

ПСИХОЛОГИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ (ВОЗРАСТНАЯ) DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Perception of school failure/success by parents and their children

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Abstract

Context and relevance. School failure/success is one of the key issues of state educational policy, significantly affecting both academic and personal development of children. Despite numerous studies devoted to the factors of school failure/success, little is known about how children and their parents perceive this experience and what meaning they attach to it. In this study, school failure/success is examined through J. Hattie's framework — from students' characteristics to features of the school and family. **Objective.** To explore how parents and their children perceive and describe school failure/success, and to identify the key aspects that are meaningful for them. **Research question.** How do parents perceive and describe their children's school failure/success? How do children perceive and describe their school failure/success? **Methods and materials.** The study uses a qualitative design and analyzes in-depth semi-structured interviews with parents ($n = 22$) and their 5th-grade children ($n = 22$) from the Nizhny Novgorod region within the project "Longitudinal Study of Factors Influencing School Failure". **Results.** School failure/success is viewed through three main components — the child (academic performance, cognitive abilities, and motivation), the family (parental involvement and support), and the school (school climate and teacher practices). Parents and children emphasize the importance of a positive school climate characterized by a friendly and organized atmosphere and opportunities for development. Such climate is supported by teacher practices based on respect and clear expectations. Families contribute to school success through maternal involvement and support. Children demonstrate success through responsibility, interest, intrinsic motivation, and cognitive abilities. **Conclusions.** The study demonstrates the complex nature of school failure/success. Addressing it requires joint support for students from schools, teachers, and parents, based on an individual approach.

Keywords: school failure/success, academic performance, cognitive abilities, motivation, parental involvement, parental support, school climate, teacher practices

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Восприятие школьной (не)успешности родителями и их детьми

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Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Школьная (не)успешность — это одна из ключевых проблем государственной образовательной политики, которая оказывает значительное влияние на академическое и личностное развитие детей. Несмотря на большое количество работ, посвященных факторам школьной (не)успешности, на данный момент мы мало понимаем, как дети и их родители воспринимают этот опыт и какое значение они ему придают. В данном исследовании школьная (не)успешность рассматривается через призму рамки Дж. Хэтти — от особенностей учеников до характеристик школы и семьи. **Цель** исследования — выявление и описание восприятия школьной (не)успешности родителями и их детьми, а также ключевых аспектов, имеющих для них значение. **Исследовательские вопросы.** Как родители воспринимают и описывают школьную (не)успешность своих детей? Как дети воспринимают и описывают свою школьную (не)успешность? **Методы и материалы.** Исследование имеет качественный дизайн и включает в себя анализ глубинных полуструктурированных интервью с родителями ($n = 22$) и их детьми 5-х классов ($n = 22$) из Нижегородской области в рамках проекта «Лонгитюдное исследование факторов, влияющих на школьную неуспешность». **Результаты.** Школьная (не)успешность рассматривается через 3 компонента — дети (их успеваемость, когнитивные способности и мотивация), семья (родительская вовлеченность и поддержка) и школа (школьный климат и учительские практики). Для успешного обучения родители и дети отмечают важность школьного климата с дружеской и организованной атмосферой и возможностями для развития. Такой климат должен поддерживаться учительскими практиками — уважительным отношением к ученикам и ясным объяснением материала. Семья поддерживает школьную успешность с помощью материнской вовлеченности и поощрения. Такие детские характеристики, как

ответственность и интерес, внутренняя мотивация и когнитивные способности, поддерживают успешность. **Выводы.** Исследование показывает, что проблема школьной (не)успешности носит комплексный характер. Для ее решения необходима совместная поддержка учащихся со стороны школы, учителей и родителей, основанная на индивидуальном подходе. **Ключевые слова:** школьная (не)успешность, успеваемость, когнитивные способности, мотивация, родительская вовлеченность, родительская поддержка, школьный климат, учительские практики

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Introduction

School failure/success is one of the key topics of educational policy (Ovakimyan et al., 2023). The challenge of improving the quality of education includes identifying effective means and methods for preventing and overcoming school failure (Isaev, Kosaretsky, Mikhailova, 2018). The causes of school failure are commonly viewed as the responsibility of the student themselves (Hernandez-Ortiz, Precht, Cudina, 2021; Vinogradov, Shatunova, 2023).

