

FAVORABLE FACTORS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT: *School success is an educational goal that has as a starting point a good adaptation in the academic environment, includes obtaining school results attesting to the acquisition of knowledge and skills appropriate to the level of schooling and, in the long run, can be the premise for success in life. Regarding this paper, for a kaleidoscopic image and as comprehensive as possible of the factors that favor the achievement of good school results, we tried to capture the opinion of those involved in the educational act: students, their parents or legal representatives, teachers and representatives of local authorities, specialists of social assistance services within town halls or local councilors with responsibilities in the field of education.*

KEY WORDS: *school success, academic failure, school progress, school results, academic performance.*

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS: *I20, I21.*

1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

1.1. School success versus academic failure

Defining the concept of school success is a complex process, this intervention is often made by referring to the reverse of this concept, that of school failure. Thus, “there is a dynamic, dialectical and complex relationship between school success and failure. Just as there can be no total and continuous success, so there can be no definitive and global success. Most often we meet with partial successes or failures”. (Sălăvăștru, 2004, p.229).

Academic success is an extremely diverse school reality that sums up both the degree of scientific training by acquiring knowledge and skills to apply them in different contexts, but also the development of intellectual capacity, structuring harmonious personality and character traits, increasing interest and motivation. for school activities, training capacity and self-realization. Also, school succes is related to the success of the students in the post-school activity.

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Academic success differs by school progress, which means evaluating the school results obtained by students at a given time and reporting them to the performance obtained previously, following the evolution of the student's school situation. Therefore, it is very likely that a student will not meet the educational goals, although, personally, he is making progress. The degree of correspondence between the performances obtained and the demands to which the student is subjected in the school environment, is crystallized in terms of school success / failure.

According to Popescu V., school success lies in “obtaining a superior performance in the instructive-educational activity, at the level of the requirements of the curricula and the aims of education” (Popescu, 1991, p. 24)., and the failure refers to “remaining behind the learning or the non-fulfillment of the obligatory requirements within the instructive-educational process, being the effect of the discrepancy between exigencies, possibilities and results ” (Popescu, 1991, p. 24).

Ecaterina Vrăsmaș și Traian Vrăsmaș describe three forms of school failure:

- lagging behind in school: in this case we are talking about a temporary failure that consist in the appearance of small difficulties in terms of school work. These impediments can be interpreted as a form of transient maladaptation to school requirements, which can manifest in the life of any student; for example, grades lower than the student's potential, the risk to fail a class, etc. In this situation, psycho-pedagogical intervention is recommended.
- particular (specific) failure: it occurs in relation to a certain discipline of study and also translates into low marks. The psycho-pedagogical intervention, in this situation, must be outlined in a more complex form.
- generalized failure: it is characterized by the existence of major, overall and long-term difficulties, consisting of repeated situations of failing a class. In the case of generalized failure, the psycho-pedagogical intervention is very difficult, complex, which requires the action of several factors (Vrăsmaș & Vrăsmaș, 2008).

1.2. Factors that determine the achievement of school success

According to Jigau (1998), the factors that converge in order to achieve academic success can be structured in the following categories:

- factors belonging to the family environment, which has several variables: the type of housing, the level of education of the parents, the family structure, the attitude of the parents towards the school, the level of aspiration regarding the professional training;
- school resources: the quality of school facilities, equipment, programs, faculty features, class of students, competitiveness or degree of cohesion in the school environment;
- characteristics of students: "More than the characteristics of the family environment and school variables, success is influenced by individual characteristics of students: level of aspirations, motivations, attitude towards school, confidence in the school" (Jigau, 1998, p. 10).

1.3. School performance versus academic success

Although there is a great similarity between the concepts of school performance and school success, semantically the two terms do not completely overlap. Defining school success is not only focused on achieving good results in school, involving many variables such as: knowledge gained during the educational process, intellectual abilities, skills in applying the knowledge acquired, personality traits, including success in the post-school activity.

