

“Not what I Can, but what I Should”: The Role of Identity Compatibility in Explaining Social Class Educational Aspiration Gap


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Abstract

Educational inequalities associated with differences in social class backgrounds remain stable in many Western societies, where students from lower social classes generally have lower academic prospects. Previous research suggested that psychological barriers could explain part of this social class attainment gap. This study aimed to investigate the role of identity compatibility in explaining the relationship between high school students' socioeconomic background and their educational aspirations. Identity compatibility is defined as perceived compatibility between students' socioeconomic background and a stereotype of a university student. A total of 362 high school students from Croatia completed an online survey that measured their subjective socioeconomic status, identity compatibility, educational aspirations, and their school achievement. The results showed positive associations between the students' subjective socioeconomic status and identity compatibility, which was, in turn, positively associated with their educational aspirations. The parallel multiple mediation model confirmed the significant indirect effect of subjective socioeconomic status on educational aspirations via identity compatibility, while the path via school achievement was not significant. These findings suggest that part of the social class educational aspiration gap could be explained by the perceived lack of compatibility between one's social class identity and future university student identity, potentially leading to lower university enrolment rates among lower social class students. Practical considerations of study results are discussed in terms of the potential of socio-psychological interventions in reducing the social class educational aspiration gap.

Keywords: social class background, identity compatibility, educational aspirations, social class educational aspiration gap

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Introduction

The socioeconomic attainment gap in education relates to the fact that young people coming from families with higher socioeconomic status tend to outperform their peers with less affluent backgrounds (Cummings et al., 2012; Gorard et al., 2012). Additionally, even when they possess similar levels of prior academic achievement as their peers, students coming from lower social class backgrounds are less likely to enrol in higher education, and if they do, they tend to have lower grades and higher dropout rates (Ostrove & Long, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004). In line with these findings, data collected from Croatian samples indicates a strong transgenerational transfer of social status, with students from less-educated families significantly less likely to pursue university education themselves (Šćukanec et al., 2016). For instance, only 5.1% of Croatian university students have fathers with an elementary level of education, whereas approximately 18.5% of the general population in their fathers' age group possess this educational level (Šćukanec et al., 2016). This data suggests a limited continuation of education among young individuals from less educated families after completing high school. This trend is particularly important considering the crucial role of educational attainment in predicting individual mobility, leading to better long-term outcomes such as fewer health problems, and increased overall well-being (Gallo & Matthews, 2003; Tan et al., 2020).

Educational Aspirations and Social Class

Data obtained from around the world highlights the correlation between students' socioeconomic status and their aspired educational attainment (OECD, 2020). Specifically, students coming from less privileged backgrounds tend to express lower educational aspirations compared to their more advantaged peers (OECD, 2020). Part of the social class differences in educational aspirations can be attributed to variations in school achievement (Agasisti & Maragkou, 2022; Berrington et al., 2016). Higher-class students consistently outperform their lower-class counterparts at each educational level, and this disparity tends to magnify as students progress through the educational system (Bukodi et al., 2021; Paulus et al., 2021; von Stumm, 2017).

However, research also indicates that the social class educational aspiration gap persists even after considering prior school achievement (Anders, 2017; Berrington et al., 2016; Bourne et al., 2018). This is a crucial point because it demonstrates that educational aspirations are not merely a reflection of school achievement (Croll & Attwood, 2013), but serve as an independent force in shaping young individuals' future educational attainment. In fact, educational aspirations were found to be associated with educational success, in terms of educational progress and higher educational attainment (Khattab, 2015; McCulloch, 2017). These results have

important policy implications when proposing and implementing actions directed at narrowing the socioeconomic attainment gap.

Currently in literature there are also substantial efforts in investigating the differences between what young people *aspire to* and what they *expect* in terms of educational attainment (Agasisti & Maragkou, 2022). While there is no consensus about what factors distinguish educational aspirations from educational expectations, there is a general agreement that aspirations tend to be more idealistic than expectations (Gorard et al., 2012). Educational aspirations reflect individual hopes and dreams about students' educational pathways, while educational expectations often consider structural opportunities and barriers in achieving them. Educational expectations as such are more closely related to individual socioeconomic background (Gorard et al., 2012). However, since educational aspirations are more often investigated in regard to socioeconomic inequalities and are more prevalent in policy concerns (Cummings et al., 2012), they are the main focus of this paper.

