

Socioeconomic Inequality and the Role of Parental Expectations in Track and Subject-Level Placement in Irish Secondary Education

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What is LEARN?

- Inequalities in learning outcomes and educational attainment in Europe are worsening, influenced by socio-economic factors, gender, and ethnic/migrant status over time.
- Project LEARN (Longitudinal Educational Achievements: Reducing iNequalities) aims to use a longitudinal approach to identify patterns of these inequalities to inform evidence-based educational policymaking.
- LEARN will conduct case studies in nine diverse European countries, mapping and analyzing existing high-quality longitudinal educational data sets.

What is LEARN?

- Ongoing investigations:
 - Systematic reviews (international)
 - Policy book (international)
 - **SES, parental expectation, and educational trajectories (Ireland)**
 - We were given a very specific set of instructions for this project. I briefly considered renaming it '*Research According to Script*'!! 🤖
 - Term-time work and university students' subjective well-being (Ireland).

Introduction

- Socioeconomic status (SES) is a well-established determinant of educational outcomes.
- Parental educational expectations (PEEs) significantly influence children's academic development.
- Building on sociological and psychological theories, this study examines how socioeconomic background shapes students' educational trajectories in Ireland, with a particular emphasis on the role of PEEs.

Introduction

- Research indicates that students from lower-SES backgrounds often end up in vocational tracks and lower-level subjects (Smyth, 2018; Triventi et al., 2021).
- However, the interaction between early parental expectations and SES in shaping educational outcomes remains underexplored.



- Are parental expectations an independent factor in subject-level differentiation and track placement?
- Do they mediate the long-term effects of parental background?

Parental Educational Expectations and Educational Inequality

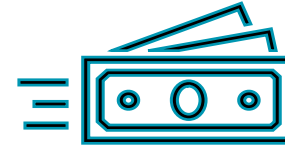
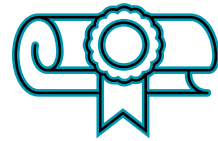
- Parents' educational expectations are conceptualised as *realistic aspirations*—distinct from idealistic hopes—in that they are more tightly constrained by institutional and structural barriers (Goldenberg et al. 2001; Finger, 2016).



- Such expectations are central to the intergenerational transmission of advantage and inequality, operating within the broader institutional context of educational tracking and curricular differentiation (Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002).

Parental Educational Expectations and Educational Inequality

- Wisconsin Model of Status Attainment (Sewell & Hauser, 1972), which positions parental expectations as a critical intermediary between family background and children's educational attainment.



- In this framework, higher family income, parental educational attainment, and richer home learning resources foster stronger and more aligned expectations, which in turn promote higher academic performance and access to advanced curricular tracks (Lai, Liu, & Huang 2022; Shi et al., 2023).

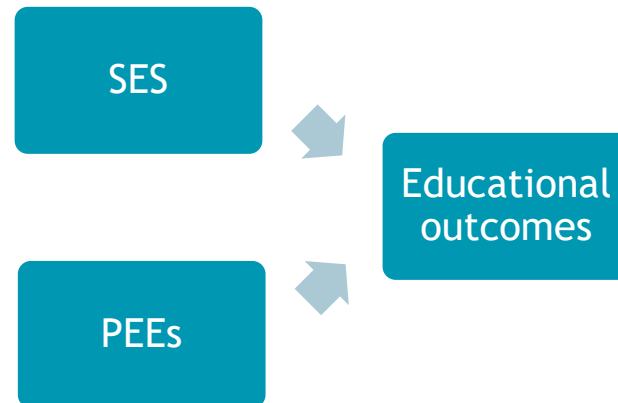
Parental Educational Expectations and Educational Inequality

- Empirical studies lend support to this mechanism, showing that children from higher-SES families benefit from expectations that are more accurate, better aligned with their abilities, and more strongly reinforced within supportive home environments (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005; Chen & Gregory, 2010; Boone & van Houtte, 2013; Shi et al., 2023).
- By contrast, lower-SES families often hold expectations that may be overly optimistic, overly pessimistic, or misaligned with children's actual performance, which can impede effective decision-making about academic options (DeBacker & Routon, 2014; Alexander et al., 1994; Reardon, 2011; Mengxuan & Chzhen, 2025).