Performance is represented by an indicator materialized in observable and measurable behaviors using assessment tools, expressed by a certain level of execution of a task. School performance designates the student's success in learning and is transposed through the grades scored in various subjects, competitions, Olympics, exams.

We observe, therefore, that the semantic area of the concept of academic success is extremely wide, starting from the school results expressed in grades, partially overlapping with notions such as: performance, progress, evolution, to the broadest sense of school success with resonance in success in life, materialized in a good socio-professional insertion.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research on the factors that favor school success was carried out in a larger study, conducted between February 2015 and February 2016. The research method used was the survey based on a questionnaire, which is widely used in studies in the field of social sciences, when the aim is to find out the opinions and motivations related to a certain aspect of the social reality.

Because we wanted to capture the researched phenomenon from multiple perspectives, 4 structured questionnaires were designed, built for each of the social categories whose opinions we wanted to perceive: students, their legal representatives, teachers, representatives of local authorities.

3. RESEARCH AREA AND POPULATION

The target population for this research is represented by people from the Jiu Valley, given the application of structured questionnaires to students, their legal representatives, as well as teachers from schools in the Jiu Valley and representatives of local authorities, based on the desire and willingness to participate in this study.

The field stage of the research was finished with the completion of 608 questionnaires. After the verification stage of the collected data, 582 questionnaires were validated, completed by the social actors involved as follows:

- 187 students from the gymnasium or high school cycle;
- 187 children`s representatives;
- 151 teachers (41 de school counselors);
- 57 representatives of local authorities, S.P.A.S. (Social Protection and Assistance Service) specialists and local councilors.

4. REASERCH RESULTS

The opening question of the questionnaire considers the factors that contribute to obtaining good school results. This question was processed manually, not being pre-coded at the time of developing the questionnaire because it was intended to be an open-ended question, for the free choice of the answer options preferred by the subjects.

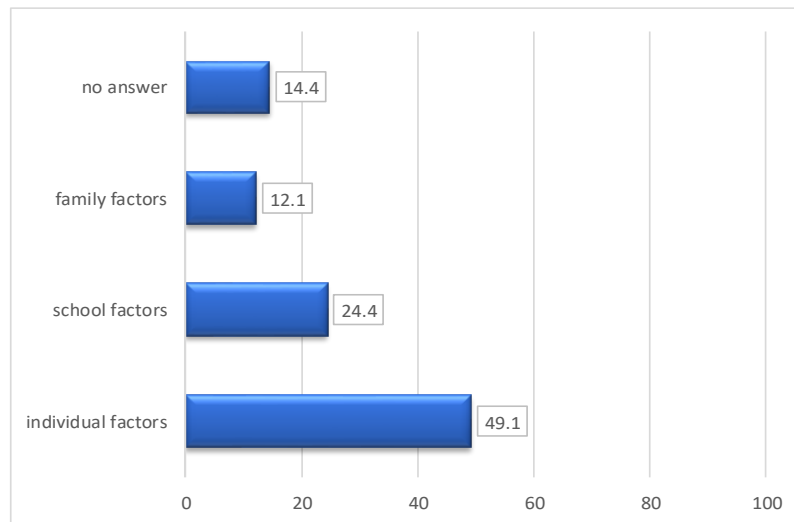


Figure 1. Factors that favor the obtaining of good school results (%) (in the opinion of the subjected students)

Regarding the students, as seen in figure 1, almost half of those surveyed (49.1%) consider that the individual factors, related to their own personality and character traits, are paramount to obtaining good school results:

- conscientiousness: performing daily homework, solving school tasks;
- self-discipline: observance of the school and rest program;
- perseverance: continuous practice, additional reading, enrichment of school knowledge; seriozitate, implicare,
- regulation, conformism;
- will, ambition, desire for success;
- intrinsic learning motivation;
- positive image of oneself: self-esteem, self-confidence.