Given the central roles that both social status and educational attainment play in shaping various life outcomes, it is essential to investigate underlying factors that hinder individuals from entering and benefitting from higher education. Previous research argued that taking a social identity perspective (Turner et al., 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) can potentially explain part of the social class disparities in higher education participation. Mainly, focusing on psychological barriers associated with different group memberships offers a promising avenue for investigating the social class attainment gap (Easterbrook et al., 2019; Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021).

Identity Compatibility

Although major contributors to educational differences are structural barriers that are preventing lower-class students from pursuing higher education (Allen et al., 2016; Burgess et al., 2020; Jerrim, 2017), in recent years it has been recognized that psychological factors are playing an important role in creating and perpetuating those class differences (Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021). Identity compatibility is suggested as one of the most prominent psychological barriers to entering higher education. It represents the perception of one's social identity as more or less congruent with a social stereotype of someone who succeeds in education (Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021; Jetten et al., 2008). According to the Social identity model of identity change (SIMIC; Jetten & Pachana, 2012), the level of perceived identity compatibility becomes particularly relevant during various life transitions, as individuals strive to integrate new identities with their existing ones. The transition to higher education is considered a significant life change that can disrupt self-continuity due to shifts in social identity networks (Jetten & Pachana, 2012). As students enter university, they often relinquish previous identities, such as being a high school student or a member of a sports team, while simultaneously having the opportunity to adopt new identities associated with their university affiliation. However, at the same time, there is a

possibility of adopting different new identities related to their university affiliation. The level of perceived compatibility between the current identity network and new identities is suggested to predict the difficulty of adapting to a new social identity (Jetten & Pachana, 2012). Given that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically have parents with lower educational attainment and are underrepresented in higher education contexts, the perceived compatibility with a university student identity tends to be relatively low (Easterbrook et al., 2019; Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021). For example, research suggests that the perception of identity incompatibility is accounting for the university choice of working-class students in the United Kingdom, even when controlling for students' high school achievement (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019). Specifically, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to choose less prestigious faculties than their more affluent peers, even when they have the same level of prior school achievement. Furthermore, identity incompatibility was found to mediate the relationship between lower socioeconomic status and lower identification with one's university (Jetten et al., 2008; Matschke et al., 2022), less positive affect, greater levels of depressive symptoms (Iyer et al., 2009), lower social integration in university, as well as higher academic and social concerns (Veldman et al., 2019). When examining the effects of identity compatibility among younger students, a recent study emphasized its importance in explaining the achievement gap among youth from different socioeconomic backgrounds, suggesting its detrimental effects on educational equality which extends even beyond past performance (Easterbrook et al., 2022). Ultimately, these findings suggest that identity compatibility can partially explain differences in educational attainment between students coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Importantly, evidence shows that apart from experiencing immediate identity compatibility, individuals are able to anticipate different levels of identity compatibility when imagining different social identities that are yet to be incorporated into one's identity network (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019). A study by Nieuwenhuis and colleagues (2019) demonstrated that simply anticipating a poor fit between one's social class background and the identity of a university student influenced subsequent university choices. Thus, anticipated levels of identity compatibility between high school students' social class identities and future university student identities could potentially predict their current educational aspirations in general. This represents a crucial avenue for future research, considering that educational aspirations are known to be key predictors of students' enrolment intentions and actual behaviours (Croll, 2009; Vaisey, 2010).