However, research conducted over the past 10 years has highlighted the need for a more comprehensive examination of this issue, taking socioeconomic and motivational factors into account alongside students' intellectual characteristics (Hernandez-Ortiz, Precht, Cudina, 2021; Costa et al., 2024; Tebbouche, 2023; Fatykhova, Shakirova, 2023).

School failure/success as a multifactorial phenomenon

Contemporary theoretical approaches emphasize that school failure/success is a complex issue whose causes may lie not

only within the individual student but also in a range of other factors (Fernández-Mellizo, Martínez-García, 2017; Costa et al., 2024; Șîțoiu, Pânișoară, 2024). Hattie (2023) identifies 12 major factors influencing educational achievement, including student characteristics, home and family, school and society, classroom organization and climate, teachers, curriculum, and deliberate teaching.

In our study, we focused on three factors — school, family, and children — because these aspects are directly related to school failure/success and can be reflected in the experiences of parents and children (Costa et al., 2024). At the same time, other factors are either indirectly incorporated into the selected categories (e.g., the school factor includes teacher practices, which Hattie identifies as a separate category) or fall beyond the scope of the participants' perceptions.

School

Research shows that school climate affects not only students' academic outcomes but is also associated with various

aspects of their engagement and behavior (Bochaver, Korneev, Khlomov, 2023; Ruzek et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2022). An organized and calm atmosphere, opportunities for learning, effective use of instructional time, and a school-wide focus on academic achievement are considered key factors positively associated with student success (Hattie, 2023).

Another factor is teacher practices, including teachers' self-efficacy and enthusiasm, emotional support and teacher-student relationships, as well as teachers' classroom management (Lazarides et al., 2021). Teachers' enthusiasm and self-efficacy are highly important for students' perceptions of teaching quality (Lazarides et al., 2021). Emotionally supportive relationships characterized by trust, respectful communication, and teacher fairness toward students increase students' intrinsic motivation and enjoyment of learning (Ruzek et al., 2016). Effective classroom management by teachers has a positive effect on students' motivation (Kunter, Baumert, Koller, 2007) and academic achievement (Fauth, 2014).

Family

Given the importance of emotional well-being and intrinsic motivation for school success, particular attention is paid to social support, including parental support, whose role is crucial in shaping students' perceptions of their own school success (Goshin, Mertsalova, 2018; Agnafors, Barmark, Sydsj , 2021).

Within the family context, socioeconomic status (SES) is commonly considered one of the key factors shaping students' academic achievement. Other factors include parental involvement, parents' strategies and attitudes toward children's development and upbringing, parental roles, and related parental stress (Bochaver et al., 2024; Savenysheva et al., 2019; Nunes et al., 2023; Fan, 2001).

Students experiencing difficulties in their studies report that their parents are less likely to find time to talk with them, behave more authoritatively, and are less willing to discuss personal, school-related, or everyday problems with them. They also report that their fathers show little interest in their school performance, do not expect them to receive good grades, do not praise them for their achievements, and are less likely to help them with schoolwork (Domagała-Zysk, 2006).

Children

According to Hattie (2023), students themselves make the greatest contribution to educational achievement: their skills when they enter the classroom, their willingness and readiness to learn, their motivation, and their interest in engaging in the learning process. Particular attention should be paid to students' skills and willingness to learn (motivation, self-efficacy, and emotional state), as these factors have a strong positive relationship with educational achievement (Ruzek et al., 2016). Conversely, unwillingness to learn (boredom, anger, and anxiety) is negatively associated with educational achievement.

Thus, positive emotions (e.g., enjoyment) contribute to well-being, which is an integral component of school well-being, whereas negative emotions impair it (Obermeier et al., 2022). School well-being, in turn, is closely related to intrinsic motivation and, consequently, to positive cognitive outcomes, such as higher academic achievement (Kleinkorres, Stang, McElvany, 2020).

Systemic perspective

As the literature review demonstrates, school failure/success is a relatively well-studied phenomenon. However, some studies pay insufficient attention to family characteristics, including parents' attitudes toward overcoming their child's school failure/success and parental involvement in their child's education (Kosaretsky, Mert-

salova, Senina, 2021). Our study, based on John Hattie's approach, considers school failure/success from a broader perspective. There are also studies that examine parents' and teachers' perceptions of overcoming school failure/success, while children remain outside the scope of such research (Ovakimyan et al., 2023). Taken together, these approaches allow school failure/success to be viewed as a multifactorial phenomenon. It is shaped through the interaction of three components — children, family, and school (in the present study, the teacher is considered part of the school).

