

EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION AMONG ROMA STUDENTS: AN INTEGRATED QUALITATIVE FRAMEWORK OF FAMILY CONDITIONS, SCHOOL CLIMATE, IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION, AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

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Abstract

This study explores the multidimensional dynamics shaping educational participation among Roma students through an in-depth qualitative analysis of family contexts, school environments, identity constructions, and structural access conditions. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with Roma students and adult participants, the data were analyzed using a hierarchical coding approach supported by code matrix browser and cross-tab analyses. The findings revealed four interrelated themes: Family Socio-Economic Conditions, Future Perceptions and Identity Construction, School Belonging and School Climate, and Multidimensional Educational Participation. Results indicate that families' educational attitudes and expectations are deeply embedded within socio-economic constraints, shaping both parental involvement and students' educational opportunities. Students' future-oriented aspirations, motivation, and academic self-perceptions emerged as central mediating processes influencing educational continuity and engagement. Supportive school climates characterized by positive teacher–student relationships, peer interactions, and institutional resources fostered stronger school belonging and reinforced educational aspirations, while experiences of discrimination, unsafe environments, and limited facilities undermined participation. Moreover, structural factors such as access to education, environmental risks, transportation barriers, and nutrition support played a critical role in shaping both emotional attachment to school and sustained attendance. The integrated conceptual model developed in this study demonstrates that Roma students' educational participation is produced through the continuous interaction of socio-economic vulnerability, relational school experiences, identity processes, and structural access conditions. The findings highlight the necessity of holistic and multidimensional educational interventions that address family contexts, strengthen inclusive school climates, support positive identity development, and remove structural barriers to promote equitable and sustainable educational engagement for Roma communities.

Keywords: Roma students, educational participation, school belonging, school climate, socio-economic conditions, identity construction; educational inequality

Introduction

Educational participation is increasingly conceptualized as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the dynamic interaction of individual, familial, social, and institutional contexts. While formal access to schooling is widely recognized as a fundamental right, meaningful participation extends beyond enrollment to include sustained engagement, emotional attachment, perceived relevance, and opportunities for educational continuity (Fredricks et al., 2004; OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2020). For students from socio-economically marginalized communities, participation in education is often constrained by intersecting structural inequalities that influence both educational opportunities and lived school experiences. Across Europe, Roma communities represent one of the most persistently disadvantaged populations, experiencing systemic exclusion in housing, employment, health, and education (European Commission, 2020; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2018). Empirical research consistently documents disproportionately high rates of absenteeism, grade

repetition, early school leaving, and academic underachievement among Roma students (Bereményi & Carrasco, 2018; Kertesi & Kézdi, 2011; Messing, 2017). These patterns are not merely outcomes of individual or family-level factors but are embedded within broader socio-economic deprivation, discriminatory practices, and institutional barriers that shape educational trajectories.

Family contexts play a central role in shaping students' engagement with education. Parental educational attainment, socio-economic status, household responsibilities, and educational expectations significantly influence children's participation, academic outcomes, and long-term aspirations (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Lareau, 2011). In disadvantaged households, children often assume caregiving and domestic responsibilities at an early age, reducing time and cognitive resources available for schooling (Morrow, 2011). Such structural constraints not only affect academic performance but also shape how education is perceived as attainable or meaningful. Beyond family contexts, students' future perceptions and identity construction processes are critical in sustaining educational engagement. Identity is increasingly understood as a socially situated and dynamic process shaped through participation in cultural practices, institutional interactions, and narrative constructions of possible futures (Gee, 2000; Holland et al., 1998). Research on future orientation suggests that students' aspirations, motivation, and academic persistence are closely linked to how they imagine their future selves and educational pathways (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Oyserman et al., 2015). For marginalized youth, when education is perceived as disconnected from realistic opportunities, disengagement may emerge as a rational adaptation rather than a deficit.

School-level factors further mediate these processes. A strong sense of school belonging—characterized by feeling accepted, respected, and supported—has been identified as a powerful predictor of engagement, well-being, and academic persistence (Goodenow, 1993; Wentzel, 2010). Similarly, school climate, encompassing relational, emotional, and organizational dimensions, shapes students' daily experiences and educational outcomes (Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa et al., 2013). For marginalized students, inclusive school climates function as protective environments that buffer against socio-economic adversity, whereas unsafe or exclusionary contexts intensify disengagement and vulnerability. Despite extensive research on educational inequality, the lived educational experiences of Roma students remain underrepresented, particularly through qualitative approaches that foreground subjective meaning-making processes (Kende et al., 2017). Large-scale quantitative studies often fail to capture how students and families interpret schooling, negotiate barriers, and construct educational aspirations within marginalized contexts. Understanding these lived experiences is essential for developing inclusive policies that move beyond access toward sustainable participation.

Accordingly, this study adopts a phenomenological perspective to explore Roma students' educational participation across four interrelated dimensions: (a) family approaches and socio-economic conditions, (b) future perceptions and identity construction, (c) school belonging and school climate, and (d) the multidimensional nature of educational participation. By centering students' and parents' lived experiences, the study seeks to provide a holistic and contextually grounded understanding of how educational engagement is constructed, constrained, and sustained within marginalized communities.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in an integrative framework drawing upon sociocultural theories of education, identity development and future orientation theories, school belonging and climate research, and multidimensional models of educational participation. From a sociocultural perspective, learning and participation are socially embedded processes shaped by access to resources, power relations, and cultural practices (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital emphasizes how families transmit not only material resources but also dispositions, expectations, and linguistic practices that align differently with institutional schooling. For marginalized families, educational involvement is often constrained not by low aspirations but by structural limitations such as economic precarity, limited formal schooling, and restricted institutional trust (Lareau, 2011). These constraints shape patterns of parental engagement, educational supervision, and interpretations of educational success.