Present Study

This study aims to examine the relationships between subjective socioeconomic status, grade point average (GPA), identity compatibility, and educational aspirations among high school students in Croatia. Additionally, we seek to explore the unique role of identity compatibility in explaining differences in educational aspirations

among these students. By addressing these questions, we hope to contribute to understanding of the well-documented achievement gap between students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (Adamecz-Völgyi et al., 2021; Chowdry et al., 2013; Morag et al., 2020). However, it is important to note that the socioeconomic achievement gap can vary across different contexts, influenced by educational systems, policies, and cultural norms (Croizet et al., 2017). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 2020), socioeconomic differences in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test scores among Croatian youth are below OECD average socioeconomic achievement gap, indicating rather high educational equity. Given the minimal disparities in academic performance among Croatian youth from various socioeconomic backgrounds, it remains to be determined whether social class differences continue to play a significant role in shaping students' educational aspirations, and whether identity compatibility can account for a part of these differences. Thus, we established the parallel mediation model that aims to investigate the independent role of identity compatibility and school achievement in mediating the association between subjective socioeconomic status and educational aspirations among high school students in Croatia (Figure 1). The following hypotheses were tested:

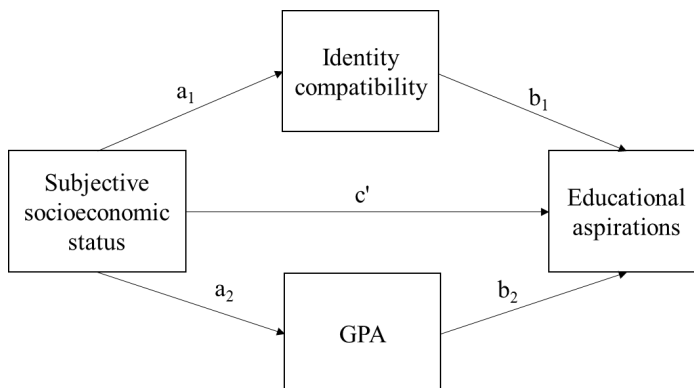
Hypothesis 1. Students' subjective socioeconomic status will be positively associated with their school achievement and identity compatibility.

Hypothesis 2. Students' school achievement and identity compatibility will be positively associated with their educational aspirations.

Hypothesis 3. Students' school achievement and identity compatibility will mediate the relationship between their subjective socioeconomic status and educational aspirations.

Figure 1

Conceptual Diagram of Proposed Parallel Mediation Model



Method

Participants

A total of 362 students (74% girls), aged 14 to 19 years ($M = 16.62$; $SD = 1.11$) participated in the study. Students were enrolled in one of the five different high schools in the City of Zagreb and Karlovac County. Four schools were general gymnasia or grammar schools, while one was a vocational high school. In Croatia, general gymnasia are designed to prepare students for university, while vocational schools are mainly preparing students for the job market. It is worth noting that in Croatia, the majority of students attending four-year and five-year vocational programs intend to enrol in higher education after graduation as well (Ristić Dedić & Jokić, 2019). In this study, a total of 85 students are enrolled in a vocational school, while the rest are enrolled in general gymnasia, all of them attending four-year programs.

Measures

Student Subjective Socioeconomic Status

One item from the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status – youth version (Goodman et al., 2001), was used to assess students' subjective socioeconomic status. Students were presented with a drawing of a ladder with 10 rungs representing Croatian society. Their task was to place their family where they believe they would stand in comparison with other citizens in Croatia, in terms of their family's education level, employment status, and income.

Identity Compatibility

We translated and adapted the measure of identity compatibility (Iyer et al., 2009; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019) to assess the level of compatibility between the student's socioeconomic background and their potential university student identity. Before the items, students were given the following instruction: „Students differ in how much they feel that studying at university is related to where they come from (e.g., what their family is like or what their acquaintances or friends do). In the following questions, we are interested in how you think studying [at university] would be compatible with where you come from. When answering the questions, please imagine yourself studying at university, even if you are not planning to enrol in a university.” The scale consisted of three items (e.g., „To what extent do you think that studying at the university would be in accordance with your wider social background?”). Students gave their compatibility ratings on a 7-point scale with the anchors *Not at all* (1) and *Very* (7). The total score on the identity compatibility

measure was calculated as a mean of the three items. The scale had high internal reliability ($\alpha = .85$).

