

**Family Support in the Context of Socioeconomic Discrimination and Future
Expectations among Dutch VET Students**

Onno Bezemer (9504710)

Youth Development and Social Change, Utrecht University

202300008 Master Project: Thesis

Dr. Loïs Schenk

Word count: 5282

June 2024

Disclaimer: This thesis has been written as a study assignment under the supervision of a Utrecht University teacher. Ethical permission has been granted for this thesis project by the ethics board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Utrecht University, and the thesis has been assessed by two university teachers. However, the thesis has not undergone a thorough peer-review process so conclusions and findings should be read as such.

Abstract

Dutch adolescents express significant concerns about their future, including education, employment, and equitable opportunities (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, 2022). Addressing these concerns is crucial to foster positive future expectations and reduce risk behaviour (Cerqueira et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2020; Prince et al., 2016). This study investigates the impact of discrimination due to socioeconomic status (SES) on the future expectations of Vocational Education and Training (VET) students, and the influence of family support on this relationship. Data from the YOUth Got Talent project in the Netherlands was used, with a total sample of N=1102 adolescents (M age = 17.38). A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived discrimination due to SES and future expectations, as well as the moderating effect of family support. Results support hypothesis 1, revealing that higher levels of perceived discrimination due to SES are associated with decreased positive future expectations. Contrary to hypothesis 2, family support did not moderate this relationship significantly. These results contribute to the broader understanding on the impact of discrimination on youth development and advocate for policies regarding social equality and inclusion. Additionally, the findings of this study highlight the importance of addressing discrimination in the Dutch society to foster positive future expectations among adolescents. Future research should explore the interactions in an intersectionality framework, containing various forms of discrimination and studying their individual and combined effects on future expectations. Overall, this study highlights the importance of studying socio-economic discrimination and its implications for future outcomes and opportunities.

Keywords: discrimination due to SES, future expectations, family support, socioeconomic status, vocational education and training students, Buffering Hypothesis, Possible Selves Theory

1. Introduction

Adolescents in The Netherlands express concerns about various aspects of their future, including education, employment, housing affordability, family planning, environmental sustainability, personal health and equitable opportunities. These uncertainties not only affect their current outlook but also shape their perspectives on the foreseeable future. These concerns are comprehensively documented in the publication ‘Young people and caring for tomorrow’, a collection of articles assembled by fourteen advisory councils affiliated with the Dutch government (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, 2022). This advice addresses society and politics to ensure that current and future young generations can face a hopeful future. Future expectations consist of beliefs or expectancies regarding the likelihood of a specific event occurring in the future (Sipsma et al., 2012). Even though looking at the future is a continual developmental challenge, it becomes significantly important during adolescence (Fornell et al., 2023). Having positive future expectations during adolescence may serve as a predictor of favourable psychosocial well-being in adulthood (Kim & Kim, 2020). On the flip side, holding a pessimistic outlook toward the future correlates with engaging in risky behaviours (Prince et al., 2016) and substance abuse (Cerqueira et al., 2022).

Stressors associated with discrimination affect the way in which individuals perceive their future expectations (Herrera, 2009). Discrimination is defined as behaviour in which an individual or group treats members of a particular group unfairly (Sanders Thompson, 2006). A significant amount of research has focused on racial discrimination, whereas only a limited number of studies have examined discrimination concerning socio-economic status (SES) (Jokela & Fuller-Rowell, 2022). SES includes income, education, occupational prestige, and perceptions of social status and class. It reflects quality of life and opportunities, and consistently predicts various psychological outcomes (*Socioeconomic status*, z.d.). Discriminatory incidents related to SES can manifest across various community or workplace

settings and can present themselves in diverse ways. These may involve instances where individuals are perceived as less competent, receive inferior services, or are treated with less consideration or respect compared to others (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2018). Although the literature shows that adolescents with higher SES backgrounds report more positive future expectations compared to adolescents with a lower SES background (Beal and Crockett, 2013), the influence of discrimination based on SES on the future expectations of adolescents remains understudied.

Prior studies indicate that perceptions of support are associated with more positive future expectations (Millán et al., 2010). Despite the increasing influence of peers during adolescence, there is growing evidence that support from adults, such as parents, remains important throughout this period (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003; Rueger et al., 2010). Additionally, a perceived absence of family support is linked with negative future expectations (Fornell et al., 2023; Mercader et al., 2022). Social support is believed to help individuals deal with and manage the effects of stress when they are experiencing it. Thus, social support might act as a protective barrier against the adverse effects of discrimination and stigma (Başar et al., 2016). However, literature specifically on the effect of family support on the potential relationship between discrimination due to SES and the future expectations of adolescents has not been found.

Understanding the impact of SES-related discrimination is of great importance, especially during adolescence. Adolescence serves as a critical period where individuals develop their understanding of societal dynamics, including discrimination. Experiences of discrimination during this time may heighten awareness of societal marginalization, potentially leading to more deviant behaviour (Quintana, 2008). Furthermore, positive future expectations play a crucial role for adolescents in fostering favourable development and successful transitions into adulthood. Conversely, adolescents anticipating a negative future

are more prone to engaging in problem behaviours (Stoddard & Pierce, 2015). A logical assumption can be made that discrimination due to SES might negatively influence adolescents' future expectations. Given the complexity of discrimination due to SES and the many different ways this discrimination is expressed and experienced (Fuller-Rowel et al., 2018), it is essential to delve deeper into this topic to get a better understanding how socioeconomic disparities affect adolescents' future perspectives from a young age. Schools can play an important role by raising awareness among students about these influences and equipping them with skills to mitigate potential negative effects. Alongside this, structural changes at the political level to address these socioeconomic disparities remain pivotal and should be supported, despite the inherent challenges associated with such reforms. By raising awareness on the impact of SES-related discrimination on adolescents' future expectations, and therefore their development, we can work towards implementing strategies to mitigate the negative effects of discrimination due to SES and promote more equal (future) opportunities for all adolescents.