Identity development theories conceptualize adolescence as a critical period for the formation of personal, social, and academic identities (Erikson, 1968). Contemporary perspectives emphasize identity as fluid, negotiated, and context-dependent (Gee, 2000; Holland et al., 1998). Through daily participation in schooling, peer interactions, and family narratives, students construct meanings about

who they are and who they can become. Future orientation theories further highlight the role of possible selves in motivating educational engagement (Nurmi, 2004; Oyserman et al., 2006). When students can envision education as part of attainable futures, persistence increases; when futures appear constrained, disengagement becomes an adaptive response. Belongingness theory posits a fundamental human need for social connection that strongly influences motivation and behavior (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In educational settings, belonging reflects students' perceptions of acceptance, care, and inclusion (Goodenow, 1993). School climate research frames schools as social ecosystems shaped by relationships, safety, institutional practices, and emotional environments (Cohen et al., 2009). Positive climates are consistently associated with engagement, academic success, and reduced dropout (Thapa et al., 2013), particularly for students facing socio-economic disadvantage.

Finally, contemporary models conceptualize educational participation as multidimensional, encompassing behavioral (attendance, involvement), emotional (belonging, interest), and cognitive (investment in learning) components (Fredricks et al., 2004). This study adopts this holistic understanding, viewing participation as a lived and relational process shaped by intersecting family, identity, school, and structural conditions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine Roma students' educational participation through four interrelated dimensions:

- (a) family approaches and socio-economic conditions,
- (b) students' future perceptions and identity construction,
- (c) sense of school belonging and perceptions of school climate, and
- (d) the multidimensional nature of educational participation.

Using a phenomenological approach, the study aims to explore how Roma students and their parents experience, interpret, and make sense of these dimensions in relation to educational engagement. Rather than identifying causal relationships, the study seeks to illuminate the interconnected social, institutional, and psychological processes shaping participation within marginalized contexts.

Research Questions

1. How do family approaches and socio-economic conditions influence Roma students' educational participation?
2. How do Roma students' future perceptions and identity constructions shape their engagement with schooling?
3. How do Roma students experience school belonging and school climate?
4. How are the multidimensional aspects of educational participation shaped by family, identity, and school-related factors?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in a phenomenological approach to explore Roma students' lived experiences of educational participation. Phenomenology focuses on understanding how individuals perceive, interpret, and make meaning of a particular phenomenon within their everyday contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenon examined in this study is educational participation as shaped by family socio-economic conditions, future perceptions and identity construction, school belonging and school climate, and structural dimensions of access and opportunity. A phenomenological design was considered particularly appropriate given the study's aim to move beyond surface-level descriptions of educational disadvantage and to capture the subjective meanings, emotions, and interpretations that students and parents attach to schooling. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how educational engagement is constructed, negotiated, and constrained within marginalized social contexts (van Manen, 2016). The study received ethical approval with Decision No. 4197824 dated April 30, 2025, from the relevant Institutional Ethics Committee.

Participants and Research Context

The study was conducted in the Kale neighborhood of the Altındağ district in Ankara, an area characterized by long-standing socio-economic disadvantage, limited access to educational resources, and high rates of school dropout. The participant group consisted of 20 individuals, including Roma students enrolled in primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary education, as well as their parents. Purposeful sampling was utilized, specifically criterion sampling, to ensure that participants possessed direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria were: (a) being a Roma student or a parent of a Roma student, (b) residing in the Kale neighborhood, and (c) having direct involvement in formal schooling processes.

Table 1. Demographics of participants.

		f	%
Gender	Male	13	65.00
	Female	7	35.00
Type of school	Primary School	5	45.45
	Middle School	5	45.45
	High School	1	9.09
Grade	1 . Grade	2	18.18
	2. Grade	2	18.18
	3. Grade	2	18.18
	4. Grade	3	27.27
	Middle school dropout	1	9.09
	High school dropout	1	9.09

Among the participants, 13 were male (65%) and 7 were female (35%). Regarding educational level, the majority of student participants were enrolled in primary and lower-secondary education (90%), while a small proportion attended upper-secondary education (10%). The limited number of high school students reflects the high dropout rates observed in the community, which constrained access to participants at this level.

To contextualize participants' educational experiences, detailed demographic and background information was collected. The findings revealed substantial structural disadvantage across households. Most students lacked basic educational resources, including private study spaces, reliable internet access, and digital learning tools. Family responsibilities were pervasive, with many students reporting caregiving duties, household labor, and in some cases income-generating activities prior to or alongside schooling. Educational vulnerability was further evident through high levels of absenteeism and grade repetition. A considerable proportion of students reported recent absenteeism, and over one-quarter had experienced grade repetition. Study routines were generally limited, with more than half of the students studying for only short durations daily or not studying at all. Parental educational attainment was predominantly low, with most parents having completed primary education or less. Household income was unstable, and many families lacked social security coverage. These socio-economic conditions formed a critical backdrop shaping students' opportunities, educational engagement, and future aspirations.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using two primary instruments: a demographic information form and a semi-structured interview protocol. The demographic form gathered information on gender, school level,

household composition, access to educational resources, daily responsibilities, attendance patterns, parental education levels, employment status, and household income. These data provided essential contextual grounding for interpreting the qualitative findings. The semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on an extensive review of relevant literature and organized around four core thematic dimensions:

1. Family approaches and socio-economic conditions
2. Future perceptions and identity construction
3. Sense of school belonging and school climate
4. Dimensions of educational participation

Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow systematic exploration of key themes while maintaining flexibility to capture participants' unique experiences and perspectives (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview questions were reviewed by experts in educational sciences to ensure content validity. A pilot study was conducted, and minor revisions were made to improve clarity and relevance.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered through face-to-face interviews conducted within the Kale neighborhood. This approach was chosen to foster trust, reduce participant discomfort, and allow for rich, contextualized data collection. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all adult participants. For student participants, parental consent was obtained. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Field notes were taken during and after interviews to document contextual observations, non-verbal cues, and researcher reflections, which supported the analytic process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method, which provides a systematic framework for identifying the essential structure of lived experiences. The analytic process involved:

1. Repeated reading of all transcripts to gain a holistic understanding
2. Extraction of significant statements related to the phenomenon
3. Formulation of meanings from these statements
4. Clustering of meanings into categories and themes
5. Development of an exhaustive description of the phenomenon
6. Identification of the fundamental structure of educational participation

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and uploaded into MAXQDA for qualitative analysis. First-cycle open coding was conducted to identify meaning units. These codes were then grouped into categories and broader thematic structures through iterative comparison and refinement (Saldaña, 2016). This process resulted in four overarching themes:

- Family approaches and socio-economic conditions
- Future perceptions and identity construction
- Sense of school belonging and school climate
- Dimensions of educational participation

The inductive nature of the analysis ensured that themes emerged from participants' lived experiences rather than being imposed a priori. To enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, multiple strategies were employed in line with qualitative research standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of student and parent perspectives, and peer debriefing with colleagues experienced in qualitative research. Transferability was enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and socio-economic conditions. Dependability and confirmability were ensured through the maintenance of audit trails, reflexive memos, and systematic documentation of analytic decisions.

Findings

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative analysis of interview data collected from Roma students and adult participants. Using a hierarchical coding process supported by code matrix browser and cross-tab analyses, the data were systematically organized into interrelated themes and

categories reflecting the multidimensional nature of educational participation. The analysis revealed four overarching themes: Family Socio-Economic Conditions, Future Perceptions and Identity Construction, School Belonging and School Climate, and Multidimensional Educational Participation. Rather than emerging as isolated domains, these themes demonstrated strong relational patterns, indicating dynamic interactions between structural constraints, relational experiences, and students' subjective meaning-making processes. The following subsections detail each theme, supported by representative participant quotations and analytical interpretations, and illustrate how these interconnected dimensions collectively shape Roma students' educational engagement and trajectories.

Table 2. Students' Access to Physical and Social Educational Resources

	Category	f	%
Having a private room	Yes	2	18.2
	No	9	81.8
Having a study desk	Yes	6	54.6
	No	5	45.4
Internet access	Yes	4	36.4
	No	7	63.6
A person available to help with homework	Yes	7	63.6
	No	4	36.4

Table 2 presents students' access to physical and social educational resources. The findings indicate that nine students did not have a private room of their own, while seven students reported having no access to the internet. In terms of study facilities, six students had a personal study desk, whereas five students lacked such a resource. Additionally, seven students stated that there was someone at home who could support them with their schoolwork, while four students reported the absence of such assistance. Overall, these results reveal notable disparities in students' access to both physical and social educational resources and highlight existing deficiencies that may influence their educational participation.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Academic Study Habits, Educational Resource Access, and Home Learning Environments

	Category	f	%
Computer use	Yes	2	18.2
	No	9	81.8
Tablet use	Yes	1	9.1
	No	10	90.9
Use of textbooks	Yes	6	54.6
	No	5	45.4
Use of supplementary learning materials	Yes	2	18.2
	No	9	81.8
Attendance at Hayal Ev	Yes	10	90.9
	No	1	9.1
Number of Books Owned by Students	1-10 books	5	45.5
	21-30 books	1	9.1
	None	5	45.5
Students' daily study time	1-3 hours per day	3	27.27
	30 minutes per day	6	54.55
	No daily study time	2	18.18

Table 3 presents a descriptive analysis of students' academic study habits, access to educational resources, and home learning environments. The findings indicate that the most frequently utilized learning support resource was *Hayal Ev*, a community-based center established by a Roma Rights Association that provides free educational support to students in the neighborhood. This was followed by the use of test preparation books. In terms of reading materials, 45.5% of the students reported owning between one and ten books, while an equal proportion (45.5%) stated that they did not possess any reading books at all. Furthermore, nine students lacked access to a computer, ten students did not have access to a tablet, and nine students reported the absence of supplementary educational materials. These findings suggest that Roma students have limited access to reading materials, digital resources, and additional learning supports, and that their access to online educational platforms remains restricted. Regarding study habits, the majority of the interviewed students reported studying for only approximately 30 minutes per day. While 27.27% indicated studying between one and three hours daily, 18.18% stated that they did not engage in studying at all. The limited duration of study time may be attributed to low motivation levels or the lack of an appropriate and supportive learning environment at home.

Table 4. Students' Pre-school Responsibilities and Activities

	Category	f	%
Having breakfast before school	Yes	9	81.8
	No	2	18.2
Doing homework	Yes	5	45.4
	No	6	54.6
Assuming caregiving responsibilities for a family member	Yes	9	81.8
	No	2	18.2
Engagement in paid work	Yes	1	9.1
	No	10	90.9

Table 4 presents students' pre-school responsibilities and daily activities prior to attending school. The findings indicate that the majority of Roma students ($f = 9$) reported having breakfast before school and that most were not engaged in any form of paid or unpaid work ($f = 10$). With regard to academic preparation, five students stated that they completed their school-related assignments before attending school, whereas six students reported that they did not engage in such activities. In addition, a considerable number of students indicated that they were responsible for providing care for other family members, including younger siblings and elderly relatives, within the household. Overall, these findings suggest that while basic daily needs such as breakfast are largely met, many Roma students assume caregiving responsibilities at home, which may limit their time, energy, and capacity for academic preparation and engagement.

Table 5. Students' grade repetition and school absenteeism

		f	%
Grade repetition	Yes	3	27.3
	No	8	72.7
Absenteeism during the past month	Yes	9	81.8
	No	2	18.2
Frequency of absenteeism during the past month	1-3 days	4	36.4
	4-6 days	4	36.4
	7-9 days	1	9.1
	No absenteeism	2	18.2

Table 5 presents data related to Roma students' grade repetition and school absenteeism. The findings indicate that only three students had experienced grade repetition. However, a substantially higher number of students ($f = 9$) reported having been absent from school at least once during the previous month. A closer examination of absenteeism frequency reveals that 36.4% of these students ($f = 4$) were

absent for one to three days, while another 36.4% ($f = 4$) reported absenteeism ranging from four to six days within the same period. These results suggest that, although grade repetition is relatively limited among the participants, school absenteeism represents a significant risk factor that may negatively affect Roma students' educational continuity and participation.