All these are translated into behaviors, expressed, in most cases, in the first person: "to be good", "to learn", "to listen to my parents and teachers", "to do my homework", "to read as much as possible", "to be ambitious, serious, to have confidence in myself", "to be orderly, not to spend a lot of time at the computer, not to be late" etc.

Furthermore, approximately a quarter of the respondent students (24.4%) state that the determinants for good academic results are the factors related to the school environment:

- attractive courses and school activities;
- qualified, well-trained teachers, both in terms of knowledge and pedagogy;
- moral and emotional support provided to students by teachers (encouragement and support);
- extrinsic motivation reflected in school scholarships, but also grades;
- relational and communication factors in the school environment: relationships with colleagues, teachers, psycho-social climate of the class of students;
- discipline in the school environment.

Family factors incriminated in obtaining good school results are mentioned by 12.1% of the surveyed children with parents who went to work abroad:

- favorable family climate: a quiet life, without conflicts, understanding in the family, parents to be together, good communication between parents, but also between parents and child;
- good material and financial situation of the family; here, in addition to providing for the family's needs, is also included the family's ability to pay for additional tutoring;
- moral and emotional support given to the child by the parents: parental love, trust and encouragement from the parents.

The opinion of the students' representatives, responding to the questionnaire, is illustrated in figure 2.

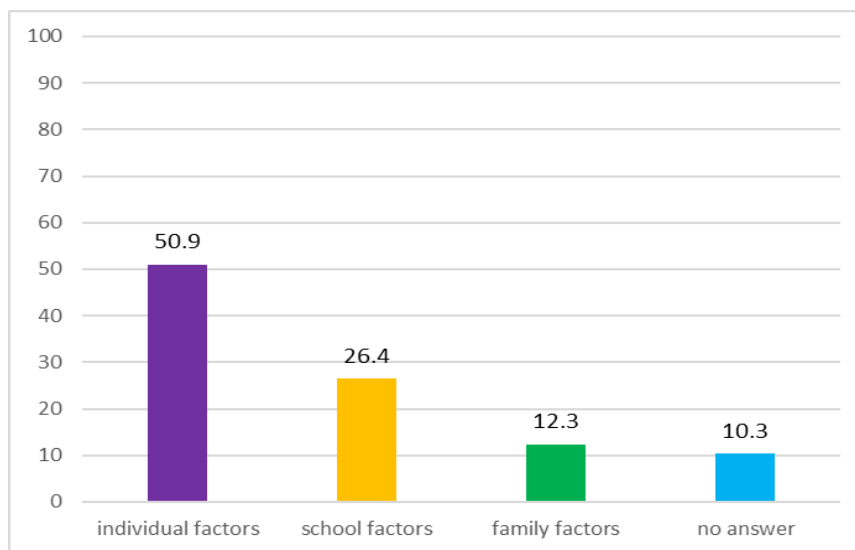


Figure 2. Factors that favor the obtaining of good school results (%) (student's representatives)

The representatives of the students who answered the questionnaire mention in the first place (50.9% of the respondents) the individual factors of the student that lead to good school results: health; motivation for learning; the child should be interested to learn and get the best results; independent work: the student must work individually and do many exercises and a lot of additional reading; hopefulness, imagination; positive attitude towards learning, discipline.

More than a quarter of the respondents (26.4% of the children's representatives) consider that the factors related to the school environment lead to good academic results: well-trained teachers, with good pedagogical skills ("to teach the subject well, for the children"); stimulating students by awarding scholarships; favorable class climate, with good relations between colleagues, dedicated teachers, efficient communications.

Also, regarding the representatives of the students with the parents working abroad, the family factors of the school success, reflected in good school results, are evoked by 12.3% of the respondents:

- good family environment, with emotional stability, good relationships between family members;
- ensuring a decent standard of living (food, clothing), as well as those necessary for the development of school activities (supplies);
- child supervision, emotional support, good relationships with the child;
- the level of training, school and professional, of the parents.