This study will contribute to the literature by addressing the gap that was found regarding the possible influence of discrimination due to SES on the future expectations of adolescents. By answering the research question, 'How does discrimination due to socioeconomic status affect the future expectations of vocational education and training (VET) students in The Netherlands, and under which conditions does family support influence this relationship?', the current study aims to provide additional insights into whether family support influences this potential relationship.

Theoretic framework

Discrimination due to SES and future expectations

Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often face an array of challenges that can significantly impact their future expectations, and perceived status-based

discrimination is a major risk factor affecting the wellbeing of college students from these backgrounds (Liu et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2023). This section explores the relationship between future expectations and discrimination due to SES, grounded in the Possible Selves Theory (PST) (Herrera, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

According to the PST, current behaviour is influenced and motivated by what individuals hope to become, expect to become, and fear of becoming. Possible selves are distinct from present self-conceptions but are closely intertwined with the present self through the way these potentialities are shaped and how they impact present actions (Herrera, 2009). In relation to future expectations, adolescents' possible selves are connected to identity goals as those goals relate to who someone wants to become. These possible selves exist of a portrayal of their long-term goals, since those long-term goals are the cognitive expression of enduring goals and aspirations (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Since adolescence is a developmental period of uncertainty and questioning of the self (Arnett, 2000), an adolescent's possible self is consistently sensitive to positive and/or negative influences (Markus & Nurius, 1986). For example, if someone foresees a successful and fulfilling future self, they may be more motivated to work towards achieving these goals. Contrarily, if someone is unfair or poorly treated due to their SES, this may lead to feelings of uncertainty about the future and creating a negative or undesirable future self.

An example of the impact of discrimination due to SES on adolescents' possible selves is provided by, among others, the study of Chaves et al. (2004). Their study found that labour market discrimination experienced by family members caused urban adolescents to develop more negative expectations about their occupational future. Another example is the study of Diemer and Blustein (2006), which argued that structural oppression and limited access to career-related resources can lead urban adolescents to be less engaged in their occupational aspirations. These sociopolitical forces may cause lower SES adolescents of colour to believe

that achieving their 'dream' occupation is unlikely, leading them to expect lower status jobs (Diemer & Hsieh, 2008). These adolescents often have limited access to valuable resources, such as financial support (Wu et al., 2023), and are more prone to facing unfair treatment, such as inequitable employment opportunities (Schmitt et al., 2014). Previous studies have found that perceived SES-based discrimination is linked to higher levels of depression and anxiety symptoms among college students from socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Li et al., 2022; Song et al., 2019). Adolescents from high-risk environments have lower expectations regarding finishing high school, accessing university, securing a decent job, and having a decent support network (Goncalves et al., 2013). To mitigate these negative influences, the role of family support becomes crucial.

Family support as a buffer against the negative influence of discrimination due to SES

A theory which explains the effect of family support on the relationship between discrimination due to SES and future expectations is the Buffering Hypothesis. The Buffering Hypothesis shows that social support can function as a buffer against stress (Cohen & Wills, 1986). Stress occurs when individuals perceive a situation as threatening or demanding and lack an effective coping strategy to deal with it (Lazarus & Launier, 1978). Social support allegedly plays a role in two different moments of experiencing stress (Cohen & McKay, 1984). Firstly, support can intervene in the process between encountering a stressful event (or anticipating it) and the subsequent stress response by either lessening or preventing the perception of stress. This means that the belief in receiving support from others can alter the perceived severity of a situation, potentially enhancing one's ability to cope with challenges and thereby preventing the situation from being viewed as highly stressful. Secondly, sufficient support can act as a buffer between experiencing stress and the development of adverse outcomes by either diminishing or halting the stress response directly or by influencing physiological processes. Support may mitigate the impact of stress by offering

problem-solving solutions, reducing the perceived significance of the stressor or by promoting healthy behaviours (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This might indicate that higher levels of family support can buffer the negative (stress) effects of discrimination due to SES on the future expectations of adolescents.

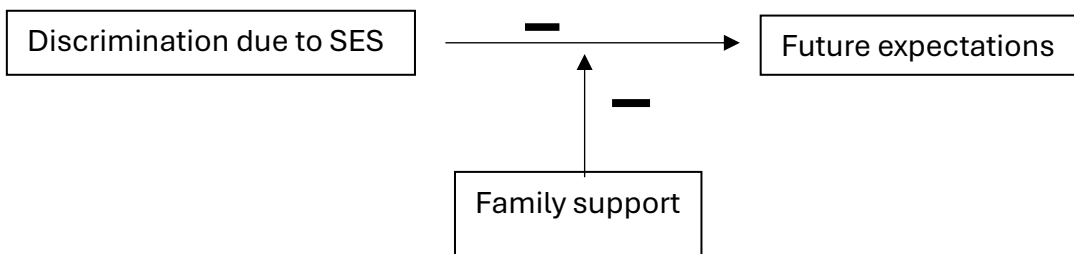
The study by Mossakowski and Zhang (2014) provides empirical evidence supporting this theory. Their research investigated the role of social support as a protective resource against the stress of (racial) discrimination among Asian American in the United States. One key finding indicates that perceived social support from family members for significant issues helps mitigate the stress associated with high levels of daily discrimination. For Asian Americans who frequently encounter unfair treatment, knowing that family members are available to provide emotional support during serious problems can be comforting and help reduce psychological distress (Mossakowski & Zhang, 2014). Similarly, Ajrouch et al. (2010) found that instrumental support, which includes help with tangible needs such as financial assistance, childcare and transportation (Lynch, 1998), serves as a significant buffer among African-American women who perceive moderate levels of everyday discrimination. However, this buffering effect diminishes for those who experience excessive everyday discrimination (Ajrouch et al., 2010). Additionally, the findings of Itzick et al. (2018) indicate that the level of perceived social support affects how perceived discrimination impacts subjective well-being among people with physical disabilities in Israel. Specifically, for those with low and moderate levels of social support, higher perceived discrimination is associated with reduced subjective well-being. Conversely, for individuals with high levels of social support, perceived discrimination does not appear to influence their subjective well-being (Itzick et al., 2018).