Table 6. Socio-demographic characteristics of parents

		f	%
Educational Attainment	No literacy skills	2	22.2
	Primary school	4	44.4
	Middle school	2	22.2
	High school	1	11.1
Employment Status	Bundle seller(Bohçacı)	1	11.1
	Homemaker	1	11.1
	Security guard	1	11.1
	Self-employed	3	33.3
	Cleaning staff	2	22.2
	Bag vendor	1	11.1
Monthly income	950 TRY	1	11.1
	12000 TRY	2	22.2
	13.000-14.000 TRY	1	11.1
	Minimum wage	3	33.3
	No fixed monthly income	2	22.2
Health insurance status	Yes	3	33.3
	No	6	66.7

Table 6 presents information regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of parents. An examination of parents' educational attainment reveals that two participants were illiterate, four had completed primary education, two had completed lower secondary education, and only one had graduated from upper secondary education. Overall, these findings indicate a generally low level of educational attainment among families. In terms of employment status, parents were engaged in various occupations, including bundle selling, homemaking, security work, and bag selling, each representing 11.1% of the participants. In contrast, parents working as cleaning staff constituted the largest proportion of the sample (33.3%). Considering these employment patterns, it can be inferred that most parents were employed in low-income and precarious jobs. An analysis of monthly household income shows that the majority of families earned below the minimum wage, with two participants reporting no regular income and only three earning the minimum wage. The prevalence of income levels below the minimum wage suggests unstable and irregular economic conditions. Regarding social security coverage, only three parents reported having health insurance, while six indicated that they did not have any form of health insurance. This finding points to significant challenges in families' access to social security and welfare systems.

Hierarchical Code-Subcodes Model

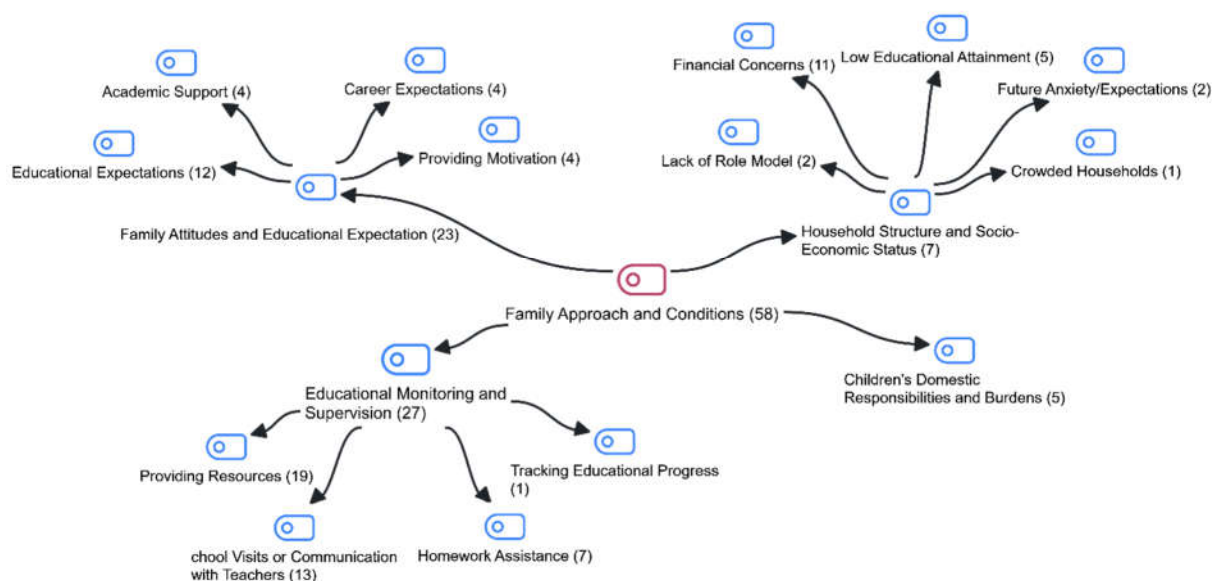


Figure 1 illustrates that, based on the qualitative data obtained from the participants, the theme *Family Approaches and Conditions* was structured into four interrelated categories: (a) parental attitudes and expectations, (b) educational supervision and monitoring, (c) household structure and socio-economic conditions, and (d) children's domestic responsibilities and burdens.

Together, these categories reveal that family influence on educational participation operates through both supportive practices and structural constraints, forming a multidimensional framework rather than a single-factor explanation.

Parental Attitudes, Expectations, and Educational Monitoring

Participants frequently emphasized their active involvement in monitoring children's schooling through direct academic support and continuous communication with schools. Parents described reviewing lessons at home, assisting with difficult topics, and closely following school processes through parent meetings and digital communication platforms.

"When my child comes home from school, I review the lessons and try to help as much as I can with the topics they do not understand." (Adult participant 1)

"We attend parent meetings and follow everything through WhatsApp groups. This is how we stay involved in our children's education." (Adult participant 7)

In addition to daily supervision, parents expressed strong educational aspirations shaped by role models within extended family networks, where higher educational attainment symbolized upward mobility and social stability.

"In our family, there are doctors, teachers, and university graduates. We show our children their lives to encourage them to study." (Adult participant 3)

Household Structure and Socio-Economic Constraints

Despite strong educational expectations, parents consistently highlighted economic hardship as a major barrier limiting educational opportunities. Precarious employment, unstable income, and limited access to resources constrained families' ability to support higher educational pathways, particularly post-secondary education.

"My child was accepted to university, but we could not send them because of financial difficulties." (Adult participant 3)

"Sometimes I cannot even afford to give my child pocket money, although I try my best." (Adult participant 6)

Parents also articulated aspirations to move away from disadvantaged neighborhoods, associating improved living conditions with better educational prospects.