Student Achievement

To assess the student's school achievement, we asked the students to write down their grade point average (GPA) at the end of their previous grade. In the Croatian school system, students' GPAs can vary between 1 and 5, with a higher number indicating better school achievement.

Student Educational Aspirations

Students' educational aspirations were assessed with one item asking them about the highest educational level they would like to achieve. Participants could choose between six options, ranging from *High school*, through different levels of post-secondary education, to *Ph.D.*

Procedure

This pilot study was conducted as a part of the larger research project *FreeCareerChoice*, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation. Ethical approvals for administering the measures in schools were granted from the Ethical Committee of Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar (no. 11-73/19-1261) and the Ministry of Science and Education (no. 05/3-73/19-3126). Prior to the broad longitudinal study within the *Free Career Choice project*, we chose to conduct a pilot study with the aim of validating new measures on a smaller, convenient sample of high school students. The participants were selected from five high schools in City of Zagreb and Karlovac County. The link to the online questionnaire was sent out for the students to complete. The students could fill out the questionnaire during or outside school hours. Participation in the study was voluntary and no financial or other incentives were provided to the students.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the study variables are shown in Table 1. Most participants held rather high educational aspirations and had high prior achievement (GPA). School achievement ranged from 2.9 to 5 on the whole sample, which indicates rather low variability between students.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables (N = 362)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	min	max
Subjective SES	6.70	1.72	1.0	10
Identity compatibility	4.04	1.81	1.0	7
Educational aspirations	4.62	1.23	1.0	6
GPA	4.37	0.52	2.9	5

Bivariate Pearson's correlations revealed that most of the study's variables have positive but small associations. As expected, the highest correlation was between students' GPA and their further educational aspirations. Subjective socioeconomic status was positively associated with students' identity compatibility, which was, in turn, positively associated with their educational aspirations. Surprisingly, the results of this study did not reveal any significant associations between subjective socioeconomic status and school achievement within this sample. This lack of significance may be attributed to the limited variability observed in school achievement scores, which could have influenced the strength of the correlations. Another possible explanation for this finding is in sample characteristics, which will be further discussed later.

Table 2*Correlations among the Study Variables (N = 362)*

	Identity compatibility	Educational aspirations	GPA
Subjective SES	.22**	.20**	.05
Identity compatibility	-	.22**	.12*
Educational aspirations		-	.38**
GPA			-

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

To test our main hypothesis, we conducted a parallel mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS version 28, model 4* (Hayes, 2017). We estimated path coefficients, indirect effects, and the total effect of the model, and tested the significance of potential mediators by calculating bootstrapped (5000 iterations) confidence intervals (CIs). As can be seen from Figure 2, subjective socioeconomic status increased identity compatibility ($a_1 = 0.23$, $CI = [0.13, 0.34]$; $p < .001$), but had no substantial effect on students' GPA ($a_2 = 0.02$, $CI = [-0.02, 0.05]$; $p = .32$). In turn, identity compatibility increased educational aspirations ($b_1 = 0.1$, $CI = [0.03, 0.16]$; $p = .004$). Students' GPA also had a positive association with educational aspirations ($b_2 = 0.84$, $CI = [0.61, 1.06]$; $p < .001$).

As we hypothesized, identity compatibility managed to explain a small portion of the social class educational aspiration gap. The indirect effect of subjective

