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# Family and Continued Education of Primary School Students

**Abstract:** This paper examines the correlation of family characteristics (material family status, parents' educational status) and the plans of primary school students to continue their education. This paper identifies the degree of correlation between individual characteristics of students' families and students' educational aspirations towards inclusion at the highest levels of education, i. e. tertiary education. This paper starts from the basic assumption that the family plays a significant role in choosing the future educational direction of primary school students. This study uses a descriptive and analytical method and implements a survey as a research technique. The obtained data were statistically processed and are presented as frequencies and percentages. The survey included 198 students in the final grade of elementary schools in the Jagodina municipality, located in central Serbia. The research was conducted in 2017 and the questionnaire examined (a) the social matrix of the students' families, (b) the students' views on continuing their education and (c) the students' views of their parents' expectations that they would continue their education. The  $\chi^2$  test was used as a measure of statistical inference. The main findings of the study showed that (a) most of the primary school students plan to continue their education by enrolling in the tertiary level of education and (b) students' educational aspirations are not significantly related to the material status of the family.

**Keywords:** family, education, educational aspirations, primary school students

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## Introduction

In Serbian society, prior to the transition, there was great confidence in education as a channel of social promotion – reaching the highest levels of education made it possible to achieve vertical social mobility in the socialist development period (Ivanović 2006; Ratković 1994). At the same time, access to higher education was opened so that in the 1950s and late 1980s, large groups of the population, owing to the completion of their tertiary education, made the transition from lower to higher social classes (Ivanović 2008; Vuković 1994). At that time, the society had a system of compensatory education that enabled members of the poorer strata to enrol in higher levels of education – the state covered their tuition fee almost completely (Ristanović 1995). However, the long transition in Serbian society, lasting from the late 1980s to the present, has led to the devastation of the society, economy, culture and education itself (Marković 2004; Mitrović 2009). Numerous reforms that have been begun and left unfinished have exhausted material and human resources, values have been altered, and in the new neoliberal development paradigm, public spending is steadily diminishing and projects such as long lasting education have become the „responsibility“ of families or individuals. The consequences of these changes have led to social stratification, altering the size and position of social groups and increasing the degree of their self-reproduction; therefore, the lower the group is on the social ladder, the smaller are its chances of promotion, even through education (Bolčić and Milić 2002; Vuković 1994; ). However, trust in education has not been lost and the crucial importance of education for the development of the individual and society continues to prevail. This is accompanied by the family's commitment to provide financial support to children for inclusion in higher education levels, even when they are poor. The emergence that the younger members of the family are increasingly perceived as a *financial resource* (Segalan 2002), and, on the other hand, in the modern family the child becomes “human capital” or “investment in the future” (Jenks 1996) is also present in the modern Serbian family.

To consider the relationship between family characteristics and the primary school students' decision to continue their education, a theoretical framework has been developed based on the literature which examines (a) the association between

sociocultural affiliation, participation in education and educational success (Atkinson et al. 2005; Bernstein 1961; Douglas 1964; Hyman 1993; Sugarman 1967; Baucal and Pavlovic-Babic 2009; Simic-Sasic et al. 2011; Žakelj and Cotič 2011); (b) the link between social inequalities, family inequalities and school inequalities (Mejel 2004; Ivanović 2008; Segalan 2009; Koković 2009; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Šimić-Šašić et al. 2011); and (c) the problem of students as social actors who seek to be *subjects* and develop practices that are not aligned with the nature of class society and the school system (Dibe 2002).

Significant differences are evident in the motivation and educational success between members of different social groups; their value structures create a particular context in which school achievement is expected or disabled due to “self-imposed obstacles” (Hyman 1993). Cultural deprivation theory seeks to explain the impact of subcultural differences on the educational aspirations and achievements of members of different social groups. According to this theory, the characteristics of the family and sociocultural environment from which students come are the real context in which their desire for achievement develops, and the most important factor shaping this desire is the parents’ interest in the education of their child (Douglas 1964). Students who are faced with low prospects for advancement and low income to invest in their future have low motivation and low educational attainment (Sugarman 1967) and subcultures (attitudes, norms, values, behaviour) of different groups form their relation to education. Thus, it is considered that members of the so-called low-income subcultures have low educational aspirations and have long-term education inaccessible and unattractive (Haralambos 2002).