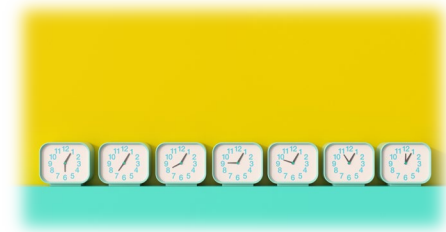
Parental Educational Expectations and Educational Inequality

- Some evidence indicates that PEEs exert a direct and independent effect on student attainment, net of family background and measured ability (Sewell & Shah, 1967; Fang & Huang, 2019; Wang & Qi, 2014).
- This suggests that even in the absence of a mediating pathway, parental expectations may operate as a lever for social mobility, potentially offsetting some effects of structural disadvantage.



Parental Expectations as a Precursor to Educational Outcomes

- Parental educational expectations are widely understood to chronologically precede and shape children's academic outcomes.



- Grusec and Goodnow's (1994) perception-acceptance pathway offers a useful framework for conceptualising this sequence.
- PEEs operate through a combination of socialisation processes and value formation mechanisms.

Parental Expectations as a Precursor to Educational Outcomes

- There is also a complementary experience pathway (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015).
- Both pathways emphasize that valuing achievement is a critical driver of academic engagement and performance.
- Students who see educational success as important are more likely to employ self-regulated learning strategies, set challenging goals, and persist through difficulties (Neubauer et al., 2022; Wang & Pomerantz, 2009).
 - This heightened engagement has been shown to translate into improved academic outcomes over time (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1993; Alexander, Entwisle, and Horsey, 1997; Kenney-Benson, Pomerantz, Ryan, & Patrick, 2006; Chase et al., 2014).

Parental Expectations as a Precursor to Educational Outcomes

- Theoretical checkpoint
- First, that SES and PEEs independently predict students' educational outcomes,
- Second, that PEEs potentially mediate the SES influence,
- Third, there is a temporal gap between the formation of parental expectations and the realization of children's educational trajectories.



Educational Stratification and Inequality in Ireland

- The Senior Cycle, normally two years in duration, offers three programmes.
 - The Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) follows an academic curriculum,
 - The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) combines academic and vocational elements
 - The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) provides a pre-vocational track designed for students at risk of early school leaving or with substantial learning difficulties.
- While LCE and LCVP students can apply directly to higher education, LCA graduates are excluded from the Central Applications Office (CAO) admissions system and typically progress into further education or the labour market.
- Participation in non-academic tracks is disproportionately concentrated among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, often linked with restricted long-term educational and occupational prospects (Banks et al., 2014; Gorby, Watson, & McCoy, 2005).

Educational Stratification and Inequality in Ireland

- Access to tertiary education is centrally regulated by the CAO points system, which allocates places based on students' six best subjects in the Leaving Certificate.
- Points vary by grade and subject level, with Foundation level subjects excluded. Many university programmes also require Higher-level passes in specific subjects, further elevating the stakes of subject-level selection.
- Although Ireland is frequently characterised as a “comprehensive” system (Clarke, 2010), the interaction of subject differentiation, programme choice, and the CAO system introduces a form of academic tracking.
- While less formalised than in other European contexts, these mechanisms shape educational trajectories and contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities.



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Educational Stratification and Inequality in Ireland

- Ireland has experienced a remarkable expansion of educational participation since the introduction of free post-primary schooling in 1967.
- Entry into higher education rose from approximately 5% of school-leavers in the mid-1960s (Clancy, 2015) to one of the highest rates in the EU today, with 59% of 20-year-olds entering tertiary education (Eurostat, 2024).
- Irish students also perform well in international comparisons, ranking second among 81 countries in the 2022 PISA assessment (OECD, 2023).
- Despite this progress, persistent socio-economic disparities in access, attainment, and progression endure (Chzhen et al., 2018; Nelis & Gilleece, 2023).