Current study

Considering the growing concerns about future housing, employment and education among adolescents in The Netherlands (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, 2022), this study investigates how perceived discrimination due to socioeconomic status (SES) relates to future expectations and the potential role of family support on this relationship. Drawing from the Possible Selves Theory (Herrera, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986), it is hypothesized that increased experiences of SES-based discrimination are associated with less positive future expectations (H1). Guided by the Buffering Hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1986), it is further hypothesized that family support may play a role in mitigating the negative effects of perceived SES-based discrimination on future expectations (H2). These relationships are illustrated in the conceptual model shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Model of the dependent, independent and moderator in the current study



Hypothesis 1 (H1): Higher levels of perceived discrimination due to SES is associated with lower levels of positive future expectations

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Perceived family support moderates the negative association between perceived discrimination due to SES and future expectations, such that higher levels of perceived family support attenuate the adverse effects of perceived discrimination due to SES on future expectations.

2. Method

Participants and design

The data from the YOUth Got Talent Project has been used for this study. The YOUth Got Talent project focuses on the SES-health gradient among adolescents (16+). Three VET schools, who cover the fields of creative, technical, health education and business, in the Utrecht region of The Netherlands participated in this project. The data was collected by trained researchers, who were present at the classrooms to conduct the self-report questionnaires, which included different topics and took around 20-30 minutes for the participants to fill in. In the Netherlands, VET students are categorized into different tracks, depending on the balance between theoretical and practical instruction. Students in track 2/3 were given abbreviated questionnaires compared to those in track 4, due to anticipated differences in their levels of attention. The data was collected in four different waves, between September 2019 and January 2022.

The data of the first wave will be used for the current study, collected between September 2019 and February 2020. The initial sample existed of approximately 1600 participants and the response rate in the first wave was 82% (N=1280). The participants who were excluded from the sample were either adolescents under the age of 16, adolescents who enrolled in class but (nearly) stopped with their study or adolescents who encountered website problems while filling in the questionnaire. The reasons for the 18% non-response of the population were absence in the classroom (16%) and refusal to participate (2%). The final sample for this study is N=1102 adolescents, due to exclusion of participants with missing values. Of this sample, 56% of the respondents identifies as female and 94% of the respondents are born in The Netherlands.

Procedure

The first wave was collected in the classroom, with researchers physically present. The second and third wave were conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the related online education. In this case, the researchers were online present in the classroom. In the third wave there were some classes where the researchers were physically present. In the last wave, the data in almost all the classes were physically conducted in the classroom except for three classes, which were conducted online. Participation was not limited, so new classes and participants could join in waves even if they did not participate in an earlier wave.

The participants gave active consent and were informed that the data would be anonymized. Ethical approval for this data collection was gained from the Ethics Assessment Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University (FETC18-070) in 2018 and 2021. Finally, researchers using this data should be aware to not publish results of small (sub) samples ($n=5$), because this may result in identification of participants. It is unknown if there was a reward for participating, resulting in the assumption that participation was voluntary.

Measurements

In Appendix 2 the complete statements and answer categories of each used variable can be found.

Future expectations

Future expectations was measured by eight statements. Each statement asks the respondent to estimate how likely they think they are to achieve a certain goal, such as a well-paying job or a happy family-life, in the future. The answer options exist of a 1-5 Likert scale, with 1 indicating a very small chance that they will achieve this certain goal and 5 indicating a very big chance. A scale, Future Expectations Scale, has been created and used in the study of Jessor et al. (1990), existing of all the eight statements (Cronbach's $\alpha = .808$). A high score on this scale indicates higher positive future expectations.

Discrimination due to SES

Discrimination due to SES was measured by asking the respondent how often they feel like they are treated unfairly and/or poorly because of how much money their family has. This was asked for three different groups of people; teachers at school, adults outside of school and youth at school. The respondent could score how often they feel like they are treated unfairly and/or poorly by each group by answering a 1-5 Likert scale, with 1 indicating never and 5 meaning very often. A scale, discrimination due to SES (Discrimination), has been created, existing of all three questions (Cronbach's alpha = .837). A higher score indicates a higher perceived amount of times being unfair/poorly treated due to how much money their family owns.

Family support

Family support was measured by four statements about the respondent's family (the family where they spend the most time), asking the respondent how they think about these statements. The answer options exist of a 1-7 Likert scale, with 1 meaning completely disagree and 7 meaning completely agree. An example of a statement is "The people in my family really try to help me". A scale, Family Support Scale, has been created. This scale exists of all four statements (Cronbach's alpha = .924), which has been used before in the study of Zimet et al. (1988). A high score on this scale means a high perceived family support.

Control variables

The demographic variable 'Age' will be included as a control variable. The study of Beal and Crockett (2013) points out that experience is a key factor in the formation of future expectations. When adolescents get older, they project their future expectations more in line with their resources and possibilities, resulting in a decrease in positive future expectations (Fornell et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to control for age. Age is measured in how old someone is in years. The control variable SES was measured by the Family Affluence Scale

(FAS) (Torsheim et al., 2016). The FAS indicates the family's objective material and financial assets. The scale consists of six questions about the respondent's family assets: Own bedroom, computer(s), vacation abroad, car(s)/van(s), dishwasher and bathroom(s). For respondents who filled in all the items a continuous family affluence score was created by summing the item scores and then ridding-transforming these summed items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.72) (Finkenauer et al., 2023). The continuous scale has scores between zero and one, in which a higher score indicates a higher SES.