Everyday living practices form a discourse within which cultural needs, educational needs and aspirations are formed (Storey 2009). The educational aspirations of members of different social classes according to Bourdieu (1986) are not accidental; they are not only derived from subjective assessments but are conditioned by the social position and class affiliation of the individual. Valuing education is linked to the environmental factors and type of cultural capital that people possess (Bourdieu 1986). According to research conducted in Serbia in the 1990s, family factors are particularly prominent among these factors, and it is emphasised that (a) the socioeconomic status (SES) and cultural standard of the family are linked to students’ educational attainment and aspirations (Havelka 1990) and (b) the financial position of the family is a major factor in shaping students’ decisions to continue their education and choose a profession (Vuković 1994).

Research into the influence of the family on developing children’s educational aspirations can essentially be described by two approaches. The first approach highlights the influence of the family on the creation of a particular culture within their own frameworks, which enables cultural and social reproduction by spreading and imposing certain values on the members of the family group. This approach is exemplified in (a) Bourdieu (1977) theory of reproduction, which explains how social inequalities are reproduced within the school and (b) Boudon’s theory of rational choice of actors (Boudon 1974), which explains the school success of children by their “choices” in an educational process that is consistent with the notion of the *cost and utility* of long education.

A dominant paradigm in research addressing students' educational achievement and educational aspirations is the realisation that the factors that shape them relate to the students or to the immediate context from which they come, such as a low SES. Research has shown that students from families with a lower SES feel less secure at school and that this may relate to their lower educational achievement (Johnson et al. 2001; Willms 2002; Kao and Thompson 2003; Baucal and Pavlovic-Babic 2009; Pavlovic-Babic and Baucal 2010). A correlation was also identified between family (parental) factors and student success in school (Klarin and Proroković 2011; Milošević 2002; Šimić-Šašić).

Nevertheless, the integration of students into the school system and the length of time they stay in it are not only an expression of social determinism and school selection but are also linked to the "subjective construction of reality, which translates into practices" (Dibe 2002, p. 10). By measuring the investment in education and the profit that investment makes, the student "projects in the future a picture of himself" (ibid., p. 18) and makes a decision about the length of schooling, which may be inconsistent with the sociocultural framework from which it originates. In this paper, the approach to elementary school students relies on the approach applied in the study of high school students by Dibe (2002) – students are seen as social actors who construct reality through social action, not just actors subject to the "pressures" of the system (family, school, social system).

The determination of members of the generations involved in compulsory education for continuing education is linked to the requirements of the so-called society of knowledge and economy that seeks highly qualified participants in the work process. In the face of increasing social and global economic inequality, education is becoming even more significant because it increases the chances of young people to participate in the global labour market (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). Many studies show that dropping out of high school before graduation creates a number of problems, such as finding a hard job (Stanard 2003) or finding a job with a sufficient salary for normal life (Christenson and Thurlow 2004), becoming involved in crime (Harlow 2003), experiencing social exclusion (Starc et al. 2006), and falling below the so-called poverty line (Bridgeland et al. 2006).

This research identifies the local characteristics of observed phenomena and determines whether a correlation exists between elementary school students' plans for continuing education and particular characteristics of their families. The empirical data obtained represent a viewpoint of the family–education relationship of a particular group of respondents in a chosen environment and at a certain time; thus, the micro-research performed does not allow for generalisation. However, to avoid relinquishing our aspirations for generalisation, we examined the processes and relationships that were identified within the study population. This research emphasises the particular viewpoint shaped by the place occupied by the observer in a particular social space (Stefani and Weber 2005), i.e. we highlight the local characteristics of the observed phenomena (and relationships).

## Method

This paper examines the connection between elementary school students' plans for continuing their education and the characteristics of their families (e.g. material family status, parents' educational status). We determine the degree of correlation between individual characteristics of the families of the elementary school students and their aspirations towards continuing their education.

In accordance with the objections and purpose of this paper, we:

- identify the socioeconomic characteristics of the families from which the primary school students come; and determine whether correlations exist between
- the material status of the family and the school performance of the primary school students;
- the school performance of the primary school students and their desire to continue their education; and
- the level of education of the student's parents and the student's evaluation of their parents' expectations for their children to continue their education.