Educational Stratification and Inequality in Ireland

- Policy initiatives such as DEIS have attempted to address these inequalities.
- While evaluations show gains in literacy and numeracy at the primary level (Kavanagh, Weir & Moran, 2017; Weir & Denner, 2013), significant achievement gaps persist, particularly between students in urban DEIS schools and their non-DEIS peers (Nelis & Gilleece, 2023).
- This reflects a broader reality: family socio-economic status (SES) continues to influence educational pathways.
- Students from higher-SES households remain overrepresented in academic tracks and Higher-level courses, while lower-SES students are disproportionately channelled into less demanding routes (McCoy et al., 2014; McCoy & Smyth, 2011; McCoy & Byrne, 2024; Cullinan et al., 2013).

The Current Study

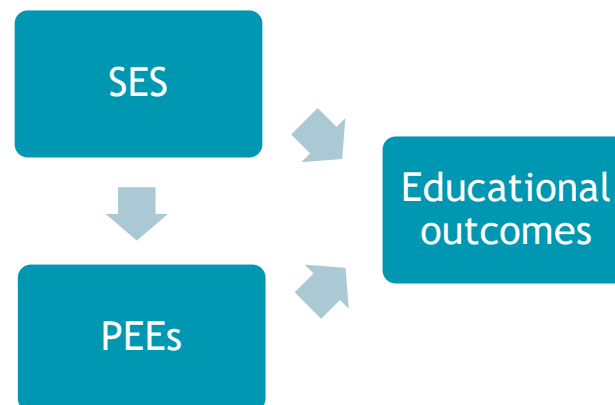
- **Students' current academic success often reflects earlier parental expectations for future achievement**—expectations that tend to exceed the child's performance at the time they were formed (Cheong and Pomerantz, 2015).



- **Theoretical arguments presented earlier on the roles of SES and parental educational expectations (PEEs) in shaping students' educational outcomes**, crucially at transition points and junctures in the curriculum (Sewell & Hauser, 1972).

The Current Study

- First, we hypothesize that SES and early-age PEEs will each independently and positively predict students' educational outcomes when modelled concurrently, controlling for contextual factors (Independent Effects Hypothesis).
- Second, we propose that parental educational expectations (PEEs) measured at an earlier stage will partially mediate the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and students' educational outcomes, such that higher SES is associated with higher PEEs, which in turn increase the likelihood of academic track placement and selection of higher subject levels, net of contextual factors (Mediation Hypothesis).



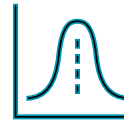
Methods

Data and sample

- We used the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) longitudinal survey, specifically the Child Cohort '98, which tracks the educational, social, and developmental trajectories of children born between November 1997 and October 1998.



- For this study, particular emphasis is placed on GUI surveys conducted at ages 9, 13, 17, and 20 as these waves align with critical decision-making stages in the Irish education system and our analytical strategies.



- The original cohort comprised 8,568 children and their families interviewed at age 9. As is common in longitudinal research, inter-wave attrition gradually reduced the sample size, with around 6,000 participants remaining at age 17/18 and 4,700 at age 20.

Methods

Dependent variables

- **Educational Track.** Educational track placement was measured as a *binary variable* distinguishing between students who followed the traditional academic Leaving Certificate and those who pursued non-academic alternatives, such as the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). This variable was extracted from a retrospective question included in the fourth wave of the GUI, i.e., age of 20.
- **Subject Level Choice.** Curricular differentiation is represented through students' subject level selection in the core subjects of English and Mathematics. These variables are reported in the third wave of the GUI (i.e., 17 years). *English was represented as a binary variable* distinguishing between Higher and Ordinary levels, while *Mathematics was captured through a three-category measure* differentiating among Higher, Ordinary, and Foundation levels.