Although many studies demonstrate the contribution of these three components to academic failure/success, we have limited understanding of how parents and their children perceive these components. It is precisely the way parents and children perceive these factors that determines how they explain the causes of school failure/success.

Importance of studying perceptions of school failure/success

Since school failure/success may be perceived differently depending on participants' experiences and degree of involvement — for example, by students themselves and their parents — it is important to examine not only statistical data but also individual experiences, which are highly relevant in this context (Ovakimyan et al., 2023). Focusing on the subjective experiences of students and their parents makes it possible to apply a phenomenological approach, which allows researchers to understand how participants themselves describe school failure/success in the context of their interactions with school.

The aim of this study is to examine parents' and their children's perceptions of school failure/success and to identify the key aspects that are meaningful to them. To achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do parents perceive and describe their children's school failure/success?

2. How do children perceive and describe their own school failure/success?

Since the aim of the study is to identify how parents and their children perceive school failure/success, it is important to examine their subjective experiences and interpret them. Therefore, a qualitative phenomenological design was selected for this study, allowing us to explore participants' perceptions of school failure/success.

Materials and methods

Design. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design (Vagle, 2018) involving semi-structured interviews with parents and their children. The phenomenological approach made it possible to focus on the lived experiences of parents and children in the context of their perceptions of school failure/success, based on the factors identified by J. Hattie (Hattie, 2023).

Participants. The sample included 22 parents (mean age = 38 years) and 22 children (9 girls). All children were fifth-grade students attending public schools in the Nizhny Novgorod Region. The parents and children were selected from a sample of more than 2000 participants who took part in a longitudinal study during the first wave of data collection in 2022 (Akhmedjanova, 2025) and agreed to participate in the second wave in 2023.

Instruments. The parent interview guide included 23 questions covering topics such as children's adjustment to fifth grade, school climate, health, motivation, self-regulation, parental support for autonomy, and parental support practices. The parent interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were audio-recorded.

The child interview guide covered the same topics as the parent interviews. The child interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and were also audio-recorded.

Data collection procedure. The data were collected as part of a longitudinal

project investigating factors associated with school failure/success. The study received approval from the Ethics Committee of HSE University. Data were collected in autumn 2023 from students attending public schools in urban and rural areas of the Nizhny Novgorod Region and their parents. The interviews were conducted by three trained research interns. In most cases, both mothers and children were interviewed on the same day. In only three cases were children interviewed on different days because they were either ill or absent.

Data collection was conducted online at a time convenient for parents and their children using Zoom or Yandex.Telemost. Parents were informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent, while children provided verbal assent to participate before the interviews began.

Data analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke, 2021). First, the interview audio recordings were transcribed using Pisek (n.d.), an audio-to-text transcription service, and the research interns checked the transcripts to ensure their accuracy. The first author, a PhD student at the Institute of Education, then coded the interviews using a coding scheme developed through a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. The coding procedures included: (1) identifying inductive codes based on the factors identified by J. Hattie; (2) identifying meaningful units in the interview transcripts; (3) coding and refining the codes; (4) narrowing down the codes; and (5) interpreting and identifying meanings.

Perceptions of school failure/success were examined across three themes: (1) children; (2) family; and (3) school.

Results

The thematic analysis of the interviews identified three main themes through which parents and children described school failure/success: the child, the family, and the school. These themes included more spe-

cific factors such as children's academic performance, cognitive abilities, and motivation; parental involvement and support; as well as school climate and teacher practices.

These findings indicate that school failure/success is a multifactorial phenomenon shaped by the interaction of child, family, and school characteristics.

Academic performance

The analysis of the interviews showed that, according to parents and children, one of the main factors associated with school success is the child's academic performance in individual subjects, including academic performance, the causes of failure/success, and the child's social environment.

Russian language was the most salient subject, eliciting concern in cases of failure and joy in cases of success: "He tries, he really does. Of course, he is happy when he gets a four in Russian; he runs up to me and says, 'Mom, I got a 4'" (Mother 22).

Mathematics was perceived by parents and children as both the main indicator of success and the most difficult subject: "The most difficult one for us is mathematics, so that's the subject where [we have to help]" (Mother 20).