The following hypotheses are made. Basic hypothesis: Primary school students' plans for continue into higher levels of education relates to their assessment of their parental aspirations regarding continuing education.

Specific hypotheses:

- The elementary school students' plans to continue their education relates to the financial position of the family.
- Students' assessment of their parents' expectations to continue their education relates to the educational status of the parents (fathers and mothers).

## Research methods, techniques and the research instrument

We used a descriptive and analytical method and a survey technique (we constructed a special instrument for the survey – Questionnaire for Eighth Graders). In addition to general instructions and questions to obtain general information of the students (gender, place of residence, overall success in school), the questionnaire contained questions to identify the socioeconomic characteristics of the students' families, the students' educational aspirations, and the students' assessment of their parents' aspirations for continuing their education. The respondents were given detailed instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and the survey was conducted as part of a full-time one-hour lesson. The  $\chi^2$  test was also used to determine the existence of a statistically significant difference between certain categories set at  $p > .01$  and  $p < .05$ .

## Population and research sample

There are 11 elementary schools in the territory of Jagodina municipality (central Serbia), six of which are urban and five are rural, with 36 separate departments.

The sample of schools in which the survey was conducted was selected: (a) according to the residential criterion – two urban and four rural schools; (b) by demographic criterion, schools in settlements with positive demographic trends (so-called ‘live’ settlements); and (c) according to the criterion of socioeconomic development of the environment in which the school is located – central urban areas and economically developed rural areas. Based on these criteria, the survey was conducted in two urban and three rural primary schools.

The sample of the research consisted of 198 final year, eighth grade, primary school students. These students were selected because they have completed the compulsory primary education level and, at the end of the school year, they have to decide about their future educational plans. The survey was completed in September 2017.

## Research results

Jagodina city, including its surrounding villages (53) has a population of 71,195, of which 50.70% live in the city and 49.30% live in the countryside (Census 2011), see Table 1.

Age	0–19	20–59	> 60
Jagodina (overall)	14,527	38,583	18,787
Urban	7,788	10,707	8,883
Other	6,739	17,927	9,904

*Table 1: Population and age structure in Jagodina municipality Source: Population age structure by municipalities and cities, 2011 Census (Census Belgrade: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia).*

The presented data show that the population of this municipality is aged 20 to 59 years. Notably, the population aged 0–19 years is significantly smaller than the population aged 60 years and above, which shows the accelerated aging of the population, especially in rural settlements.

The educational structure of the population in Jagodina municipality, according to the data obtained by the Census (2011), is presented using the following parameters: no education, primary education, high school, higher education, university (faculty) and unknown (see Table 2).

Municipality	Sex	Overall	No education	Incomplete primary education	Primary education	High school	Higher education	Faculty	Unknown
Jagodina	p	61,511	1,680	7,524	13,835	30,029	3,437	4,747	259
	m	29,430	258	2,774	6,068	16,288	1,668	2,261	113
	f	32,081	1,422	4,750	7,767	13,741	1,769	2,486	146
Urban	p	31,679	451	1,875	5,388	17,333	2,592	3,965	75
	m	14,666	76	467	2,087	8,906	1,214	1,882	34
	f	17,013	375	1,408	3,301	8,427	1,378	2,083	41
Other	p	29,832	1,229	5,649	8,447	12,696	845	782	184
	m	14,764	182	2307	3,981	7,382	454	379	79
	f	15,068	1,047	3,342	4,466	5,314	391	403	105

Table 2: Educational structure in Jagodina municipality (Census 2011) Source: Population aged 15 and over, by level of school completion and sex, by municipalities and cities, 2011 (Census Belgrade: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia).