Methods

Key predictors

- **Socioeconomic status (SES).** It was measured using two complementary indicators from earlier waves of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study: equivalised household income, categorised into quintiles, and primary parental education level, coded categorically. These measures were collected when the child was aged 9 and 13.
- **Parental educational expectations (PEEs).** They were operationalised as a binary variable, distinguishing between high expectations (aspiring to a college degree or higher) and lower expectations (below degree level). This variable was measured at ages 9 and 13, well before the age 17 outcomes.

Methods

Control variables

- To account for potential confounding influences, the models incorporate a range of demographic, academic, neighbourhood, and school-level controls.
- These factors encompass a student's gender, immigration background, and number of siblings. Prior academic performance is measured using Junior Certificate grades in English and Mathematics, which are reported in the third wave of the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study.
- Neighbourhood context is measured using parent-reported assessments of the availability of youth activity resources, such as sports clubs, youth centres, or swimming facilities, in the local area.
- School-level influences are approximated using the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) classification, which designates schools serving populations at risk of socioeconomic disadvantage (Fleming & Harford, 2023).

Methods

Empirical strategy

- Two sets of regression models were computed, distinguished by the timing of measurement for income and PEEs (ages 9 and 13).
- Logistic regression models were used to assess the probability of academic track and English subject level choice, which were both measured as binary variables.
- An ordered logistic regression model was applied to the Mathematics subject level choice, which was measured using three ordered categories (Higher, Ordinary, and Foundation).



Methods

Empirical strategy

- To assess the potential mediating role of parental expectations, the analysis employed the Karlson-Holm-Breen (KHB) method, which is specifically designed to decompose total effects in non-linear probability models (Karlson et al., 2011; Breen et al., 2010).
- The KHB approach allows for the separation of direct and indirect associations, adjusting for the scale identification problem that typically arises when adding mediators to logistic regression models.
- Given the multicategorical nature of the SES indicators used in this study (i.e., income quintiles and parental educational levels) we used bootstrapped confidence intervals for the KHB indirect effects.

Methods

Missing data strategy

- The GUI study is subject to inter-wave attrition.
- The analytic samples used for academic track placement, drawn from the fourth wave, and subject-level indicators obtained from the third wave differ in size.
- In addition to attrition, further reductions occurred due to missing data on key variables.
- For the main analyses, we adopted a complete-case approach, which reduced the effective sample to roughly 4,800 observations for the subject-level models and 4,000 observations for the track placement models.



Methods

Missing data strategy

- To evaluate the robustness of our findings, we implemented a chained multiple imputation procedure to replace missing values in key variables and re-estimated the models, while applying longitudinal sample weights specifically designed to adjust for differential non-response.
- These weights, provided by the GUI research team, help ensure that the estimated relationships are not biased by systematic patterns of attrition (ESRI, 2021).

Summary statistics

Variables	Summary
N	4,803
Academic track (N= 4,006)	95.5%
Parent's highest educational level	
None or primary	1.0%
Lower secondary	8.3%
Up sec/Postsec non-tert	30.4%
Short-cycle tertiary	25.9%
Bachelor's or equivalent	19.3%
Postgraduate	15.1%
Household annual income quintiles (9)	
Lowest	10.3%
2nd	16.4%
3rd	19.8%
4th	24.6%
Highest	28.9%
Household annual income quintiles (13)	
Lowest	14.1%
2nd	15.7%
3rd	18.9%
4th	23.9%
Highest	27.5%
Parental educational expectations (9)	
Non-degree	17.8%
College degree	82.2%
Parental educational expectations (13)	
Non-degree	12.2%
College degree	87.8%
School take part in the DEIS (13)	
No	87.8%
Yes	12.2%
Gender	
Male	48.8%
Female	51.2%
Born in Ireland (parent)?	
Yes	85.4%
No	14.6%