We note that the percentage is approximately double for the children's representatives, who consider that the factors related to the academic environment are paramount for achieving school success, compared to those who claim as priority the factors that ensure a good family environment, necessary for good school results.

The teachers, responding to the questionnaire, record in relatively similar proportions the family (27.2%), school (25.6%) and individual (23.8%) factors that work together to obtain good academic results, a situation illustrated in figure 3:

- family factors:
 - emotional support, empathy, unconditional support given to the child by the parent;
 - parents involved and concerned with the child's education;
 - the presence of the parents and their involvement in the instructive-educational act;
 - careful control and supervision of the child by the parents;
 - positive motivation, in particular the development of intrinsic motivation;
- factors related to the school environment:
 - competent, well-trained teachers, with dedication for the profession;
 - attractive activities that arouse students' interest, the use of interactive methods;
 - collaboration between teachers, school psychologist and guiding teacher;
 - group and individual counseling activities;
 - use of self-knowledge and personal development techniques;
 - differentiated work in the classroom, focused on the child's needs;

- favorable socio-relational climate in the class of students, support from colleagues, good relations with them;

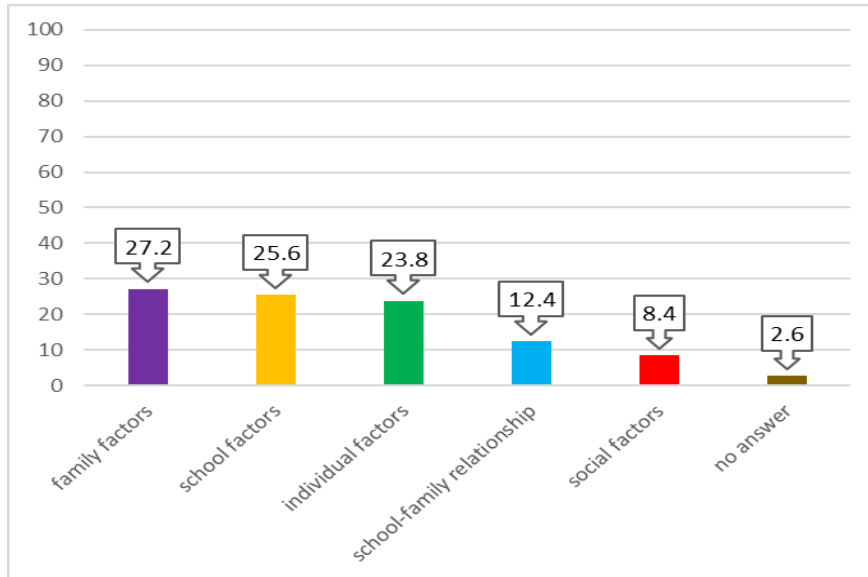


Figure 3. Factors that favor the obtaining of good school results (%) (teachers)

- individual factors:
 - the child`s health;
 - the genitic potential of the child;
 - the student`s learning motivation;
 - the ability to work in a team, to collaborate;
 - emotional balance, emotional intelligence of the child;
 - capacity for self-knowledge and personal development;
 - perseverance, will, self-confidence.

A rather significant percentage (12.4%) is represented by the school-family relationship in terms of obtaining appreciable school results. The responding teachers consider that the attitude of the parents towards the difficulties that the students face is extremely important, as well as the way in which the solutions are sought, in collaboration with the teachers and the class leader, with the involvement of the school counselor if necessary.

The social factors are mentioned by the teachers responding to the questionnaire in proportion of 8.4%, emphasizing aspects such as: the quality of the social environment; social conditions favorable to the educational act; social and educational policies, with emphasis on the need for the education of the new generation.

As for the opinion of the specialists of the social assistance services of the town halls, as representatives of the local authorities, this is illustrated in figure 4.