Analysis

To analyse the relationship between Discrimination due to SES and Future Expectations, and the moderating effect of Family Support on this potential relationship, the statistical program JASP has been used. Before the analysis could be performed the assumptions had to be checked. The linearity assumption is met by checking the scatterplots and residual plots. The scatterplots showed a linear pattern and the residuals were randomly scattered around the zero. There is no autocorrelation in the residuals because the Durbin-Watson statistic was about 1.8, and values between 1.5-2.5 are acceptable. To check for homoscedasticity, the residual plots were checked and these showed homoscedasticity. The normal-distribution of the residuals were checked in the histograms and Q-Q plots, and this assumption was met. The multicollinearity was tested by checking the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). At first the assumption was violated since the VIF score for the independent and moderator were >16 , while it should be at least <10 . This was solved by centring both the independent variable and moderator, resulting in VIF scores of 1. The centring was done by deducting the mean score of the variable of every individual score. No outliers were detected by checking Cook's distance, which showed no scores >1 . Missing values were excluded listwise. This means that respondents who did not fill in all the variables are excluded. This

method provides consistent sample sizes and is useful for this study since the proportion of missing data is low and the pattern of missing values is random (Acock, 2005).

The first step for analysing this study was inspecting the descriptive statistics for all the variables. Secondly, a correlation matrix was examined whether there is a significant association between the variables. If one of the control variables has no significant association with the other variables, this control variable will not be included in the upcoming analysis. Lastly, a multiple linear regression with three models will be conducted for the two hypotheses. The first model includes only the control variables. In the second model the first hypothesis was tested by adding the centred independent variable to the multiple linear regression. Finally, the second hypothesis was tested in the third model by adding the centred moderator and the interaction effect between the centred independent variable and the centred moderator.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all the variables included in the study. The participants have on average moderately high future expectations, leaning towards a positive outlook ($M=3.78$, $SD=0.537$). On average, participants reported experiencing discrimination due to SES at a frequency slightly above rarely ($M=1.12$, $SD=0.522$). On average, the respondents agreed that they received a considerable amount of perceived family support ($M=5.82$, $SD=1.385$).

In Table 2 the correlations between the variables are presented. Control variable SES will not be controlled for in this study because it has no significant correlation with the other variables. As shown in Table 2, the correlation between future expectations and discrimination due to SES was very weak ($r=-.09$, $p=.002$), suggesting a very small but significant correlation which indicates that an increase in discrimination due to SES may be associated

with a decrease in positive future expectations. A moderate correlation between future expectations and family support was found ($r=.33$, $p<.001$), suggesting a noticeable and significant effect. This indicates that an increase in perceived family support is related to an increase in positive future expectations. The correlation between future expectations and control variable age was very weak ($r=-.1$, $p=.001$), implying a very small but significant effect. This indicates that an increase in age is associated with a slight decrease in future expectations. Discrimination due to SES is very weak correlated with family support ($r=-.1$, $p<.001$) which implies a very small but significant effect. This suggests that an increase in the perceived family support is related to a decrease in the perceived discrimination due to SES. The correlation between discrimination due to SES and age was very weak ($r=.07$, $p=.025$). This indicates a very small but significant effect which implies that getting older is associated with an increase in perceived discrimination due to SES. Family support and age was weak correlated ($r=-.11$, $p<.001$) which indicates a small but significant effect. This implies that getting older is associated with a decrease in the perceived feeling of family support.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

	Mean (SD)	Min-max
Future Expectations	3.8 (0.5)	1-5
Discrimination due to SES	1.2 (0.5)	1-5
Family support	5.8 (1.4)	1-7
SES	0.5 (0.3)	0-1
Age	17.4 (1.2)	16-29

Table 2*Pearson's Correlations*

Variable	Future expectations	Discrimination due to SES	Family support	SES	Age
Future expectations	-				
Discrimination due to SES	-.09**	-			
Family support	.33***	-.10**	-		
SES	.06	-.04	.01	-	
Age	-.10**	.07*	-.11***	-.07*	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The results of the regression analysis can be found in Table 3. Model 1 included the control variable (age) and the dependent variable (future expectations). There was a significant negative association between age and future expectations ($B = -0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, $P < .001$), showing that an older age is correlated with slightly lower positive future expectations. The overall model was significant, $F(1,1181) = 13.25$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of 0.011. In model 2 the centred independent variable discrimination due to SES was added to the regression analysis. There was a significant negative association between discrimination due to SES and future expectations ($B = -0.09$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .003$), showing that higher perceived discrimination due to SES is correlated with lower positive future expectations. The overall explained variance of the model increased with an R^2 of 0.008, $F(2,1158) = 12.44$, $p < .001$. Model 3 added the centred moderator family support and the interaction term (centred discrimination due to SES x centred family support). Family support was associated with higher positive future expectations ($B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$), showing that higher levels of perceived family support are associated with higher positive future expectations. However,

the interaction term was not significant ($B= 0.02$, $SE= 0.02$, $p=.26$), showing that family support does not significantly interact with the relationship between discrimination due to SES and future expectations. Including the moderator and interaction term increased the model's R^2 with 0.099 , $F(4, 1156) = 39.48$, $p < .001$. The final model explains 11.8% of the variance in future expectations ($R^2= 0.118$). To summarize this analysis, discrimination due to SES is associated with lower positive future expectations, as outlined in Hypothesis 1. Contrary to Hypothesis 2, family support is not associated with a change in the relationship between discrimination due to SES and future expectations.

Table 3.