English was described as a difficult subject for children and a source of helplessness for parents. The mother of one child who "just can't get the hang of" English explained that she had studied German and therefore "can't help with pronunciation" (Mother 12). Thus, performance in a foreign language may be situational and may depend on the availability of support.

Some parents noted that children become more independent with age: "In second and third grade, she did very poorly; if they were assigned poems, [...] she would immediately have a tantrum: 'I won't learn it, I'm scared,' [...] now she reads it twice and immediately recites it much better" (Mother 6). However, this "rapid growth" (Mother 6) contributed to overcoming ear-

lier difficulties. Her child also emphasized the difference between her past and present perception of the curriculum: "...fourth grade was more difficult, there were all these difficult topics..." (Child 6).

The child's environment at school and at home has a substantial influence on academic performance: "Classmates who get bad grades [...] hit you, make it difficult to copy..." (Child 5). Active parental involvement in learning can often compensate for such difficulties: "Son, let's sit down and work through it," [...] and things got a little better; they started to understand each other with the teacher" (Mother 8). Such cases demonstrate that parents can act as mediators between teachers and children.

Comparing a child with other students, siblings, or with their own previous performance is an important factor in how academic success is perceived. Such comparisons can be a source of additional motivation: "She started doing much better in fifth grade than in fourth..." (Mother 6). At the same time, children may sometimes take an undesirable example from others: "She looks at [...] the others running poorly, [and thinks], 'Why should I run and try? I'll run just like them,' [...] and, as a result, of course, her grades get worse..." (Mother 5).

Cognitive abilities

Memory and information processing are basic cognitive processes. When a child has a "very good memory" (Mother 2), they can quickly complete oral assignments and demonstrate confident understanding of the subject matter. Children also described their own abilities: "I just read it and recited it" (Child 5).

Poor memory makes it difficult to memorize material quickly: "...he won't be able to remember it immediately, [...] so he needs to repeat it again" (Mother 11). Children added that they ask the teacher to explain something again if they have not remembered it: "...I can ask again, 'Could you explain it?' She explains it again" (Child 16).

Children also differed in how they perceived and processed information, for example, through visual imagery: "...if I get bored in class, I don't get distracted, [...] I imagine pictures in my head, I just listen and remember" (Child 10). Some children described predominantly auditory processing: "...she learns particularly well by listening, [...] she can retell some of the things the teacher explained" (Mother 9). These observations demonstrate that different strategies can help children remember information.

Successful acquisition of material may also be related to practice, when children consolidate their knowledge by completing tasks: "...when they explain a topic to us, I go to the board and try to write it down, well, solve an example..." (Child 18).

However, not all children can easily apply theoretical knowledge in practice: "...he had difficulties with grammar in this respect; he could learn the rules, but he rarely knew how to apply them" (Mother 22). Children themselves acknowledged difficulties when solving problems, particularly in understanding the wording of the tasks: "...sometimes she doesn't understand the meaning, [...] sometimes the wording of the problem isn't completely clear..." (Child 21). These difficulties may be associated with insufficient concentration or problems understanding task formulations.

Some children reported being able to find solutions independently by relying on partial understanding of the situation and adult support: "Well, my parents usually help me if I have difficulties; I can, well, figure it out myself..." (Child 14). Even with insufficient knowledge, children may use contextual information and prior experience to overcome learning difficulties.

Motivation

Three main themes were identified in the section on motivation: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and motivational difficulties.

Intrinsic motivation was manifested in students' interest, including their desire to learn and attend school: "...when new subjects started, like history and geography, he said it was interesting, [...] he really gets into it and understands it" (Mother 2). The child himself also described how such interest motivated him not simply to study a subject but to explore it more deeply: "...we had new biology lessons, and in that lesson we looked through a microscope; I really liked it" (Child 2). Thus, the child demonstrated initiative and awareness in pursuing learning goals, which may contribute to the development of sustained intrinsic motivation and increase engagement in the educational process.

Extrinsic motivation was evident when children studied in order to receive praise or avoid punishment. Other motivating factors included attending extracurricular activities: "...he really wants to go to football practice, so he does his homework before football" (Mother 1); receiving new things: "If you finish the term with good grades, I'll order whatever you need from Wildberries" (Mother 5); spending time with family: "...we can go somewhere together" (Mother 17); and grades: "...right now my child is focused on getting good grades" (Mother 20). Children also expressed a desire to obtain good school certificates and pass examinations: "...if you get a three or a two, your certificate will be different" (Child 6).