"I would love to send my child to better schools and give them a better life, but we do not have the means." (Adult participant 7)

Children's Domestic Responsibilities

Alongside economic challenges, students frequently described assuming household responsibilities such as caregiving and domestic labor, which shaped their daily routines and limited time and energy for academic engagement.

"I help with housework and take care of my sibling." (Student 3)

Structural Constraints Reproducing Educational Inequality

Some participants explicitly connected family conditions to broader patterns of structural disadvantage, including early labor participation, early marriage, and limited access to educational resources, suggesting that educational disengagement is not merely individual but socially reproduced.

"Children stop going to school because families repeat what they experienced—working early, early marriage, and lack of opportunities." (Student 11)

Hierarchical Code-Subcodes Model

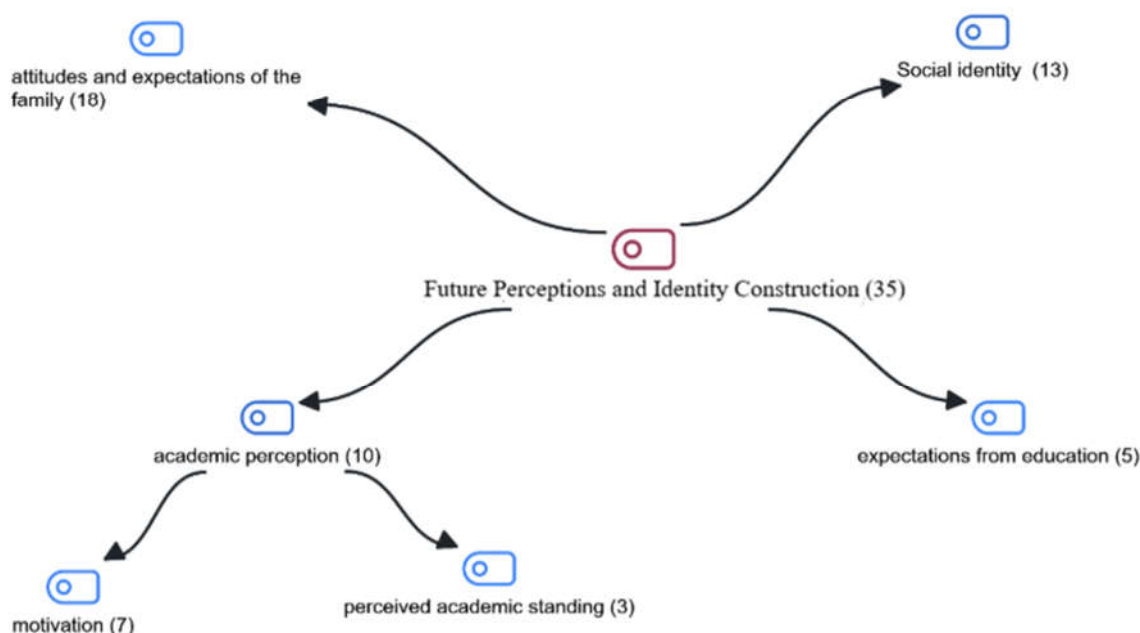


Figure 2 illustrates that the theme *Future Perceptions and Identity Construction* was organized into four interrelated categories within a hierarchical code–subcode structure: (a) future expectations and perceptions of Roma students and parents, (b) social identity perceptions, (c) academic self-perceptions, and (d) expectations from education.

Together, these categories indicate that students' engagement with schooling is strongly shaped by how they envision their future, interpret their social positioning, and construct their academic identities. Rather than reflecting isolated aspirations, future perceptions emerge as interconnected with experiences of discrimination, academic confidence, and access to institutional support.

Future Expectations and Aspirational Pathways

Students articulated diverse career aspirations, often linking educational attainment to social mobility and personal fulfillment. These aspirations ranged from professional occupations to skilled trades, reflecting both ambition and pragmatism shaped by lived realities.

"My dream is to become a motorcycle police officer. I want to continue studying until I grow up." (Student 1)

Collectively, these categories illustrate that school belonging is shaped through emotional attachment, relational experiences, and institutional conditions, forming a multidimensional environment that either supports or constrains Roma students' educational engagement.

Sense of Belonging and Emotional Attachment to School

Students frequently described school as a meaningful and emotionally significant space, where attendance contributed to feelings of well-being and stability. The absence of school was associated with discomfort and emotional distress, highlighting the central role of schooling in students' daily lives.

"When there is no school, I feel bad. When there is school, I do not want to leave." (Student 1)

For many students, feeling valued and recognized within the school community reinforced their sense of belonging and motivation to attend regularly.

"I generally felt valued at school, and the teachers worked very hard to support me." (Student 11)

Peer Relationships as Sources of Support and Motivation

Peer interactions emerged as crucial emotional and academic support mechanisms. Students emphasized mutual assistance with schoolwork, emotional encouragement, and shared experiences of solidarity.

"My classmates help me with my homework, and when I am hungry, my friend even shared food with me." (Student 1)

Similarly, friendships functioned as coping resources during moments of stress and sadness.

"When I feel sad, my friends make me laugh and help me feel better." (Student 3)

Teacher and Administrator Relationships

Supportive relationships with teachers and school leaders were consistently linked to positive school experiences and academic progress. Participants highlighted individual educators who demonstrated care, responsiveness, and commitment beyond formal responsibilities.

"Some teachers care much more and treat us better, which makes school feel good." (Student 3)

Parents also acknowledged the critical role of school leadership in fostering a supportive climate and addressing students' needs.

"The vice principal helps the children even from their own pocket and always supports them." (Adult participant 8)

However, not all interactions were positive, as some parents reported harsh treatment and limited communication with certain teachers, indicating variability in relational quality across school contexts.

"Some teachers behaved very harshly and were not very sensitive." (Adult participant 9)

School Facilities, Safety, and Institutional Conditions

The physical environment of schools significantly influenced perceptions of belonging and comfort. Participants raised concerns regarding hygiene, safety, and limited infrastructure, while also acknowledging improvements such as meal provision.