Multiple linear regression

Model		B	Std. Error	Sig.	95 % Confidence Interval for B		R square change	Sig.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	(Constant)	4.34	0.16	<.001	4.04	4.65	0.011	<.001
	Age	-0.03	0.01	<.001	-0.05	-0.02		
2	(Constant)	4.35	0.16	<.001	4.05	4.66	0.008	0.003
	Age	-0.03	0.01	<.001	-0.05	-0.02		
	Centred_DiscrSES	-0.09	0.03	0.003	-0.16	-0.03		
3	(Constant)	4.17	0.15	<.001	3.88	4.47	0.099	<.001
	Age	-0.02	0.01	0.007	-0.04	-0.01		
	Centred_DiscrSES	-0.06	0.03	0.047	-0.12	-0.01		
	Centred_FamSupp	0.12	0.01	<.001	0.10	0.01		
	Centred_DiscrSes x Centred_FamSupp	0.02	0.02	0.26	-0.02	0.06		

Dependent variable: Future expectations

Discussion

Adolescents in The Netherlands face diverse concerns regarding their future, spanning education, employment, housing affordability, and more (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, 2022). These uncertainties shape their expectations, which are crucial during adolescence, predict psychosocial well-being and influence behaviours (Prince et al., 2016; Sipsma et al., 2012). This study investigated whether there is an association between discrimination due to SES and the future expectations of VET students, as well as whether family support plays a role in this relationship. The findings indicate that higher levels of perceived discrimination due to SES are linked with lower levels of positive future expectations among VET students. Additionally, the study explored whether family support moderates this relationship but found no significant evidence to support such moderation.

In line with Hypothesis 1, the findings suggest that VET students who perceive discrimination based on their SES tend to express lower positive future expectations. This finding aligns with the Possible Selves Theory, which proposed that future expectations are shaped by individuals' hopes, expectations and fears. Adolescents' possible selves, influenced by identity goals, reflect their long-term aspirations (Herrera, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Empirical evidence supports this, with studies showing that structural oppression and limited access to career-related resources diminish adolescents' engagement with occupational aspirations (Diemer & Blustein, 2006) and that lower SES adolescents who experience these sociopolitical forces expect lower status jobs because they may believe that achieving their 'dream' occupation is unlikely (Diemer & Hsieh, 2008). Even though the results of this study indicate a significant association between discrimination due to SES and future expectations, this finding should be interpreted with caution. The explained variance of the model was relatively low, suggesting that only a small portion of the variance in future expectations was accounted for by discrimination due to SES. This might imply that there are other factors

influencing future expectations, which need to be identified in further research to assess their combined contribution.

The results of this study indicate that family support does not significantly moderate the relationship between discrimination due to SES and future expectations. Family support positively predicts future expectations, suggesting that higher levels of perceived family support are associated with more positive future expectations, but the interaction between discrimination due to SES and family support was not significant. This suggests that, contrary to hypothesis 2, family support does not appear to attenuate the adverse effects of perceived discrimination due to SES on future expectations. These findings do not support the Buffering Hypothesis, which posits that social support, such as family support, can alleviate the negative impact of stressors, like discrimination, on future outcomes (Cohen & Wills, 1986).

Moreover, they diverge from previous empirical evidence, such as that of Mossakowski & Zhang (2014), which highlights the buffering effect of family support against the stress of discrimination. An alternative explanation for these findings is the Reverse-Stress Buffering Model. This model suggests that strong peer relationships may not provide the expected benefits in high-stress environments characterized by negative life events. Adolescents typically thrive when they have strong peer support in low-stress environments. However, in high-stress contexts, such relationships may become less effective, potentially exacerbating the challenges faced by at-risk youths. This aligns with research indicating that protective factors, including social support, tend to be more effective in less risky environments (Rueger et al., 2016; Ouyang et al., 2020; Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008).

Implications

The findings of this study have several valuable implications for future policies and practices. The significant impact of discrimination due to SES on future expectations highlights the need for governmental parties and policymakers to address economic inequality

and provide equal opportunities for education and employment, regardless of someone's socioeconomic background. A positive step in The Netherlands has been the legal recognition of VET students as 'students' rather than 'participants' (*MBO'ers willen officieel studenten heten*, 2018). However, still many structural solutions are needed to stimulate an equal society, also for VET students. An example of an intervention could be a SIRE campaign, aimed at raising awareness among employers about discriminatory practices against VET students during their job or internship applications.

Even though there was no moderating effect of family support on the relationship between discrimination due to SES and future expectations, the significant relationship between family support and future expectations indicates that enhancing family support remains crucial. Programs designed to strengthen family bonds in high schools could be beneficial for the positive future expectations of adolescents.

Future research is warranted to delve deeper into these relationships. Future studies should consider investigating the effects of SES-based discrimination within the broader context of intersecting forms of discrimination. Emerging evidence advocates for adopting an intersectionality framework, which examines how discrimination across multiple social categories influences outcomes such as health. This approach suggests that examining discrimination through a single social category may underestimate its overall impact (Williams et al., 2019). Thus, exploring the intersectional effects of discrimination could provide a more comprehensive understanding of its implications for various outcomes, including future expectations among diverse student populations.