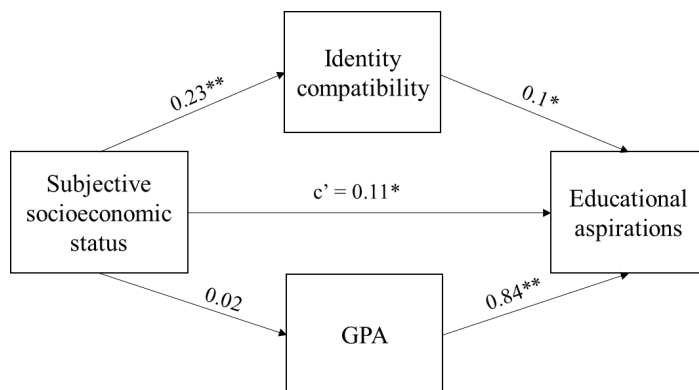
socioeconomic status on aspirations via identity compatibility was 0.02, CI = [0.01, 0.05], which corresponds to the significant but small effect size (Kenny, 2021). Following a non-significant correlation between subjective socioeconomic status and school achievement, students' GPA did not significantly mediate the path from subjective socioeconomic status to educational aspirations. This means that, at least in this sample, GPA cannot explain aspiration differences among students coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. After including identity compatibility and students' GPA in a model, the effect of subjective socioeconomic status on educational aspirations reduced but stayed significant (from $c = 0.15$, CI = [0.07, 0.22], $p < .001$, to $c' = 0.11$, CI = [0.04, 0.18], $p = .002$) suggesting that other variables not included in the current model can further explain this relationship. Additionally, we estimated the proportion of the total effect of subjective socioeconomic status on students' educational aspirations that is explained by identity compatibility using the following formula: $(ab)/c$, where ab is the product of two paths, corresponding to the indirect effect of subjective socioeconomic status on educational aspirations via identity compatibility, while c is the total effect of subjective socioeconomic status on students' educational aspirations. Accordingly, we conclude that 15.64% of the total effect of subjective socioeconomic status on educational aspirations is mediated by students' perceived identity compatibility.¹

Linear regression analysis revealed that the model managed to explain 19.66% of educational aspirations' variance, with students' GPA as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$), followed by their subjective socioeconomic status ($\beta = .15$, $p = .002$) and finally identity compatibility ($\beta = .14$, $p = .004$). However, students' GPA did not significantly mediate the relationship between subjective socioeconomic status and educational aspirations, suggesting that psychological barriers such as identity compatibility are more common transmitters of educational aspiration gap in Croatian high-achieving high school samples.

¹ To test our model for robustness, we ran the same analyses with the type of school as a control variable (1 – vocational secondary school; 2 – general secondary school). This model yielded nearly identical results as the first model, so we continue reporting on the results from the first model.

Figure 2

Parallel Mediation Model Depicting the Relationship between Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Educational Aspirations Identity Compatibility and GPA (N = 362)



* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the potential role of identity compatibility in explaining the socioeconomic gap in educational aspirations. Previous research has indicated that adopting a social identity perspective when studying the educational outcomes of individuals from different social classes can provide insights into longstanding educational inequalities (Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021; Matschke et al., 2022; Veldman et al., 2019). Our findings contributed to previous literature by investigating, to our knowledge for the first time, whether identity compatibility can explain the social class educational aspiration gap between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. In accordance with previous studies, we found that lower subjective socioeconomic status was related to lower levels of perceived identity compatibility between one's social class and future university identity (Iyer et al., 2009; Jetten et al., 2008; Veldman et al., 2019), which was in turn related to lower educational aspirations. Furthermore, we tested the comparative role of students' school achievement and their levels of identity compatibility in mediating the relationship between subjective socioeconomic status and educational aspirations. Since previous research established the key role of students' achievement in high school as a transmission mechanism of intergenerational social mobility (Adamecz-Völgyi et al., 2021; Chowdry et al., 2013; Morag et al., 2020), we were particularly interested in testing these two indirect effects simultaneously. The parallel multiple mediation model revealed that part of the association between students' subjective socioeconomic status and educational aspirations can be explained by varying levels of identity compatibility between students coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. These results mirror the findings on the

influence of identity compatibility on other educational outcomes, such as achievement on standardized national exams in the UK (Easterbrook et al., 2022), university choice (Niuwenhuis et al., 2019), and levels of university identification and social integration (Jetten et al., 2008; Matschke et al., 2022; Veldman et al., 2019). Interestingly, the results on this sample didn't support the mediation effect of students' school achievement in explaining the social class educational aspiration gap. It seems that this non-significant indirect effect was due to the absence of the association between students' subjective socioeconomic status and school achievement, potentially confirming high levels of social class equity in PISA results in Croatia (OECD, 2020). However, before making final conclusions about low levels of the social class achievement gap in Croatia, it is important to point out that all students in this sample live in more developed parts of the country and attend rather prestigious schools which makes them likely more fortunate in terms of school faculty or materials offered to them. It is possible that research on a more representative sample of high school students would reveal a more common pattern of socioeconomic differences in high school achievement. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the limited variability in school achievement within this sample may have influenced the strength of correlations with other variables.