Legend: P = population, m = male, f = female

The following summarise the basic characteristics of the families of the interviewed students:

- The majority of the students come from families with four members (43.9%), followed by five (26.8%) and six-member families (14.1%). The fewest come from seven-member families (4.0%).
- In evaluating the financial position of their own family, 5.6% of the students consider their family *wealthy*, 41.4% of the students consider their family to be *well-off*, and the majority, 42.4%, consider their family to be of *average financial standing*. Of the respondents, 2.0% claim to be *poor* or *extremely poor* with a monthly income per household member of less than or around 50 euros.
- Data on the educational standard of the parents of the surveyed students, according to the students, show that the majority of the parents completed high school. Accordingly, 60.6% of the fathers completed high school, 17.2% finished higher education and 7.1% graduated from a faculty. Additionally, only 13.1% of fathers completed the whole eight grades of primary school, and 2.0% of fathers did not finish primary school. Data on maternal education indicate that 55.6% of the students' mothers completed high school, 17.2% completed higher education, 9.1% graduated from a faculty, 16.2% completed primary school, and 2.0% did not finish primary school.

- According to the students, the largest percentage of their fathers were workers (38.4%), 21.7% were clerks, 14.1% were craftsmen, 10.1% were farmers, 5.6% were executives, 3.5% were entrepreneurs, 1.5% were experts and 1.0% were artists. The data obtained about the students' mothers' occupations indicate that 35.9% were housewives, 30.3% were workers, 17.7% were clerks, 4.0% were experts, 3.5% were entrepreneurs and 3.5% were farmers.

To determine whether a correlation exists between the SES of the family and the school achievement of the primary school students, we collected the students' school performance at the end of the seventh grade of primary school (Table 3) and identified the relationship between the assessment of the material status of the family and the school performance of the students (Table 4).

Students' school success	Frequency (F)	Percentages (%)
Excellent	61	30.86
Very good	71	35.85
Good	62	31.31
Pass	3	1.51
Overall	197	99.49
No answer	1	0.50
Suma	198	100.0

Table 3: Student success at the end of the seventh grade of primary school

Of the 198 students, 61 achieved excellent school success, 71 achieved very good school success, 62 achieved good school success and only three students achieved only a pass (one respondent did not provide an answer).

The socioeconomic characteristics of the environment from which the student comes are considered to have a positive or negative impact on their educational achievement. The more favourable the material position of the student's family, the more favourable is the context for better educational accomplishment, and a bad material position is thought to create negative circumstances that limit the student's educational accomplishment. The respondents were asked to assess the material status of their family. Table 4 shows the relationship between the students' perception of the material status of the family and the school achievement of the examined group of students. Four respondents did not answer this question.

	School success								Overall	
	Excellent		Very good		Good		Pass			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Wealthy	4	2.06	1	0.51	6	3.09			11	5.67
Well-off	25	12.88	31	15.98	23	11.86	4	2.06	83	42.78
Average material status	29	14.95	29	14.95	26	13.41			84	43.29
Below average material status	2	1.03	6	3.09	4	2.06			12	6.18
Poor (monthly income per household member of around 50 euros)			1	0.51	1	0.51			2	1.03
Extremely poor (less than 50 euros per family member)			1	0.51	1	0.51			2	1.03
Overall	60	30.92	69	35.56	61	31.44	4	2.06	194	100.0

Table 4: Evaluation of the family financial status and student achievement in school  
 $\chi^2 = 13.122$ ;  $df = 15$ ;  $p = .593$

The results of the Hi-square test is  $\chi^2 = 13.122$ , with  $df = 15$ , and  $p = .593$ , indicate that no statistically significant difference exists in the academic achievement of students coming from families with different material statuses. In other words, the null hypothesis is confirmed, suggesting that the student's academic achievement is not shaped by the material status of the family.

Numerous studies that have examined the impact of SES on students' educational achievement have shown a correlation. For example, an analysis of PISA data that has monitored the impact of SES (i.e. parental educational status, parental interest and material possessions) on the development of the students' key competencies has shown that, in all countries, students with a higher SES achieve, on average, higher levels of educational achievement (OECD 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010). Many studies show a positive correlation between SES and educational attainment (Sirin 2005; White 1982; Hattie 2009). However, the findings obtained in this study do not show a positive correlation between SES and student academic achievement. The findings herein are closer to those obtained in other

studies conducted in Serbia which track the impact of SES on students' educational achievement. For example, in Baucal's (2012) study on the impact of students' SES on educational achievement, this impact is slightly weaker than in other European countries:

In Serbia, the SES of students explains 10% of the variance, while the SES is a gradient of 27 points. These data indicate that the impact of SES on student educational achievement in Serbia is slightly weaker than in the OECD and European countries, suggesting that the fairness of education in Serbia is at a slightly higher level than in those countries. However, the effect of SES students on educational achievement in Serbia is still, individually, one of the strongest predictors of student achievement. (p. 9)

The rational decision to continue education is based on the student's achieved school success. To determine whether school success is an important parameter for deciding whether to continue their education in the study population, students were asked to 'discover' their educational aspirations (Table 5). Six respondents did not respond to this question.