Limitations and strengths

While a direct measure of inequality for the experienced discrimination could have been used in this study and there is a diverse sample which is favourable for the reliability and

validity of this study, there are also some limitations. Firstly, the variable ‘discrimination due to SES’ was measured in this study by investigating how many times someone was treated poorly/unfair due to how much money their family owns. This might be debatable given the fact that SES is seen as “the social standing or class of an individual or group, often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation” (Juntunen et al., 2022), and not only family income as measured in this study. However, empirical studies lack agreement on the best way to define and measure SES. Often, studies give little attention to why specific indicators are chosen over others (Bornstein and Bradley, 2014). Liberatos et al. (1988) suggested there is no universally best measure because the choice depends on key considerations such as the relevance to the study, suitability to the specific population, and reliability and validity. Given these complexities, it is essential to acknowledge that our study’s approach to measuring discrimination due to SES, while grounded in existing research, may not capture the full spectrum of social class influence. Secondly, another limitation of this study is that it is a cross-sectional sample, and therefore causation could not be studied because cross-sectional designs are merely associations, and they do not imply causation (*Cross-Sectional study- an overview | ScienceDirectTopics*, z.d.). The last limitation of this study is that the sample only represents the Utrecht region of The Netherlands, and therefore cannot be generalised towards the whole population of The Netherlands.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the relationship between discrimination due to SES and future expectations of VET students, alongside the potential moderating role of family support. The key findings of this study revealed that discrimination due to SES significantly decreases the positive future expectations of VET students. However, contrarily to the initial hypothesis, family support had no moderating effect on this relationship. These findings

highlight the importance for governmental parties and policymakers to implement anti-discrimination policies and interventions, such as a SIRE campaign, to foster positive future expectations among adolescents. Additionally, this study emphasizes that family support remains crucial for adolescents' positive future expectations. By addressing these issues, the way can be paved for more equitable educational and employment outcomes and opportunities for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status. This research contributes to the broader understanding of the influence of discrimination due to SES and these effects on youth development, highlighting the importance of policies and interventions to promote social equality and inclusion to empower every adolescent to achieve their full potential in life.

References

- Acock, A. C. (2005). Working With Missing Values. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(4), 1012-1028. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00191.x>
- Ajrouch, K. J., Reisine, S., Lim, S., Sohn, W., & Ismail, A. (2010). Perceived everyday discrimination and psychological distress: Does social support matter? *Ethnicity & Health*, 15(4), 417-434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2010.484050>
- Arnett, J.J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469–480
- Başar, K., Öz, G., & Karakaya, J. (2016). Perceived Discrimination, Social Support, and Quality of Life in Gender Dysphoria. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 13(7), 1133-1141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2016.04.071>
- Beal, S. J., & Crockett, L. J. (2013). Adolescents' occupational and educational goals: A test of reciprocal relations. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 34(5), 219-229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2013.04.005>
- Bornstein, M. H., & Bradley, R. H. (Ed.). (2002). *Socioeconomic Status, Parenting, and Child Development*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410607027>
- Cerqueira, A., Gaspar, T., Botelho Guedes, F., Godeau, E., & Gaspar de Matos, M. (2022). Alcohol and tobacco use in Portuguese adolescents: The relationship with social factors, future expectations, physical and psychological symptoms. *Children & Society*, 36(5), 1010-1025. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12552>
- Chaves, A. P., Diemer, M. A., Blustein, D. L., Gallagher, L. A., DeVoy, J. E., Casares, M. T., & Perry, J. C. (2004). Conceptions of Work: The View From Urban Youth. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51(3), 275-286. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.51.3.275>
- Cohen, S., & McKay, G. (1984). Social Support, Stress and the Buffering Hypothesis: A Theoretical Analysis. In *Handbook of Psychology and Health, Volume IV*. Routledge.

Colarossi, L. G., & Eccles, J. S. (2003). Differential effects of support providers on adolescents' mental health. *Social Work Research*, 27(1), 19-30.

Conceptions of Work: The View From Urban Youth. (z.d.). Geraadpleegd 8 juni 2024, van

<https://oce-ovid-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/article/00001192-200407000-00001/HTML>

Cross-Sectional Study—An overview / *ScienceDirect Topics*. (z.d.). Geraadpleegd 20 juni 2024,

van <https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/topics/nursing-and-health-professions/cross-sectional-study>

Diemer, M. A., & Blustein, D. L. (2006). Critical consciousness and career development among urban youth. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 68(2), 220-232.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.07.001>

Diemer, M. A., & Hsieh, C.-A. (2008). Sociopolitical Development and Vocational Expectations Among Lower Socioeconomic Status Adolescents of Color. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 56(3), 257-267.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2008.tb00040.x>

Finkenauer, C., Boer, M., Spitzer, J., Weinberg, D., Visser, K., Jonker, M., & Stevens, G. W. J. M.

(2023). Examining the role of civic attitudes in the link between family wealth and school dropout among tertiary vocational students. *Npj Science of Learning*, 8(1), 1-10.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-023-00189-4>

Fornell, P., Ortiz-Bermúdez, A. Ú., Rodríguez-Mora, Á., Verdugo, L., & Sánchez-Sandoval, Y.

(2023). Future expectations of adolescents from different social backgrounds. *Anales de Psicología / Annals of Psychology*, 39(2), Article 2.

<https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.522701>

Fuller-Rowell, T. E., Curtis, D. S., Chae, D. H., & Ryff, C. D. (2018). Longitudinal health consequences of socioeconomic disadvantage: Examining perceived discrimination as a mediator. *Health Psychology*, 37(5), 491–500.

<https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1037/hea0000616>

- Herrera, D. E. (2009). *Perceived racial/ethnic discrimination, hope, and social connectedness: Examining the predictors of future orientation among emerging adults*.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2152/7837>
- Itzick, M., Kagan, M., & Tal-Katz, P. (2018). Perceived social support as a moderator between perceived discrimination and subjective well-being among people with physical disabilities in Israel. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 40(18), 2208-2216.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2017.1331380>
- Jokela, M., & Fuller-Rowell, T. E. (2022). Changing associations between socioeconomic status and self-reported discrimination from the 1990s to the 2010s in the United States. *International Journal of Psychology*, 57(6), 760-765. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12853>
- Juntunen, C. L., Pietrantonio, K. R., Hirsch, J. K., Greig, A., Thompson, M. N., Ross, D. E., & Peterman, A. H. (2022). Guidelines for psychological practice for people with low-income and economic marginalization: Executive summary. *American Psychologist*, 77(2), 291-303.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000826>
- Kim, T., & Kim, J. (2020). Linking adolescent future expectations to health in adulthood: Evidence and mechanisms. *Social Science & Medicine*, 263, 113282.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113282>
- Li, Q., Wu, J., & Wu, Q. (2022). Self-Compassion Buffers the Psychological Distress from Perceived Discrimination Among Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Emerging Adults: A Longitudinal Study. *Mindfulness*, 13(2), 500-508. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01810-6>
- LIBERATOS, P., LINK, B. G., & KELSEY, J. L. (1988). THE MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL CLASS IN EPIDEMIOLOGY. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 10(1), 87-121.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.epirev.a036030>