"I would like our school to be cleaner and more hygienic." (Student 4)

"Now that the school provides meals, we feel relieved knowing our children will not go hungry." (Adult participant 6)

Security concerns in and around school premises were also highlighted as important factors affecting attendance and parental trust.

"I would really like the security at school to be increased because the surroundings are very unsafe." (Adult participant 2)

Hierarchical Code-Subcodes Model

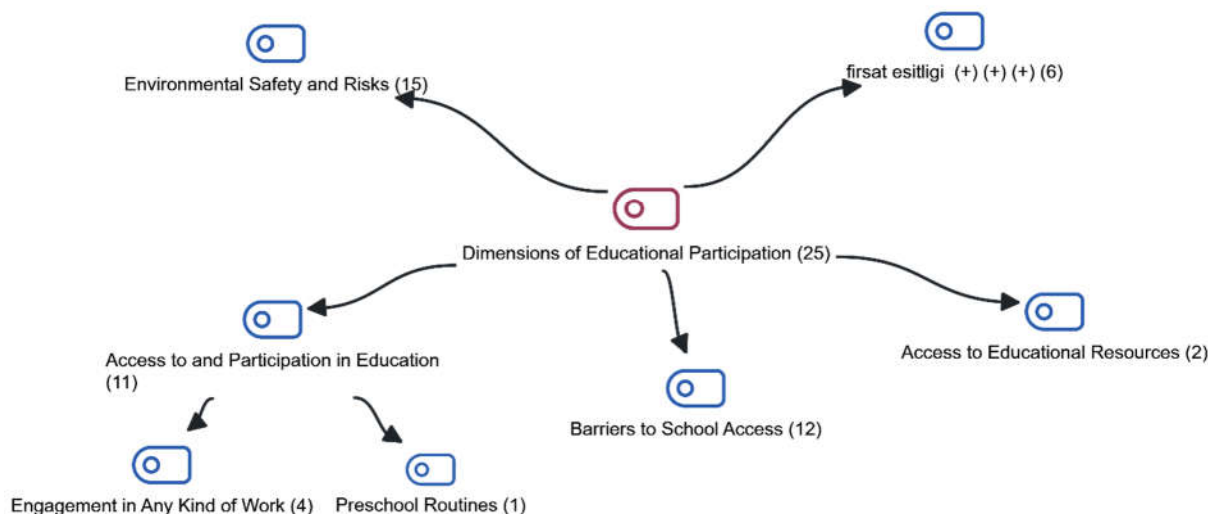


Figure 4 illustrates that the theme *Educational Participation and Its Dimensions* was organized into four interrelated categories within a hierarchical code–subcode structure: (a) equal opportunities, (b) access to educational resources, (c) environmental safety and risks, and (d) access to and participation in education.

Together, these categories demonstrate that Roma students’ educational participation is shaped by the interaction of institutional provisions, household conditions, and broader environmental contexts. Educational engagement is therefore not solely dependent on individual motivation but is embedded within structural inequalities and safety-related constraints.

Equal Opportunities and Institutional Support

Participants emphasized the role of school-based support mechanisms in promoting educational participation, particularly the provision of meals and basic services. Such supports were frequently described as protective factors that alleviated economic hardship and encouraged consistent attendance. “At our school, the food comes directly to us. Now we feel like part of the school.” (Student 8)

This indicates that institutional efforts to meet students’ basic needs contribute significantly to students’ emotional attachment to school and sustained engagement.

Household Responsibilities and Economic Pressures

Students’ narratives revealed that economic vulnerability often required them to assume income-generating activities alongside schooling. These dual responsibilities constrained academic focus and contributed to irregular attendance.

“On one hand I go to school, on the other hand I work in different jobs because we need money.” (Student 11)

Such experiences highlight how economic pressures intersect with educational participation, limiting students’ capacity to engage fully in schooling.

Environmental Safety and Access Barriers

Transportation difficulties and unsafe routes to school emerged as major obstacles to regular attendance. Despite relatively short distances, hazardous conditions—including stray animals, uneven roads, and exposure to drug-related activities—significantly restricted access.

“The road is dangerous with dogs and drug users, not the distance itself.” (Adult participant 6)

Parents expressed concerns that these risks contributed to absenteeism and early disengagement from education.

“Because of safety problems, we could not send our children to school until security was provided.” (Adult participant 8)

Access to Education as a Multidimensional Process

Participants' accounts collectively suggest that access to education involves far more than physical enrollment. It encompasses safety, institutional support, economic stability, and social inclusion.

“Transportation is our main problem; without it, children wander the streets and stop going to school.”
(Adult participant 2)

Table 7. Joint coding frequencies of family attitudes and expectations towards education across selected themes

Themes	Occupational expectations	Educational expectations	Motivational support	Academic support
Parental monitoring and supervision of education	4	7	4	3
Household structure and socioeconomics	4	4	3	1
Family structure	3	3	-	1

Table 7 presents the co-occurrence patterns between families' educational attitudes and expectations and the categories of educational supervision and monitoring, household structure and socio-economic conditions, and family structure through a code matrix browser analysis.

Overall, the findings indicate that families' expectations regarding their children's education are closely intertwined with both their capacity to monitor educational processes and the socio-economic conditions of the household. The strongest associations were observed between educational supervision and educational expectations, suggesting that parents who actively engage in monitoring schooling tend to hold higher educational aspirations for their children. Occupational expectations were also frequently linked to both educational supervision and socio-economic conditions, reflecting families' efforts to connect schooling with long-term economic security.

In contrast, academic support and motivation provision were less frequently co-coded with household structure and family structure, indicating that while families value education, structural limitations often constrain their ability to provide consistent academic assistance.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that parental aspirations are not solely driven by individual beliefs but are shaped by families' lived socio-economic realities. Educational expectations appear to emerge within the boundaries of material resources, employment conditions, and household responsibilities.