In several interviews, children's motivation was either reduced or absent: "...and we also have a heavy workload [...] outside of school..." (Mother 19). One student confirmed that a high workload could lead to a lack of interest in a subject, explaining that "we have a lot to memorize in history" (Child 2).

When a child has low academic performance, their motivation may also decline. However, this can be compensated for by interest that emerges during the learning process: "...my child is not doing very well

academically, so [...] I can't say that she is [...] interested in everything. If you get her interested during the lesson, she can actually come home and immediately share her impressions" (Mother 20).

Parental involvement and support

Parental involvement is an important factor in school failure/success. It includes intensive involvement, monitoring, advice, and support for the development of independence.

Excessive parental involvement may create dependence: "At least Mom finds out everything, does everything, tells you everything, prepares everything, and so on, so why do we need independence if everything is done for me?" (Mother 2). Children confirmed this dependence: "How do you do your biology retellings? — Mom, too; Mom reminds me" (Child 20).

Some parents supported the development of independence followed by parental monitoring. They initially taught the child how to complete a task and then expected the child to do it independently: "...I tell her, 'I'll show you, and then you do it yourself,' [...] I show her, explain, and tell her how it's better to do it..." (Mother 5). Thus, parents teach children how to complete particular tasks and then monitor and check their work: "No, he does it himself; we just check" (Mother 14). Children themselves recognized the presence of such monitoring: "Does Mom keep track of what you have been assigned and how you did it? — Yes, yes, she does" (Child 22). This approach may contribute to the development of confidence and help children solve problems independently, fostering autonomy and responsibility for their learning.

Parental support was manifested through goals and expectations, emotional support, joint activities, and concern for health. High expectations fostered a sense of responsibility: "...Why are you scolding me for getting a four?" — 'I'm not scolding

you; I just know you can do more. Why don't you want to?" (Mother 2).

Emotional support reduced anxiety and motivated children: "...I always tell him that I believe in him, [...] that he can handle it, even if there is some kind of problem" (Mother 3). For children, such support was important: "...when I talk about what's bothering me, I feel kind of better, because Mom says, 'It's okay, you can fix it; then go talk to your math teacher'" (Child 9). Thus, emotional support helps children overcome anxiety and maintain confidence while also directing their efforts toward further goals.

Working together involved jointly searching for solutions to problems, which helped children cope with academic tasks more quickly and reduced stress: "...we try to find a solution together, [...] to correct each other so we don't argue..." (Mother 12). This also extended to completing homework: "...if we're going somewhere, [...] we recite a poem [...] or sing the songs they were assigned, the whole family" (Mother 19). Children likewise confirmed that such interaction positively affected their school success: "...were there any assignments that were difficult to complete? — Uh-huh. — And what did you do in that case? — I asked my mom" (Child 17).

Concern for children's health supported motivation and helped them recover from academic demands: "We put the homework aside and let the child rest, [...] my child's health is my number one priority" (Mother 3). Children noted that parental care helped them feel better during the learning process: "When people take care of me? That's the best thing" (Child 13).

School climate

School climate was associated with school failure/success through interpersonal relationships, interactions with teachers, emotional support, and adaptation to the class following the transition to secondary school. Friendly relationships and peer

support contributed to engagement and motivation, whereas conflicts and pressure from teachers could cause stress.

Parents noted that when the class was friendly, children interacted with everyone: "...the class is friendly, everyone is together, and he interacts with everyone..." (Mother 1). Such relationships could help children deal with schoolwork: "...they call him, ask how to do the homework, and just talk..." (Mother 2). For children, friendly relationships created a comfortable environment for learning: "...we are friends with our classmates, we talk, and we help each other if we don't understand something" (Child 2).

Despite the friendly atmosphere in the class, conflicts sometimes occurred. However, parents noted that these conflicts "never turn into anything more serious, [...] they try to apologize right away" (Mother 10). Children confirmed that serious conflicts were rare and that they generally resolved minor disagreements themselves: "We just talk and resolve the issue with words" (Child 17). Thus, children learn to manage conflicts independently, while adults become involved in more complex situations to maintain a safe atmosphere.