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Regression results

Table 2. Logistic and Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis of Educational Outcomes with PEEs and SES Measured at Age 9

Variables	Ordered logit	Logit	
	Mathematics level	English level	Track
Household annual income quintiles			
2nd	0.213 (0.128)	0.224 (0.138)	0.244 (0.234)
3rd	0.423 *** (0.125)	0.544 *** (0.142)	0.798 ** (0.266)
4th	0.575 *** (0.124)	0.542 *** (0.143)	0.397 (0.257)
Highest	0.603 *** (0.127)	0.850 *** (0.156)	0.701 * (0.296)
Parent's highest educational level			
Lower secondary	0.873 * (0.354)	-0.308 (0.335)	-0.048 (0.453)
Up sec/Postsec non-tert	1.381 *** (0.345)	0.183 (0.326)	0.247 (0.440)
Short-cycle tertiary	1.384 *** (0.348)	0.253 (0.331)	0.455 (0.458)
Bachelor's or equivalent	1.894 *** (0.352)	0.520 (0.343)	1.018 * (0.516)
Postgraduate	1.842 *** (0.357)	0.867 * (0.364)	0.869 (0.555)
Parental educational expectations (=1 if College degree)	0.870 *** (0.089)	0.954 *** (0.094)	1.004 *** (0.168)
School take part in the DEIS (= 1 if Yes)	-0.657 *** (0.104)	-0.696 *** (0.108)	-0.646 *** (0.127)
Gender (=1 if Female)	-0.507 *** (0.066)	0.371 *** (0.085)	-0.006 (0.161)
Number of siblings	0.068 * (0.032)	0.070 (0.041)	0.114 (0.077)
Parent born in Ireland (= 1 if No)	0.169 (0.092)	-0.058 (0.120)	-0.273 (0.220)
Number of observations	4798	4803	4006

Regression results

Table 3. Logistic and Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis of Educational Outcomes with PEEs and SES Measured at Age 13

Variables	Ordered logit	Logit	
	Mathematics level	English level	Track
Household annual income quintiles			
2nd	0.263 * (0.118)	0.463 *** (0.136)	0.001 (0.227)
3rd	0.392 *** (0.115)	0.530 *** (0.136)	0.050 (0.238)
4th	0.398 *** (0.112)	0.540 *** (0.135)	0.778 ** (0.277)
Highest	0.732 *** (0.117)	0.781 *** (0.152)	0.744 * (0.312)
Parent's highest educational level			
Lower secondary	0.830 * (0.354)	0.403 (0.340)	0.257 (0.447)
Up sec/Postsec non-tert	1.309 *** (0.344)	0.768 * (0.328)	0.641 (0.434)
Short-cycle tertiary	1.316 *** (0.346)	0.875 ** (0.333)	0.813 (0.449)
Bachelor's or equivalent	1.821 *** (0.350)	1.180 *** (0.344)	1.089 * (0.495)
Postgraduate	1.821 *** (0.355)	1.655 *** (0.367)	1.032 (0.536)
Parental educational expectations (=1 if College degree)	1.222 *** (0.110)	1.293 *** (0.103)	1.327 *** (0.171)
School take part in the DEIS (= 1 if Yes)	-0.659 *** (0.104)	-0.706 *** (0.111)	-0.481 * (0.189)
Gender (=1 if Female)	-0.496 *** (0.066)	0.375 *** (0.087)	-0.046 (0.160)
Number of siblings	0.061 (0.033)	0.064 (0.043)	0.109 (0.078)
Parent born in Ireland (= 1 if No)	0.161 (0.092)	-0.080 (0.121)	-0.256 (0.218)
Number of observations	4740	4748	3971

Regression results

Table 4. *KHB mediation regression results with parental expectation as the mediator (PEEs and SES measured at age 9).*