Family factors incriminated in obtaining good school results occupy the first place (38.6%), followed by factors related to the school environment (22.2%), then the personal traits of the student (18.7%), social factors (9.3%), the family-school relationship also being considered important (5.9%):

- the family factors that favor the achievement of good school results, mentioned by the representatives of the local authorities, are:
 - emotional support provided to students by the family;
 - the material and financial conditions of the family, including resources for additional children`s tutoring;
 - secure family environment;
 - family harmony;
 - parents` concern regarding children`s education;
 - the education of the parents;

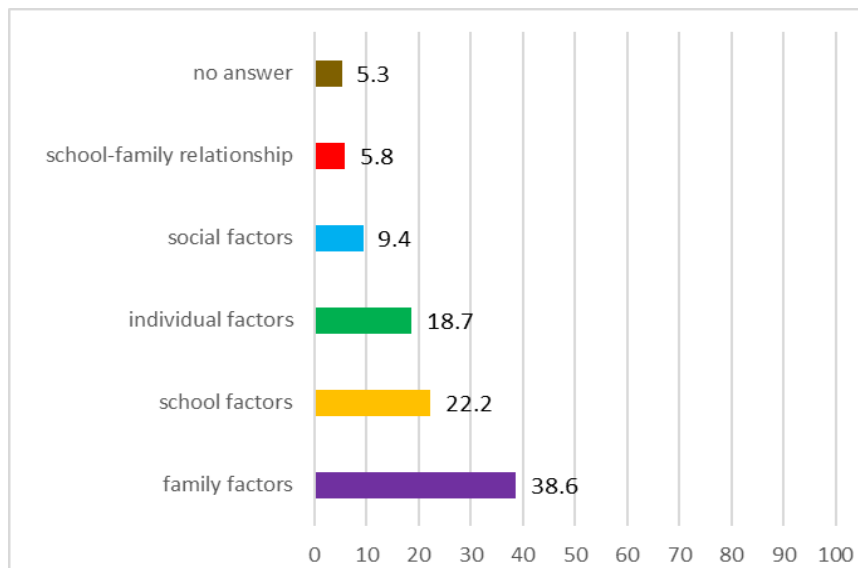


Figure 4. Factors that favor the obtaining of good school results (representatives of local authorities)

- factors related to the school environment:
 - well-trained teachers;
 - adapting the school activity to the possibilities of each student;
 - using the interactive teaching methods to capture and maintain students` attention;
 - avoiding negative evaluations, criticism;
 - focus on collaboration and team work;
 - good teaching conditions, effective teaching aids and materials;
 - effective communication between the teacher and the class of students;

- individual factors:
 - the intellectual skills of the student;
 - the student`s aspiration level;
 - the student`s conscientiousness;
 - health status;
 - other features such as perseverance, seriousness;
 - discipline, attending classes by the student;
 - stimulating students in order to increase school motivation;
- socio-cultural factors:
 - society`s attitude towards school;
 - the influence of extra-family groups: the group of friends, the team of the student, in case of practicing a sport, the group with which the student collaborates in volunteer activities, etc.;
- the school-family relationship is another necessary factor to promote the achievement of school success, in the opinion of the representatives of the local authorities who answered the questionnaire.

5. CONCLUSIONS

According to the previously cited author (Jigau, 1998), the respondents interviewed in relation to the factors that work together to achieve good school results, the following categories are highlighted: individual factors, factors belonging to the academic environment and family factors, their weight being different depending on from the perspective of the social actor.

Thus, in terms of students and their representatives, individual factors are paramount, followed by school factors and, ultimately, family factors. In other words, the responsibility falls mainly on the shoulders of the child who must be good and want to learn, then the school is responsible for the student's academic results, and the family gets the lowest percentages, about 12%.

Changing perspective, the interviewed specialists, teachers and those in social assistance services consider that the family and the family climate are the most important factors for obtaining good school results, significant percentages being reached by both academic and individual factors, working together to achieve common goal. It should be mentioned that, in the opinion of specialists, there are two more categories of factors that influence school results, namely: social factors and the school-family relationship.

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