiet or shy. A pupil is afraid that I am going to examine.	How a pupil learns.	What a pupil can learn at home.	A pupil writes the homework.
	K54; P3a			
	Some pupils know they have mastered the topic and can succeed but are not assertive enough to express it because they are more introverted than others.			

Source: Own research.

The participants' statements in Table 1 revealed differential *indicators of pupils' academic achievement* based on their parents' profession. The first group of parents (parents working in the education sector), when defining the concept of school achievement, also take into account the pupils' behaviour in and out of the lesson (K46; P4a/K43; P4a), their activity in class (K40; P4a) and also while doing homework (K39; P4a/K41; P4a/K42; P4a). The second group of parents (specifically, parents working outside the education sector) more often associate school achievement with the child's grading (K63; P2b/ K75; P4b) but also with the child's relationship with the teacher (K70; P4b) or with the subject

itself (K68; P4b). From the parents' point of view, it is evident that the child's activity in class alone will not guarantee good school achievement (K50; P1a), as participants describe it as the child's overall functioning that can be observed in the lesson (K49; P5a).

Another area of exploration of school achievement in parents' reflections is the *impact of school achievement on the child*, i.e., how parents perceive its impact on the child. We recorded individual participant statements in Table 2.

Table 2. *Impact of school achievement on the child*

Category	Identification of participant and code			
<i>The impact of school achievement on the child</i>	K53; P3a	K75; P5b	K58; P4a	K57; P7a
	School achievement can open many <i>doors in the future</i> .	School achievement has been with pupils <i>all their life</i> .	Those grades determine pupils' <i>direction</i> .	Pupils can then <i>apply</i> what they enjoy and what they want to do.
	K60; P4a	K56; P2a	K55; P2a	K79; P1b
	Children have a <i>different mindset</i> when their parents keep instilling the idea that they are the best.	The child feels <i>valued</i> for having mastered something.	In overall <i>satisfaction</i>	<i>In their motivation</i> – when children learn, they want the best grade because they know it. Pupils believe in themselves, and they want to achieve good school performance.
	K71; P5b	K85; P4b	K62, P1a	K80; P2b
	When children get bad grades, they are <i>disappointed in themselves</i> .	<i>Pressure</i> on children	School achievement can ' <i>strangle</i> ' someone	What is <i>bothering</i> the children, and <i>what they are thinking about</i> .
	K74; P5b	K90; P3b		K81; P3b
	When an excellent pupil has a worse grade, they <i>already give it to the child to 'suck it up'</i> ; they do not want to believe it.	<i>A demotivating influence</i> – I had already resigned and disliked teachers, everyone, school, and learning.		My daughter comes home from school <i>sad</i> . She <i>said</i> she could answer well, but she is afraid and prefers to leave it to her classmate because the teacher likes her more.
	K86; P4b	K57; K4b		K78, P1b
	Those <i>little kids</i> are <i>totally over it</i> . My son is about to <i>faint</i> when he receives a bad grade.	<i>My son is scared</i> because he wants a good grade.		My daughter deleted the bad grade from EduPage <i>out of fear</i> ; she did not like it there.

Source: Own research.

The data in Table 2 show that parents, regardless of their profession, are aware of the impact of school achievement on their child's future (K53; P3a/K75; P5b), as achievement affects both future educational and professional opportunities (K57; P7a). According to the participants, parents also create their aspirations and expectations for success in their

children. The desire to 'be the best' arises from the constant pressure from parental expectations (K60; P4a). From the participants' statements presented in Table 2, it is evident that one of the areas affected by a pupil's school achievement is the child's overall satisfaction, stemming from the fulfilment of expectations – and the subsequent appreciation, whether from parents or teachers (K56; P2a/K55; P2a). At the same time, parents, regardless of their profession, are aware of the negative impact of school achievement on their children. The participants' statements indicate that school achievement creates pressure on pupils (K85; P4b), by becoming a specific norm for performance, thus bringing many threats to the child's life. In particular, the participants describe the children's frustration with their own 'failure' (K71; P5b), fear of failure, sadness and feelings of anxiety (K57; K4b/K78, P1b), as well as demotivation, resistance to learning and the school environment in general (K90; P3b). From the parents' point of view, the most at-risk group are the younger school-age pupils, who experience school failure most intensely. Situations that pupils cannot process emotionally may also manifest themselves in psychosomatic difficulties.

When examining pupils' school achievements, the question arises regarding the way(s) how teachers perceive pupils based on their school achievement. The participants' statements in Table 3 relate to this aspect of school achievement.

Table 3. *Assessment of school achievement*

Category	Identification of participant and code			
	K59; P4a	K64; P2b	K65; P2b	K82; P5b
Evaluation of school achievement	Parents see that the child has <i>only the grade '1'</i> . My child is an excellent pupil and will go to university.	All parents <i>expect the best grades</i> ; they perceive the grade '3' as the end of the world.	Pressure on the child can cause some <i>trauma</i> .	The teacher is an 'old-school' teacher, and she <i>divides children into stupid and clever</i> . Those with grades '3' are already stupid, and she does not try to help. She tramples on them.
	K89; P1b	K61, P4a	K67, P1b	K51; P1a
	<i>Teachers are also under pressure because it is the teacher's fault when a class gets bad results.</i>	Children can get grades '3' if they want something and <i>pursue their goals</i> .	If you have a child at home who does not want to learn, <i>you must find a different approach</i> .	Some children are afraid or ashamed to say something stupid. They are unsure, so it is not indicative. <i>The child can be silent and have good school achievements.</i>
	K76; P5b	K73, P5b		K66; P3b
	I know teachers who see a child's average of 1.5 and immediately assign a grade '2'. They are not interested in the child's <i>effort or activity</i> .	The child hears from the teacher: You usually get a '2' or '3', <i>you cannot do this</i> , and so on. When the pupil gets the grade '1', the teacher is surprised at what happened and <i>even willing to test the child</i> .		As a mother, I never dealt with my daughter's school achievement. <i>When she was learning and got a worse grade, I did not press on her or blaspheme about her grade.</i>

Source: Own research.