Variables	Math level	English level	Track
Income quintile			
<i>2nd</i>			
Total	0.206	0.065	0.263
Direct	0.213	0.065	0.244
Indirect	-0.007	0.000	0.019
<i>3rd</i>			
Total	0.425 ***	0.550 ***	0.832 **
Direct	0.423 ***	0.544 ***	0.798 **
Indirect	0.003	0.005	0.034
<i>4th</i>			
Total	0.602 ***	0.575 ***	0.465
Direct	0.575 ***	0.542 ***	0.397
Indirect	0.027	0.033	0.069
<i>Highest</i>			
Total	0.663 ***	0.918 ***	0.800 **
Direct	0.603 ***	0.850 ***	0.701 *
Indirect	0.060	0.067	0.098
Education			
<i>Lower secondary</i>			
Total	0.969 *	-0.206	0.073
Direct	0.873 *	-0.308	-0.048
Indirect	0.095	0.102	0.122
<i>Upsec/Postsec non-tert[†]</i>			
Total	1.580 ***	0.398	0.477
Direct	1.381 ***	0.183	0.247
Indirect	0.198	0.215	0.230
<i>Short-cycle tertiary</i>			
Total	1.625 ***	0.518	0.750
Direct	1.384 ***	0.253	0.455
Indirect	0.241	0.264	0.295
<i>Bachelor's or equivalent</i>			
Total	2.204 ***	0.858 *	1.390 **
Direct	1.984 ***	0.520	1.118 *
Indirect	0.310 *	0.338 *	0.371 *
<i>Postgraduate</i>			
Total	2.175 ***	1.231 ***	1.256 *
Direct	1.842 ***	0.867 *	0.869
Indirect	0.333 *	0.364 *	0.387 *
	4798	4803	4006

Notes: [†] Up sec/Postsec non-tert = Upper secondary or postsecondary non-tertiary education. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Regression results

Table 5. *KHB mediation regression results with parental expectation as the mediator (PEEs and SES measured at age 13).*

Variables	Math level	English level	Track
Income quintile			
<i>2nd</i>			
Total	0.281 *	0.482 ***	-0.008
Direct	0.263 *	0.463 ***	0.001
Indirect	0.018	0.019	-0.009
<i>3rd</i>			
Total	0.472 ***	0.615 ***	0.112
Direct	0.392 ***	0.530 ***	0.050
Indirect	0.081	0.085	0.061
<i>4th</i>			
Total	0.486 ***	0.629 ***	0.843 **
Direct	0.398 ***	0.540 ***	0.778 **
Indirect	0.088	0.089	0.066
<i>Highest</i>			
Total	0.857 ***	0.911 ***	0.860 **
Direct	0.732 ***	0.781 ***	0.744 *
Indirect	0.125	0.130	0.116
Education			
<i>Lower secondary</i>			
Total	0.781 *	0.350	0.250
Direct	0.830 *	0.403	0.257
Indirect	-0.048	-0.053	-0.007
<i>Upsec/Postsec non-tert[†]</i>			
Total	1.385 ***	0.848 **	0.741
Direct	1.309 ***	0.768 *	0.641
Indirect	0.075	0.081	0.101
<i>Short-cycle tertiary</i>			
Total	1.439 ***	1.007 **	0.987 *
Direct	1.316 ***	0.875 **	0.813
Indirect	0.124	0.132	0.165
<i>Bachelor's or equivalent</i>			
Total	1.999 ***	1.369 ***	1.312 **
Direct	1.821 ***	1.180 ***	1.1089 *
Indirect	0.178	0.189	0.224
<i>Postgraduate</i>			
Total	2.007 ***	1.854 ***	1.256 *
Direct	1.821 ***	1.655 ***	1.032
Indirect	0.186	0.199	0.227
	4740	4748	3971

Notes: [†] Up sec/Postsec non-tert = Upper secondary or postsecondary non-tertiary education. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Regression results

Table 6.

Bootstrap KHB indirect results of influence of SES through PEEs (at age 9) and joint significance test results.