		Students' educational aspirations										Total	
		I intend to graduate from college		I intend to graduate from high school (gymnasium)		I intend to graduate from vocational high school		I intend to finish the craft and get a job		I only intend to finish primary school			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Respondents' school success	Excellent	60	31.26									60	31.26
	Very good	55	28.64	10	5.22	5	2.60			1	0.52	71	36.97
	Good	23	11.97	21	10.94	5	2.60	9	4.68			58	30.21
	Pass			3	1.56							3	1.56
	Total	138	71.87	34	17.72	10	5.21	9	4.68	1	0.52	192	100.0
		Students' educational aspirations										Total	

Table 5: Students' school success and their educational aspirations  
 $\chi^2 = 78.811$ ;  $df = 12$ ;  $p = .000$

The value of the Hi-square test  $\chi^2 = 78.811$  ( $df = 12$ ) is significant at the  $p = .000$  significance level. These results indicate that a statistically significant difference exists between students with different academic achievements and their educational aspirations. Thus, the null hypothesis is not confirmed.

When asked if they could recognise the aspirations of their parents regarding the choice of their future educational direction, the students gave the following answers: »Yes, they want me to graduate and encourage me to make such a decision« (56.1%); »Yes, they want me to finish high school« (20.7); »They want me to finish the craft and start working right away« (2.5%); »No, they have no desire to deal with my further education« (2.0%).

However, by comparing students' aspirations to continue their education and their perceptions of parental aspirations to continue the education, it is observed that students' aspirations are *higher* than their parents' aspirations. More than 71.87% of students have a desire to get a higher education (graduate from a faculty), while only 56.1% of students recognised this as a parents' wish.

Parental expectations are particularly emphasised as an important factor in students' school achievement (Carpenter 2008, Grossman et al. 2011). In examining parental involvement in their children's schooling, several researchers (Fan and Chen 2001; Singh et al. 1995, according to Jacob 2010) included four dimensions (i.e. communication between children and parents about school, family structure, parental involvement in school activities, and parental expectations and aspirations) and found that the dimension of *parental expectations and aspirations* was most strongly associated with student academic achievement. An examination of the impact of parental aspirations on school achievement, how students perceive their parents' aspirations, and whether parents' aspirations are opposite or consistent with students' aspirations, found that parents' expectations are the first factor of school achievement from the perspective of students and from the perspective of parents it is in the fourth place (Suzić and Tunjić 2001).

To determine whether the parents' educational status relates to the students' assessment of their parents' aspirations to continue their education, the respondents were asked to recognise the aspirations of their fathers and mothers to choose their future educational direction. Table 6 shows the students' perceptions of their fathers' aspirations of different levels of education regarding the continuation of their children's education. Four respondents did not answer this question.

	Perceptions of fathers' expectations of continuing education by their children														Total		
	Yes, he would like me to graduate from the faculty and he encourages me		Yes, he would like me to graduate from Gymnasium		Yes, he would like me to graduate from the high vocational school		Yes, he would like me to complete the craft		Yes, he wants me to finish primary school and start working right away		Yes, but he leaves that decision to me		No, he doesn't care		F	%	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
Not completed primary school	1	0.51										1	0.51			2	1.03
Completed primary school	7	3.60	10	5.15	2	1.03	1	0.51	2	1.03	2	1.03	1	0.51	25	12.88	
High school	69	35.56	21	10.82	2	1.03			2	1.03	23	11.85	3	1.54	120	61.85	
Higher school	25	12.88	4	2.06	1	0.51					3	1.54			33	17.01	
Faculty	9	4.63	1	0.51							4	2.06			14	7.21	
Total	111	57.21	36	18.55	5	2.57	1	0.51	4	2.06	33	17.01	4	2.06	194	100.0	

Table 6: Perceptions of fathers' aspirations about the continued education of their children by students and the level of fathers' education  
 $\chi^2 = 36.720$ ;  $df = 24$ ;  $p = .047$

The results of the Hi-square test is  $\chi^2 = 36.720$ , with  $df = 24$  and  $p = .047$ , show that a statistically significant difference exists in the students' perceptions of their fathers' aspirations for completing different educational levels education. In other words, the null hypothesis has not been confirmed.