The statements in Table 3 show that parents generally perceive school achievement as a classification most commonly expressed in terms of a grade. They expect the best grades from their children because these predict future university study (K59; P4a). Average or worse grades do not match the parents' high aspirations for their children's educational careers (K64; P2b). At the same time, most parents working outside the education sector know that excessive expectations for pupils' school performance can bring many threats into their lives (K65; P2b). The statements confirm that teachers categorise pupils into 'clever' and 'stupid' based on their performance (K82; P5b). Subsequently, teachers adjust their expectations of pupils' performance. Parents feel that teachers are not sufficiently concerned about the children's effort or activity and only consider the pupil's performance expressed by the grade (K76; P5b). However, they know that teachers' work is also subject to societal pressure concerning pupils' results (K89; P1b).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The issue of pupils' school achievement and success is a long-standing topic studied in educational institutions, scientific circles, and society in general. Pupils' school achievement and satisfaction at school are transmitted to different areas of their childhood, while ultimately influencing the further stages of their lives. In the school environment, it is perceived as a specific result of their work, and it becomes the primary evaluation criterion by parents and teachers on the child's education.

Our findings show that school achievement represents the leading indicator of pupils' performance and the overall activity at school. However, parents also perceive other aspects of school achievement, such as their children's behaviour and activity in the classroom or the fulfilment of school duties in their preparation at home.

The analysed findings also reveal that parents perceive school achievement through the lens of the children's future. Although excellent school achievement does not inherently guarantee pupils' success in their future lives, parents often perceive it as a determinant of their socioeconomic integration into society. Ultimately, parents think that school achievement significantly predicts their children's future and becomes a norm for their performance, which corresponds with findings highlighting the important role of parental expectations in children's academic achievement and future educational aspirations (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). For this reason, there is often a tendency to 'be the best' and, subsequently, to be rewarded for this effort by parents and teachers. However, Helus (2004) warns that excessive expectations without regard for the child's capabilities can create a learned helplessness syndrome. Children feel that their school failure is permanent and unchangeable. In another of his works, this author adds that children are constantly under a permanent burden and constant pressure (Helus, 2015). They gradually learn to hide their desires and fears that they will lose their parents' love forever if they do not meet the set expectations (Matějček, 2000; Helus, 2004). Children often lose motivation and effort to learn. Hatred towards the school environment develops, while anxiety and depression arise (Medina, 2011) because the children have to fulfil the pre-

determined behaviour – you are an excellent pupil with grades ‘1’, and you always know everything. After failing to adhere to the requirements, the children develop a feeling of inferiority or, on the contrary, overconfidence (Ziemska, 1980; Kopřiva et al., 2008).

Parents' perceptions of school achievement vary depending on their aspirations for their children's educational outcomes. Tsabaryová (2018) states that the desire to ‘push’ children into school success originates from the egocentrism of parents who want to justify their lifestyle and approach to education. At the same time, they want to get a ‘living trophy’ as a reward for their own success.

Unfortunately, our findings show that school achievement becomes a tool for the satisfaction of the children and their parents. The importance of school achievement for parents stems from the overall setting of a society favouring ‘numbers’ as criteria for success. Similarly, according to Čechová et al. (2006), school success is a general norm in our society that is highly valued. Parents want to conform to societal expectations, and therefore they strive to motivate their children to perform well in school.

Parents negatively perceive the tendency of teachers to select pupils based on their school performance as more and less successful. Equally negatively perceived is the absence of teachers' efforts to take into account the children's effort or activity. Our findings correspond with the research results by Benya, Šimčáková, and Herich (2006). According to them, parents sometimes feel that teachers are not objective and, so to speak, are ‘unfair’ to their children when they do not consider their uniqueness and talents.

Nowadays, the high parental pressure on their children regarding school performance often significantly impacts their education. Research suggests that excessive parental pressure may negatively affect children's motivation, emotional well-being and attitudes towards learning (Pomerantz et al., 2007). Typically, as Helus (2015) states, parents consistently put their children under pressure to perform highly, to show perfect results, or to always be better than others. This pressure has intensified recently, as it is clear that a crucial condition for good social performance in the future is a quality education. In this context, there is a need to address the issue of pupils' experiences of school success/failure, not only within the professional community but also within the parental community. It touches on the pupils' experiences and behaviour, self-esteem and emotions, and their relationships with school activities.

These findings highlight the importance of understanding parents' perceptions of school achievement beyond a single national context. Although we conducted the study in the Slovak educational environment, the identified patterns of parental expectations and attitudes towards school performance reflect broader processes discussed in international research. Therefore, the results may contribute to a broader interdisciplinary discussion of how parental expectations shape children's motivation, emotional well-being, and the overall educational experience across different educational systems and cultural contexts.

Author contribution:

Libuša Gužíková: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, data curation, visualization, writing – original draft.

Eleonóra Mendelová: conceptualization, investigation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, resources.

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