Illustrative Participant Accounts

Parents commonly articulated strong educational aspirations oriented toward independence and upward mobility:

“My expectation is that my child will complete school, obtain a profession, and not be dependent on anyone.” (Adult participant 1)

At the same time, families described limited educational capital and reliance on extended family support to compensate for their own educational constraints:

“Since I am not very educated myself, their uncles help with their lessons, and I support as much as I can.” (Adult participant 3)

Participants also highlighted disparities in educational infrastructure and access to enriched learning environments:

“I would like schools to have laboratories and computer rooms, but our school does not even have a computer lab.” (Adult participant 6)

Economic hardship was repeatedly identified as a barrier to realizing these educational aspirations:

“Because of financial difficulties, sending my child to better schools is very hard.” (Adult participant 5)

Table 8. Joint coding relationships between school resources and standards and theme of school belonging and school climate

Subcodes	Joint coding frequency (f)
Support programs	2
Expectations for an ideal school	9
Nutrition opportunities and support services	7
School environment and physical resources	8
Learning environment	4
Financial support and aid	2
School hygiene and sanitation	3

Table 8 presents the co-occurrence patterns between school facilities and standards and students' perceptions of school belonging and school climate based on a code matrix browser analysis.

Overall, the findings indicate a strong association between institutional conditions and students' emotional attachment to school. The highest levels of co-occurrence were observed between the categories of *ideal school expectations* and *school environment and facilities*, suggesting that students' and parents' perceptions of school climate were frequently articulated in relation to both aspirations for better school conditions and the material limitations of existing educational environments.

In contrast, support programs, material assistance, and school hygiene were less frequently co-coded with school belonging and school climate, indicating that while these factors remain relevant, broader structural features of school infrastructure and environment played a more prominent role in shaping students' overall perceptions.

Notably, the frequent co-occurrence between *nutrition support and opportunities* and school belonging underscores the importance of meeting students' basic needs as a foundation for fostering positive school climates and sustained educational engagement.

Illustrative Participant Accounts

Students emphasized how access to institutional support and facilities influenced their experiences of schooling:

"At my school, the food comes directly to us—meat dishes, soup, pasta. That makes school better." (Student 8)

Others expressed unmet needs related to learning resources and recreational spaces:

"If we had more books and toys, it would be very nice." (Student 10)

Participants also reflected on the uneven distribution of resources across schools and its impact on educational participation:

"Some schools used to provide meals and fruit, but those programs were removed. In other schools, you need money just to buy food." (Adult participant 5)

Parents highlighted the emotional reassurance provided by school-based meal programs:

"Even when we cannot give pocket money, we feel relieved knowing our child will not go hungry at school." (Adult participant 6)

Table 9. Co-occurrence of categories related to school belonging, school climate and future perceptions and identity construction

	Expectations from education	Social identity perception	Academic self-perception (motivation)	Academic self-perception (academic status)	Future expectations and perceptions
Sense of school/class belonging	5	3	4	2	10

Teacher-student interaction and communication	4	7	4	2	9
Peer relationship(conflicts/solidarity)	2	2	3	2	7
School facilities and standards	4	6	3	3	10

Table 9 presents the co-occurrence patterns between the theme of *school belonging and school climate* and the theme of *future perceptions and identity construction* based on a code matrix browser analysis. Overall, the findings demonstrate a strong interconnection between students' experiences within the school environment and the ways in which they envision their future educational and occupational trajectories. The highest levels of co-occurrence were observed between school belonging and students' future expectations and perceptions, indicating that positive school experiences are closely linked to stronger aspirations and more hopeful future outlooks.

Teacher–student interaction and communication emerged as a particularly influential relational factor, showing strong associations with both students' social identity perceptions and future expectations. This suggests that supportive and respectful relationships with educators contribute not only to students' sense of belonging but also to the formation of positive educational identities.

Similarly, peer relationships and the quality of school facilities were strongly associated with students' future-oriented perceptions. While peer relationships were less frequently linked to social identity perceptions, school infrastructure and institutional conditions appeared to play a more substantial role in shaping how students perceived their social positioning and educational possibilities.

Collectively, these findings indicate that school climate functions as a critical context in which Roma students' aspirations, motivation, and identity constructions are either reinforced or constrained. Supportive interactions, inclusive environments, and adequate school resources contribute to more positive future narratives, whereas negative experiences such as discrimination or institutional neglect undermine students' educational self-concepts.

Illustrative Participant Accounts

Participants reflected on how school environments shaped both belonging and future aspirations:

“There used to be discrimination before the school administration changed, but now teachers treat students better.” (Adult participant 6)

Students directly connected schooling with their future goals:

“I want to keep going to school and then become a football player.” (Student 3)

“I go to school to become a police officer and earn my own living.” (Student 5)

Positive learning experiences and peer support were frequently described as sources of motivation:

“Seeing my friends and learning new things from my teachers makes me feel good and motivates me.” (Student 7)

Others emphasized the necessity of schooling for achieving professional aspirations:

“Without studying and going to school, I cannot become a prosecutor or a lawyer.” (Student 8)

Table 10. Distribution of categories related to school belonging, school climate and dimensions of educational participation

	Access to and participation in education	Engagement in paid work	Pre-school routines	Environmental safety and risk	Access to educational resources	Equality of opportunity
Sense of school/class belonging	4	3	1	4	1	6

Teacher-student interaction and communication	6	3	1	7	1	5
Peer relationship(conflicts/solidarity)	1	2	1	1	1	5
School facilities and standards	6	3	1	8	2	6

Table 10 presents the co-occurrence patterns between the theme of *school belonging and school climate* and the theme of *multidimensional educational participation* based on a code matrix browser analysis. Overall, the findings indicate that Roma students' sense of belonging to school and classroom environments is strongly interconnected with structural dimensions of educational participation. In particular, school belonging was most frequently associated with perceptions of equal opportunities, suggesting that students who experienced inclusive and supportive school climates were more likely to perceive education as accessible and fair.

Teacher–student interaction and communication emerged as a central relational factor linking school climate to broader participation outcomes. Strong associations between teacher–student relationships and both environmental safety and educational access indicate that supportive educators play a key role in buffering environmental risks and facilitating sustained engagement with schooling.