	Math level	English level	Track
Income quintile			
<i>2nd</i>	-0.007 (0.023)	0.000 (0.023)	0.019 (0.028)
<i>3rd</i>	0.003 (0.021)	0.005 (0.022)	0.034 (0.028)
<i>4th</i>	0.027 (0.020)	0.033 (0.021)	0.069 * (0.029)
<i>Highest</i>	0.060 ** (0.021)	0.067 ** (0.022)	0.098 *** (0.030)
Joint significance test (P-value)	0.000	0.000	0.003
Education			
<i>Lower secondary</i>	0.095 (0.069)	0.102 (0.072)	0.122 (0.082)
<i>Upsec/Postsec non-tert</i> [†]	0.198 ** (0.069)	0.215 ** (0.073)	0.230 ** (0.084)
<i>Short-cycle tertiary</i>	0.241 *** (0.071)	0.264 *** (0.074)	0.295 *** (0.089)
<i>Bachelor's or equivalent</i>	0.310 *** (0.074)	0.338 *** (0.077)	0.371 *** (0.095)
<i>Postgraduate</i>	0.333 *** (0.075)	0.364 *** (0.078)	0.387 *** (0.097)
Joint significance test (P-value)	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	4798	4803	4006

Notes: [†] Up sec/Postsec non-tert = Upper secondary or postsecondary non-tertiary education. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05



Regression results

Table 7.

Bootstrap KHB indirect results of influence of SES through PEEs (at age 13) and joint significance test results.

	Math level	English level	Track
Income quintile			
<i>2nd</i>	0.018 (0.027)	0.019 (0.028)	-0.009 (0.031)
<i>3rd</i>	0.081 *** (0.025)	0.085 *** (0.025)	0.061 * (0.029)
<i>4th</i>	0.088 *** (0.024)	0.089 *** (0.025)	0.066 * (0.029)
<i>Highest</i>	0.125 *** (0.024)	0.130 *** (0.025)	0.116 *** (0.030)
Joint significance test (P-value)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Education			
<i>Lower secondary</i>	-0.048 (0.084)	-0.053 (0.091)	-0.007 (0.097)
<i>Upsec/Postsec non-tert</i> [†]	0.075 (0.078)	0.081 (0.087)	0.101 (0.093)
<i>Short-cycle tertiary</i>	0.124 (0.081)	0.132 (0.088)	0.165 (0.096)
<i>Bachelor's or equivalent</i>	0.178 * (0.080)	0.189 * (0.087)	0.224 * (0.098)
<i>Postgraduate</i>	0.186 * (0.081)	0.199 * (0.088)	0.227 * (0.098)
Joint significance test (P-value)	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	4798	4803	4006

Notes: [†] Up sec/Postsec non-tert = Upper secondary or postsecondary non-tertiary education. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05



Robustness checks

- Estimates from the imputed datasets and weighted models closely mirrored those obtained from the original logistic and ordered logistic regressions, as well as from the KHB mediation analyses.

Conclusion

- SES and PEEs independently predict academic outcomes: higher SES and stronger expectations both increase the likelihood of academic track placement and higher-level subject choices.
- Mediation effects exist but are contingent on the timing of expectations.
- When measured at age 9, parental education has a more significant indirect effect through PEEs.
- However, at age 13, the mediation for education diminishes while the indirect effects of income grow more pronounced and consistently significant.
- The findings highlight a **compounding effect**: families with both high SES and strong expectations create a double advantage, while low SES and weak expectations create a double disadvantage.

Implications

- The developmental stage matters.
- Initially (at age 9), cultural capital (parental education) drives expectations and academic orientation.
- As students approach adolescence, material capital (income) becomes more influential—likely because costs for advanced subjects, exam prep, and extracurricular activities rise.
- Policies should be **stage-sensitive**:
 - **Early years**: Focus on parental engagement and expectation-building programs.
 - **Adolescence**: Provide financial support (grants, subsidies) to ensure access to higher-level subject choices.



Thank you for your attention!