During the process of adapting to the class, friendly relationships and teacher support were important. Parents noted that a cohesive group and a friendly atmosphere created the necessary conditions for adjustment: "...that's why they have such a friendly, close-knit group, and therefore the adjustment is going quite smoothly" (Mother 18). Children emphasized that communication with classmates and having friends played a key role: "...what helped you adapt easily to fifth grade? — Communicating with my classmates" (Child 1).

Teacher practices

Teacher support and assistance were among the key teacher practices contributing to school success. Parents described teachers as taking on a role not only as ed-

ucators but also as a “classroom mother”: “...she acts like a class mom, [...] if there are any problems — come to me, write, call, tell me, and we’ll solve everything” (Mother 10). This created a sense of security for parents, who felt confident that their child would not be left alone with their problems.

Parents considered an individualized approach important because “...some children [...] are capable, and each child needs their own approach” (Mother 3). In their view, such an approach could motivate children more strongly. Children emphasized the importance of individualized support because it led to more effective learning: “...I ask if I can improve it to a five, and they let me — I sometimes do it during the lesson” (Child 10).

Parents noted that teacher feedback increased the significance of lessons for children: “...even with mathematics — he is interested in a new topic, he understood it well, especially if the teacher acknowledged him in some way; he talks about it” (Mother 13). In cases of academic difficulties, praise and encouragement helped motivate students: “English — the teacher praises them, [...] the children improved, they all caught up” (Mother 3). For children, the connection between praise and academic performance was quite direct: “And why do you only want to get excellent grades? — The teachers are happy and praise me...” (Child 6).

Strict discipline at school could complicate the learning process and reduce school motivation: “...they just can’t find common ground with her, [...] she has these assumptions that the child doesn’t study by himself, that we do his homework for him...” (Mother 4). Another mother reported that a teacher openly stated: “...your child will not pass the exams” (Mother 11). Such attitudes may demotivate children and increase parental stress.

Children perceived such attitudes negatively, which also affected their school success: “...why is it that what comes easily

to you is easy, while what is difficult is difficult? Is it somehow related to your preferences? — Yes, because we have so much to memorize in history” (Child 2). Rigid practices may reduce children’s learning motivation and contribute to negative attitudes toward education.

However, teacher collaboration with parents could have a positive effect on children’s school success. Parents noted that teachers actively maintained communication with them: “...I think that the teachers [...] — any dialogue, we come in, talk, and the problem gets resolved...” (Mother 3). Such communication allowed parents to remain informed about the situation and involved in their child’s learning process, helping to create a more supportive environment for school success.

In addition to teachers’ interpersonal skills, their competence and professionalism played an important role. Parents noted that stronger teachers laid the foundation for learning: “...while she is teaching you mathematics and geometry, you have to pay attention, remember, and listen to what she says, [...] she simply won’t start a new topic until she has drilled this one into them...” (Mother 5). This enabled children to acquire structured knowledge, feel supported, and develop academically. Children themselves confirmed this: “[I like] sitting in lessons because teachers give us new knowledge; you learn something new...” (Child 1).

Discussion

This study examined how parents and their children perceive school failure/success. The interview findings demonstrated the multifaceted nature of school failure/success and highlighted the role of three factors — students, family, and school — which is consistent with John Hattie’s multifactorial approach (Hattie, 2023).

The findings indicate that these perceptions include both factors that parents and children can influence, such as children’s

academic performance and cognitive abilities, and factors over which they have less control, such as school climate and parental involvement. The importance of children's academic performance and cognitive abilities may stem from what these factors signal to parents and children: the extent to which students are able to cope with the curriculum and the role of their own abilities in this process. Moreover, cognitive abilities and grades are factors that children and parents can influence and for which they can observe tangible outcomes — for example, when they work through mathematics problems with a parent or begin taking additional English lessons. In contrast, school climate and parental involvement may be shaped by external circumstances (Ruzek et al., 2016; Savenysheva et al., 2019) that neither parents nor children can readily influence. For example, one mother reported that she had to work extensively, which limited her ability to be involved in her child's school life.

Our findings help to further specify how factors associated with school failure/success are perceived. Participants confirmed the importance of child-related factors, particularly cognitive abilities and motivation, as key factors associated with school failure/success. This finding is consistent with Hattie's conclusions (Hattie, 2023) and those of other researchers (Costa et al., 2024).