Table 7 shows the students' perceptions of their mothers' aspirations of different education levels about the continuation of their children's education. Six respondents did not answer this question.

		Perceptions of mothers' expectations of continuing education by their children										Total						
		She encourages me to graduate from the faculty		She encourages me to graduate from Gymnasium		She encourages me to graduate from high vocational school		She encourages me to complete the craft		She wants me to finish school and start working right away				She leaves that decision to me		She doesn't care		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Mother - level of education	Not completed primary school											1	0.52			1	0.52	
	Completed primary school	10	5.20	13	6.77	3	1.56	1	0.52	2	1.04	2	1.04			31	16.14	
	High school	66	34.37	18	9.37	2	1.04			2	1.04	19	9.89	2	1.04	109	56.77	
	Higher school	23	11.97	4	2.08							5	2.60	1	0.52	33	17.18	
	Faculty	13	6.77									5	2.60			18	9.37	
	Total																	

Table 7: Perceptions of mothers' aspirations about the continuing education of their own children by the examined students and the level of education of mothers.

$\chi^2 = 45.004$ ;  $df = 24$ ;  $p = .006$

The calculated Hi square test ( $\chi^2 = 45.004$ ) with the 24<sup>th</sup> degree of freedom ( $df = 24$ ) was significant at the significance level of  $p = .006$ . The calculated level of significance indicates that a statistically significant difference exists in the students' perceptions of their mothers' aspirations regarding the continuation of their schooling. In other words, the null hypothesis was not confirmed.

The data obtained (Tables 6 and 7), although indirect, show that the parents' level of education significantly determines their expectations regarding the continuation of their children's education. Other studies had similar findings: a direct proportionality was found between parents' educational achievement and their children's educational achievement expectations – parents with lower educational achievement expect less of their children, while parents with higher educational achievement had higher academic expectations of their children (Kaplan et al. 2001, according to Erceg, 2014). Additionally, in a study of parental expectations and school achievement of students, Slijepčević et al. (2017), found statistically significant differences in the way parents expressed their expectations and assessed the reality of their set expectations depending on their level of education.

## Discussion

The conducted micro-research provided empirical indicators regarding the impact of individual family characteristics on the students' decision to continue their education. The data obtained from the survey showed the following:

(1) The SES of the family is not transferred to the students' academic achievement, which suggests the possible conclusion that education is appreciated in their families. This circumstantial finding correlates with the results of other studies which found that education is highly valued in families as a way out of the "vicious circle of poverty" (Coleman et al. 1966; Anđelković and Pavlović-Babić 2004; Pavlović-Babić and Anđelković 2004; Tomanović 2010). This finding conflicts with a functionalist approach to education, which interprets that an individual's success is a consequence of the equal opportunities that society provides to participants in the educational process and their motivation for achievement. Although they are part of a deeply divided society and come from families with different SESs, resulting in unequal chances, the students surveyed in this study showed that their academic achievement goes beyond the simple conditionality of socioeconomic factors.

(2) According to the students, a large percentage of parents (over 56.1%) have high aspirations and desires for their children to get a college education, and they pointed out that their parents encourage them to realise this desire. The perceptions of high parental aspirations can encourage students to plan their further education and participation in higher education. The significant role of the family (parents) in the success of students in school and their academic achievements has been drawn by numerous studies which have shown that (1) a correlation exists between family/parental factors and the success of students in school (Šimić-Šašić et al. 2011; Milošević 2002) and (2) parental aspirations, goals and values, as well as parenting behaviours, relate to students' academic achievement (Okagaki and Feensch 1998; Spera et al. 2009; Spera 2005; Wentzel 1998, according to Simic-Sasic et al. 2011). Parental aspirations and expectations are a critical factor in a student's academic achievement, their expectations and final academic achievement (Jacob 2010). The findings of this study suggest that, in the surveyed student population, the perceptions of their parents' aspirations to continue their education may be a strong support for their participation in higher education.