Although the indirect effect of subjective socioeconomic status on educational aspirations via identity compatibility was confirmed, the direct link from subjective socioeconomic status to educational aspirations remained significant, leaving space for other variables not included in this study to explain some part of this relationship. We assume that various structural barriers likely play their part, as previous studies highlighted their importance in creating and maintaining the social class attainment gap (Allen et al., 2022; Burgess et al., 2020; Jerrim, 2017). However, it is also possible that other psychological barriers could further explain this relationship. For example, social identity threat was hypothesized to mediate the associations of underrepresented students' social identities and their educational outcomes, such as school achievement or educational aspirations (Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021). Indeed, there is a wealth of empirical evidence on the role of stereotype threat, a specific form of social identity threat, in the school context (Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Spencer & Castano, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). It seems that students coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more vulnerable to various types of psychological threats, whose contribution should be further addressed in future research.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several methodological drawbacks must be considered when interpreting these results. Firstly, this study employed a convenient sample of high school students from five specific high schools in the City of Zagreb and Karlovac County. Therefore, the generalizability of the study results to students from other regions or attending different schools may be limited. This limitation is particularly important

to address in research on psychological barriers, such as identity compatibility, since other studies highlight the crucial role of the context in moderating the associations between social identities and levels of experienced identity threats (Baysu et al., 2016; Easterbrook et al., 2022; Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021; Picho et al., 2013). Future research should, therefore, investigate the moderating effects of local and school contexts, such as the perceptions of negative stereotypes about one's social class, representation of different social classes in educational settings, and/or school norms that potentially misalign with those more often endorsed among lower social class students. Studies like these are highly valuable when considering policy implications since they can shed a light on characteristics of local and school contexts responsible for creating and maintaining social class educational differences. Furthermore, it is important to note that the participants in this study were enrolled in highly competitive general high school programs or four-year vocational school programs that enable further university education. Consequently, they may have held relatively high educational aspirations. To establish the distinct role of identity compatibility in predicting the social class educational aspiration gap among a broader student population, it is crucial to conduct research using a more representative sample of high school students attending less prestigious high school programs.

Secondly, this study used single-item measures of subjective socioeconomic status, students' GPA, and educational aspirations. Single-item measures are sometimes more vulnerable to measurement errors (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2009), which is why scholars often advocate against using them. The second argument against the use of single-item measures is that complex psychological phenomena, such as personality or emotions, can rarely be captured using only one item (Allen et al., 2022). However, we believe that constructs in this study can be well represented with only one item. Subjective socioeconomic status is assessed by one measure which integrates three commonly used indicators of family's socioeconomic status (education level, employment status, and income). Participants were instructed to consider all three indicators when formulating their overall perception of their social background. This measure has been frequently utilized in other studies (e.g., Amir et al., 2019; Demakokos et al., 2008) and is considered representative of the three most commonly used indicators of individual social class (Diemer et al., 2013). Furthermore, school GPA as a measure of a school achievement is in itself capturing school grades across multiple high school subjects. Since it is an important indicator of student's future prospect, it is often used in educational psychology (Allensworth & Clark, 2020). Finally, the measure of educational aspirations consists of precise educational levels to which students can aspire to in Croatian educational system, and therefore cover all range of information on educational aspirations. Since single-item measures are increasingly used in modern research, especially in complex longitudinal design that aims to capture a wide array of psychological phenomena, they were found to be the most appropriate here as well (Allen et al., 2022).