- Liu, X., Xie, T., Li, W., Tao, Y.-Q., Liang, P., Zhao, Q., & Wang, J. (2021). The relationship between perceived discrimination and wellbeing in impoverished college students: A moderated mediation model of self-esteem and belief in a just world. *Current Psychology*, 42. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01981-4>
- Lynch, S. A. (1998). Who Supports Whom? How Age and Gender Affect the Perceived Quality of Support from Family and Friends. *The Gerontologist*, 38(2), 231-238. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/38.2.231>
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954-969. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954>
- Mbo'ers willen officieel studenten heten.* (z.d.). Geraadpleegd 21 juni 2024, van <https://nos.nl/op3/artikel/2231314-mbo-ers-willen-officieel-studenten-heten>
- Mercader Rubio, I., Oropesa Ruiz, N. F., Ángel, N. G., & Fernández Martínez, M. M. (2022). Motivational Profile, Future Expectations, and Attitudes toward Study of Secondary School Students in Spain: Results of the PISA Report 2018. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(7), Article 7. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19073864>
- Millán, J. M. F., Cortina, D. D. de la, Buitrago, M. J. M., & Mohamed, A. H. (2010). Relación entre el apoyo social, la satisfacción vital y las expectativas de futuro de menores acogidos en centros de protección. *Electronic Journal of Research in Education Psychology*, 8(21), Article 21. <https://doi.org/10.25115/ejrep.v8i21.1372>
- Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, W. en S. (2022, mei 23). *Jongeren en het zorgen voor hun morgen—Overige—Gezondheidsraad* [Publicatie]. Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport. <https://www.gezondheidsraad.nl/documenten/overige/2022/05/23/jongeren-en-het-zorgen-voor-hun-morgen>

- Mossakowski, K. N., & Zhang, W. (2014). Does Social Support Buffer the Stress of Discrimination and Reduce Psychological Distress Among Asian Americans? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 77(3), 273-295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272514534271>
- Ouyang, C., Li, D., Li, X., Xiao, J., Sun, W., & Wang, Y. (2020). Cyber victimization and tobacco and alcohol use among adolescents: A moderated mediation model. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 114, 105041. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.105041>
- Possible Selves. (z.d.). Geraadpleegd 8 juni 2024, van <https://oce-ovid-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/article/00000487-198609000-00004/HTML>
- Prince, D. M., Epstein, M., Nurius, P. S., Gorman-Smith, D., & Henry, D. B. (2019). Reciprocal Effects of Positive Future Expectations, Threats to Safety, and Risk Behavior Across Adolescence. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 48(1), 54-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2016.1197835>
- Quintana, S. M. (2008). Racial perspective taking ability: Developmental, theoretical, and empirical trends. In *Handbook of race, racism, and the developing child* (pp. 16-36). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Rueger, S. Y., Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2010). Relationship between multiple sources of perceived social support and psychological and academic adjustment in early adolescence: Comparisons across gender. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(1), 47-61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9368-6>
- Rueger, S. Y., Malecki, C. K., Pyun, Y., Aycocock, C., & Coyle, S. (2016). A meta-analytic review of the association between perceived social support and depression in childhood and adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 142(10), 1017-1067. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000058>
- Sanders Thompson, V. L. (2006). Coping Responses and the Experience of Discrimination¹. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 36(5), 1198-1214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-9029.2006.00038.x>

- Schmitt, M. T., Branscombe, N. R., Postmes, T., & Garcia, A. (2014). The consequences of perceived discrimination for psychological well-being: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(4), 921-948. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035754>
- Sipsma, H. L., Ickovics, J. R., Lin, H., & Kershaw, T. S. (2012). Future Expectations Among Adolescents: A Latent Class Analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50(1), 169-181. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-011-9487-1>
- Socioeconomic status*. (z.d.). <https://www.apa.org>. Geraadpleegd 20 juni 2024, van <https://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status>
- Song, R., Fung, J., Wong, M., & Yao, P. (2019). Attachment as Moderator of Perceived Social-Class Discrimination on Behavioral Outcomes Among Chinese Migrant Children. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 40, 027243161987060. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431619870604>
- Stoddard, S. A., & Pierce, J. (2015). Promoting Positive Future Expectations During Adolescence: The Role of Assets. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 56(3), 332-341. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-015-9754-7>
- Torsheim, T., Cavallo, F., Levin, K. A., Schnohr, C., Mazur, J., Niclasen, B., Currie, C., & FAS Development Study Group. (2016). Psychometric Validation of the Revised Family Affluence Scale: A Latent Variable Approach. *Child Indicators Research*, 9, 771-784. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-015-9339-x>
- Vanderbilt-Adriance, E., & Shaw, D. S. (2008). Conceptualizing and Re-Evaluating Resilience Across Levels of Risk, Time, and Domains of Competence. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 11(1), 30-58. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-008-0031-2>
- Williams, D. R., Lawrence, J. A., Davis, B. A., & Vu, C. (2019). Understanding how discrimination can affect health. *Health Services Research*, 54(S2), 1374-1388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13222>