(3) Within the surveyed population, there is a positive evaluation of education; both the students and their parents (according to students) have high educational aspirations. The students' perceptions of their parents' aspirations about the continuation of their education indicate that the majority (56.1%) of them want their children to graduate and encourage them to do so. Thus, the parents seek to influence the child's decision about the future educational direction, which allows for the assessment that (a) parents who have received a higher education recognise the chance for social promotion of their children, i.e. they recognise education as a capital that will enable their children to attain a prestigious social status; (b) the parents' directing their children to higher educational levels show that, despite the many changes that the family has experienced, it still has an educational and protective role in the contemporary Serbian society.

## Conclusion

The research results show that (1) the decision to continue their education was significantly crystallised among the students in the final grades of elementary school by a desire to participate in higher education and (2) the students' perceptions of their parents' aspirations about their further education show that the respondents estimate that their parents have high aspirations for them and want them to continue their education and to graduate. Indirectly, the data obtained allow us to conclude that, under the influence of the family factor, the examined population have developed an awareness of the importance of education and that their educational aspirations are influenced by their parental aspirations. Notably, the specific hypothesis about the correlation between the material status of the family and the school success of the students has not been confirmed, which suggests that education in Serbian society is recognised as a value and that the objectivity of education is high.

Families in Serbian society today face many challenges that are a logical consequence of its decades-long social, economic and cultural devastation. An anomalous society cannot perform numerous functions to full capacity, including functions that developed societies "take over" from the family. It is exposed to numerous influences that lead to its destabilisation and non-legitimation, yet, as a "creation of long duration", the family has the capacity to enable its survival. In this micro-environment, solidarity among family members, particularly in the parent-child relationship, is the *vertical* that maintains this group. Of particular importance is the influence of parents on the formation of educational aspirations of children, especially from the aspect of inclusion in higher levels of education, which still represent an open channel of social promotion. The inclusion of generations into higher education levels, however, presupposes the financial support of parents (families). Therefore, it is necessary for society, if it has a serious intention to modernise itself, to (a) provide macroeconomic stability that would strengthen the material basis of the family and enable it to participate in the financing of the youngest members who wish to continue their education after primary school and (b) increase the compensatory costs for education, which would have the effect of reducing inequalities in education and the openness of higher education. The proposals presented contribute to the implementation of the principles of the *Education Strategy for 2020* in Serbia (2012), especially in the context of including young generations in higher education.

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## ZNAČILNOSTI DRUŽINE IN IZOBRAZBENE ASPIRACIJE OSNOVNOŠOLCEV

**Povzetek:** V članku obravnavamo povezanost med značilnostmi družine (materialni status družine, izobrazba staršev) in načrtovanjem nadaljnje izobraževalne poti otrok, ki zaključujejo osnovnošolsko izobraževanje. Zanima nas torej stopnja povezanosti med posameznimi značilnostmi družin ter izobrazbenimi aspiracijami otrok, zlasti z njihovimi aspiracijami po doseganju najvišje, tj. terciarne stopnje izobrazbe. Naša izhodiščna predpostavka je, da ima družina pomembno vlogo pri izbiri prihodnje izobraževalne poti osnovnošolcev. Uporabili smo deskriptivno in analitično metodo ter z anketnim vprašalnikom zbrali podatke, ki smo jih statistično ustrezno obdelali. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 198 učencev zaključnega razreda osnovne šole v občini Jagodina v osrednji Srbiji. Raziskava je bila opravljena leta 2017, z vprašalnikom pa smo pridobili podatke o (a) socialnem statusu otrokove družine, (b) njegovih pogledih na nadaljnje izobraževanje in (c) njegovih prepričanjih o tem, kakšna so pričakovanja njegovih staršev glede njegove nadaljnje izobraževalne poti. Uporabili smo  $\chi^2$  preizkus za preverjanje hipotez neodvisnosti. Rezultati kažejo, da (a) večina osnovnošolcev izkazuje aspiracije po visokošolski stopnji izobrazbe in (b) da ni mogoče dokazati povezanost teh aspiracij z materialnim statusom družine.

**Ključne besede:** družina, izobraževanje, izobrazbene aspiracije, osnovnošolski učenci

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