Final drawback of this study is in its cross-sectional design. Future research would benefit from employing a longitudinal study design, which would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the causal relationships between the variables examined in this study. Specifically, a study with two or more measurement points would better inform us about the nature of the relationship between identity compatibility and educational aspirations. Even though previous research suggested the causal order tested in this study, it is also possible that those variables have reversed or even reciprocal effects. For instance, it could be the case that higher educational aspirations over time lead to the reduction of identity incompatibility among lower social class students, emphasizing the importance of interventions targeting parental and students' educational aspirations when aiming to reduce psychological barriers among lower-class students. Future research should examine these probabilities to further enhance our understanding of the dynamics between these variables.

In conclusion, the results of this study point to the importance of considering the social identity perspective when investigating the causes of the socioeconomic attainment gap in higher education. Not only does identity compatibility emerge as a crucial predictor of various educational outcomes among university students, but it also plays a role in explaining the gap in educational aspirations among younger students who are still contemplating their future educational paths. Lastly, being mindful of the varying levels of identity compatibility among high school students could be beneficial to practitioners as well. School psychologists and career counsellors could benefit from investigating students' perceptions of identity compatibility or other forms of potential psychological barriers when advising students about their potential career paths. Finally, they can help vulnerable students to overcome these psychological threats by designing and implementing various types of socio-psychological interventions tailored to their school context (Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021; Walton & Crum, 2020). Such interventions, which aim to alter students' perceptions of the overall educational context and their role within it, are well-suited for addressing the needs of vulnerable students at a low cost and have demonstrated promising results (Hadden et al., 2020; Harackiewicz et al., 2016).

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„Ne ono što mogu, već ono što bih trebao”: uloga kompatibilnosti identiteta u objašnjenju socioekonomskih razlika u obrazovnim aspiracijama

Sažetak

Socioekonomske obrazovne nejednakosti u mnogim zapadnim društvima i dalje opstaju. Pokazalo se da učenici iz obitelji nižega socioekonomskog statusa postižu lošije akademske ishode od svojih vršnjaka iz obitelji višega socioekonomskog statusa. Prijašnja istraživanja također upućuju na potencijalnu ulogu psiholoških barijera u objašnjenju dijela tih obrazovnih nejednakosti. U skladu s time, cilj je ovoga istraživanja bio ispitati ulogu kompatibilnosti identiteta u objašnjenju odnosa između socioekonomskoga porijekla srednjoškolaca i njihovih obrazovnih aspiracija. Kompatibilnost identiteta odnosi se na percipirani sklad između socioekonomskoga porijekla učenika i stereotipa tipičnoga studenta. U istraživanju su sudjelovala 362 učenika srednjih škola u Hrvatskoj. Učenici su ispunili mrežni upitnik u kojemu su mjereni njihov subjektivan socioekonomski status, kompatibilnost identiteta, obrazovne aspiracije i školski uspjeh. Rezultati su pokazali pozitivnu povezanost između subjektivnoga socioekonomskog statusa učenika i kompatibilnosti identiteta te njihovih obrazovnih aspiracija. Paralelni medijacijski model potvrdio je značajan indirektni efekt subjektivnoga socioekonomskog statusa učenika na njihove obrazovne aspiracije preko percipirane kompatibilnosti identiteta, dok se put preko školskoga uspjeha nije pokazao značajnim. Ti nalazi upućuju na to da se dio socioekonomskih razlika u obrazovnim aspiracijama srednjoškolaca može pripisati razlikama u percipiranoj kompatibilnosti identiteta učenika iz obitelji različitih socioekonomskih prilika. Moguće je da niska kompatibilnost identiteta dovodi do nižih stopa upisa fakulteta kod učenika iz obitelji nižega socioekonomskog statusa. U praksi bi, stoga, trebalo djelovati na smanjenje različitih psiholoških barijera kod učenika nižega socioekonomskog statusa provedbom kontekstualno primjerenih sociopsiholoških intervencija.

Ključne riječi: socioekonomski status, kompatibilnost identiteta, obrazovne aspiracije, obrazovne nejednakosti

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