- Wu, J., Li, Q., Chi, P., Zhao, J., & Zhao, J. (2023). Mindfulness and well-being among socioeconomically disadvantaged college students: Roles of resilience and perceived discrimination. *Current Psychology*, 42(6), 4772-4784. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01796-3>
- Wu, J., Li, Q., Wu, Q., & Li, Q. (2022). Social Class-Based Discrimination and Psychological Symptoms Among Socioeconomically Disadvantaged College Students: The Moderated Mediation Role of Stress Mindset and Rumination. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.858951>
- Xie, T. H., Ahuja, M., McCutcheon, V. V., & Bucholz, K. K. (2020). Associations between racial and socioeconomic discrimination and risk behaviors among African-American adolescents and young adults: A latent class analysis. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 55(11), 1479-1490. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-020-01884-y>

Appendix 1: Interdisciplinary approach

The integration of theoretical insights from multiple scientific (sub)disciplines significantly enhances the understanding of how discrimination due to SES impacts the future expectations of VET students. By integrating perspectives from different fields, this study addresses the multifaceted nature of this social issue. In this study, especially insights from the disciplines psychology and sociology have been used. Combining insights from these disciplines show a more comprehensive analysis of how socioeconomic status discrimination influences adolescents' perceptions and outcomes. The discipline psychology provides an understanding of the cognitive and emotional processes that show the influence and responses of adolescents to being discriminated because of their SES, and how that affects their future expectations. An example of a theory from the discipline psychology which is used in this study is the Possible Selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986), which provides insights in a core psychological process regarding cognition and emotion. Understanding this process provides a better understanding of how individuals may form their future expectations and how (structural) negative events, such as discrimination due to SES, may affect the formation of (positive) future expectations. Additionally, the discipline sociology provides perspectives on social structures, systemic inequalities and sociopolitical factors in this study which may stand between marginalised adolescents and their ambitions, and influence adolescents' future expectations. The studies of Chaves et al. (2004) and Diemer and Blustein (2006) show how labour market discrimination and limited access to resources impact occupational aspirations, affecting marginalized groups their future expectations. Also, the study of Mossakowski & Zhang (2014), which emphasized the role of family support as a social resource, provides a sociological perspective because sociology often examines family structures, social networks and support systems. Understanding this sociological perspective provides insights into the effects on adolescents' future expectations if they belong to a, or multiple, marginalized

groups in society, and how the people in the same groups support each other. It also provides insights in the interaction between social networks of an individual and the influences of their surroundings.

Using insights and perspectives from stakeholders outside academia contributes to understanding the effects of discrimination due to SES on future expectations of VET students and the influence of family support on this relationship better because insights from, for example, youth workers in low-socioeconomic neighbourhoods may provide essential information about adolescents their experiences which researchers maybe could not have obtained because they do not have such a personal connection with these young people and therefore the youth will not share their experiences with this researcher. This example shows that different stakeholders can provide valuable information and unique perspectives which may be valuable for this topic, and therefore can be very useful. When looking at the results of this study, the perspectives of politicians, policymakers and municipality employees are important to cross the boundaries between science and practice because before arguing for an equal society, it is important to know what the pitfalls are in creating interventions/policies that can promote a more equal society. Additionally, the academia need to 'push' these stakeholders, such as policymakers, to focus on creating a more equal society when conclusions of studies suggest these recommendations, even if it is difficult to realise.

Using multiple scientific research methods to investigate this topic would lead to a deeper understanding of the influence of discrimination due to SES on the future expectations of VET students and the role of family support on this relationship because valuable insights from interviews and focus groups could be used in questionnaires to check whether these insights are generalisable for a bigger population. Also, the variable discrimination due to SES could be better studied because in this study it is based on how much money the family of the respondent has while socioeconomic status is not only based on income, but also on

education, occupational prestige, and perceptions of social status and class. Together it reflects the quality of life and opportunities, and consistently predicts various psychological outcomes. This could be studied in a literature review and focus groups to try to grasp this concept in its entirety. This could for example, be done with adolescents, asking them how they perceive their socioeconomic status.

Appendix 2: Overview questionnaires

Variable	Question(s)/statement(s)	Answer category
Future expectations	<p>How likely is the chance that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You will end up with a well-paid job? 2. You can buy a house? 3. You will have a happy family life? 4. You will get a job you enjoy? 5. You will mostly have a good health? 6. You can choose where to live in the Netherlands? 7. You will feel respected in the 	<p>1: Very small 2: Small 3: Neutral 4: Big 5: Very big</p>

	<p>group that you are a part of?</p> <p>8. That you will have good friends that you can count on?</p>	
Discrimination due to SES	<p>How often do you feel like people treat you unfairly/poorly because of how much money your family has?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers at school 2. Adults outside of school 3. Youth at school 	<p>1: Never</p> <p>2: Rarely</p> <p>3: Sometimes</p> <p>4: Often</p> <p>5: Very often</p>
Family support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The people in my family really go out of their way to help me. 2. I get the emotional support and help I need at home. 3. I can talk about my problems at home. 4. At our house, they want to help me make decisions. 	<p>1: Totally disagree</p> <p>7: Totally agree</p>
Age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When were you born? Year 2. When were you born? Month 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open answer option 2. Answer option 1-12. 1=January, 12=December
SES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does your family have a car/van? 2. Do you have your own bedroom? 3. How many computers does your family have? Excluding Ipads, smartphones and gaming devices. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No=1 Yes, one=2 Yes, two or more=3 2. No=1 Yes=2 3. None=1 One=2 Two=3 More than two=4 4. None=1 One=2

	<p>4. How many bathrooms (with a shower or bath) are present in your house?</p> <p>5. Do you have a dishwasher?</p> <p>6. How many times have you been on vacation abroad in the last 12 months with your family?</p>	<p>Two=3 More than two=4</p> <p>5. No=1 Yes=2</p> <p>6. Not at all=1 Once=2 Twice=3 More than twice=4</p>
--	---	---