However, the findings also revealed different ways and strategies of learning among children, including visual and auditory processing and independent practice. This helps to further elaborate on parents' and children's perceptions of students' cognitive abilities and their relationship to school failure/success. In addition, the study identified the importance of external factors, such as strict teacher requirements, changes in the curriculum, school absences, and adaptation to a new class. Children confirmed the significance of these factors through their own experiences: friendly relationships and

peer support contributed to school success, whereas low expectations or a lack of trust from teachers could reduce motivation and confidence (Hattie, 2023).

The findings also confirm the importance of parental involvement, including advice, monitoring, and emotional support, which is consistent with previous research (Fan, 2001; Savenysheva et al., 2019). At the same time, excessive parental assistance may foster dependence and slow the development of children's independence. An important contribution of the present study is the identification of the role of joint parent–child work, or “working as a team,” which contributes not only to successful completion of academic tasks but also to reduced anxiety. Children confirmed the importance of such collaboration, noting that completing tasks together helps them better understand the material and cope with difficulties.

Adaptation to secondary school and to a new class emerged as an independent factor influencing students' academic achievement and emotional well-being. This finding is consistent with Ruzek et al. (2016), who highlighted the relationship between school climate, academic achievement, and student engagement. Hattie (2023) also emphasizes the importance of a calm atmosphere and opportunities for successful learning. Our findings further specify this relationship by showing that collaboration between parents and teachers provides additional support for children and contributes to their school success.

Previous studies have also highlighted teacher practices, including emotional support, teacher–student relationships, and classroom management, as factors contributing to school success (Hattie, 2023). The present findings extend this multifactorial perspective on school failure/success and emphasize the importance of interactions among school-, family-, and student-related factors.

Overall, parents' and children's perceptions of school failure/success constitute a complex phenomenon in which factors that can be influenced interact with factors that are more difficult to influence. Our findings highlight the need for a systemic approach to supporting students that takes into account individual child characteristics, effective collaboration with teachers, and informed parental involvement.

Because the findings are based on the subjective perceptions of parents and children from the Nizhny Novgorod Region, future research should collect questionnaire data both in the Nizhny Novgorod Region and in other regions to further assess perceptions of school failure/success. It would also be valuable to compare parents' and children's responses and to complement qualitative data with children's performance on standardized tests.

Conclusions

This study examined how parents and their children perceive school failure/success, making it possible to identify the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. School failure/success comprises three main components: the student, the family, and the school.

Children are a key component of school success through their cognitive abilities, motivation, self-regulation skills, and ways of processing and acquiring information. Intrinsic motivation, initiative, and the use of different learning strategies contribute to more effective learning, whereas reduced interest and a high workload can negatively affect academic performance.

The family supports children through parental involvement and support. Teaching and guidance, emotional support, working as a team, and concern for children's health can contribute to school success. However, excessive monitoring and assistance may hinder the development of children's independence.

School climate and teacher practices are associated with school failure/success. A friendly and supportive atmosphere at school and in the classroom contributes to children's engagement and motivation. An individualized approach and teacher feedback can strengthen this effect. In contrast, strict and unfair demands may negatively affect school success.

Overall, perceptions of school failure/success are multifactorial, which is consistent with findings from international research. Our findings help describe the specific features of this phenomenon in the Russian educational context based on the subjective experiences of parents and children.

The findings emphasize the importance of a systemic approach to supporting students that takes into account individual child characteristics, effective collaboration with teachers, and informed parental involvement.

Limitations. This study has several limitations. The sample included only students from the Nizhny Novgorod region, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions of the Russian Federation; therefore, the results should be considered preliminary and require confirmation using larger and more diverse samples and quantitative methods. The participation of only mothers in the interviews does not allow for consideration of fathers' perspectives on school success or underachievement. As data collection was conducted online and, in most cases, mothers and children were interviewed on the same day, the influence of participants' responses on one another cannot be ruled out. In addition, responses may have been affected by social desirability bias. Finally, the data rely on subjective perceptions and do not include direct observation of the learning process, which limits verification of the actual educational context.

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Contribution of the authors

Leon E. Britos — development of the concept and design of the work; conducting research; data analysis and interpretation; writing and editing text; annotation.

Diana R. Akhmedjanova — data collection and analysis; description of research results; writing and design of the manuscript.

All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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