Similarly, school facilities and institutional standards were closely related to environmental safety concerns, as well as to access to education and equal opportunities. This suggests that the physical and organizational conditions of schools function not only as learning environments but also as protective spaces within high-risk contexts.

Peer relationships were most strongly linked to perceptions of equal opportunities, indicating that supportive friendships may contribute to students' sense of inclusion and fairness within educational settings, even when other structural barriers persist.

Taken together, these findings highlight that educational participation among Roma students is shaped through the continuous interaction of relational experiences, institutional resources, and environmental conditions. School belonging and climate therefore operate as foundational contexts through which structural inequalities are either mitigated or reinforced.

Illustrative Participant Accounts

Students frequently described the emotional and motivational role of school environments:

“Teachers are very good, and we enjoy attending classes.” (Student 7)

Concerns related to environmental safety were prominent:

“There are dogs around our school, and I am afraid.” (Student 8)

School was often framed as a stabilizing and protective space:

“School calms me down and helps me focus on my lessons.” (Student 11)

Parents emphasized how transportation difficulties and neighborhood risks disrupted educational continuity:

“Without transportation, children wander the streets and stop going to school.” (Adult participant 2)

“Bad habits in the neighborhood make it hard to protect children and continue schooling.” (Adult participant 3)

Economic barriers and safety risks were also directly linked to disengagement:

“Because of costs and safety issues, some children stop going to school.” (Adult participant 5)

Table 11. Distribution of categories related to students' future perceptions and identity construction across selected variables

	Absenteeism status		Grade repetition status		Study duration		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	30 minutes	1-3 hours	None
Expectations from education	3	2	2	3	2	1	2
Social identity perception	-	1	-	1	-	-	1
Academic perception(motivation) self-	7	-	2	5	-	5	2
Academic perception(academic status) self-	1	2	-	3	-	2	1
Future expectations and perceptions	12	6	5	13	6	8	4

Table 11 presents the co-occurrence patterns between Roma students' future perceptions and identity construction and their experiences of absenteeism, grade repetition, and study duration based on a code matrix browser analysis.

Overall, the findings reveal that students' future-oriented perceptions and identity-related dimensions are closely associated with their patterns of educational engagement and continuity. Students who reported higher levels of absenteeism demonstrated stronger associations with expectations from education, motivation, and future expectations. This suggests that although these students articulated strong aspirations and educational hopes, structural or contextual barriers may have hindered their ability to sustain regular attendance.

In contrast, students who had not experienced grade repetition exhibited stronger associations with motivation, academic self-perceptions, and positive future expectations, indicating that sustained academic progress is closely linked to more confident educational identities and forward-looking aspirations.

Study duration emerged as another critical factor shaping identity-related dimensions. Students who studied between one and three hours per day demonstrated higher co-occurrence levels with motivation, academic self-perceptions, and future expectations compared to those who studied minimally or not at all. This pattern highlights the reciprocal relationship between academic engagement and positive identity construction.

Notably, social identity perceptions were most frequently associated with the condition of not studying, suggesting that experiences of marginalization or negative social positioning may undermine students' academic engagement. Meanwhile, expectations from education appeared consistently across varying study durations, reflecting a broadly shared belief in the value of education, even when active engagement differed.

Collectively, these findings underscore that future perceptions and identity constructions function as central mechanisms influencing the sustainability of educational participation among Roma students. Stronger motivation, positive academic self-concepts, and hopeful future narratives are associated with greater engagement and continuity, while social identity challenges appear to disrupt consistent academic involvement.

Table 12. Distribution of categories related to school belonging and school climate by absenteeism and grade repetition status

	Absenteeism status		Grade repetition status	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sense of school/ class belonging	12	6	5	13
Teacher-student interaction and communication	9	6	4	11
Peer relationship(conflicts/solidarity)	8	3	1	10
School facilities and standards	8	6	3	11

Table 12 presents the co-occurrence patterns between students' perceptions of *school belonging* and *school climate* and their experiences of absenteeism and grade repetition based on a crosstab analysis.

Overall, the findings reveal distinct patterns in how students experiencing different forms of educational disengagement articulated their school experiences. Students who reported absenteeism exhibited stronger associations with school belonging, teacher–student interaction, and peer relationships. This suggests that absenteeism does not necessarily reflect emotional detachment from school but may instead be influenced by external structural barriers such as environmental risks, economic pressures, or access-related challenges previously identified in the findings.

In contrast, students who had experienced grade repetition demonstrated weaker associations with dimensions of school belonging and school climate, including relationships with teachers and peers as well as institutional conditions. This pattern indicates that academic disengagement associated with grade repetition may be more closely linked to diminished relational connections and reduced perceptions of support within the school environment.

Taken together, these findings highlight that absenteeism and grade repetition represent distinct forms of educational disruption with different underlying dynamics. While absentee students may retain strong emotional ties to school despite irregular attendance, students who repeat grades appear to experience deeper disengagement from the relational and institutional aspects of schooling.

Table 13 Distribution of themes related to students’ future perceptions and identity construction across pre-school routines

	Care for family members	Performing household chores	Engaging in paid work	Having breakfast
Expectations from education	4	4	1	4
Social identity perception	1	1	1	-
Academic self-perception(motivation)	2	6	-	7
Academic self-perception(academic status)	3	1	1	1
Future expectations and perceptions	14	12	2	14

Table 13 presents the co-occurrence patterns between Roma students’ pre-school routines and the theme of *future perceptions and identity construction* based on a code matrix browser analysis.

Overall, the findings indicate that students’ daily routines prior to attending school function as significant contexts shaping their future-oriented aspirations and identity narratives. High levels of association were observed between caregiving responsibilities and household chores and students’ future expectations, suggesting that early exposure to domestic responsibilities contributes to the formation of future-oriented perspectives characterized by responsibility, resilience, and pragmatic aspirations.

Similarly, the routine of having breakfast before school was strongly associated with both motivation and future expectations. This pattern highlights the importance of basic needs fulfillment in fostering positive emotional states and sustained engagement with learning processes.

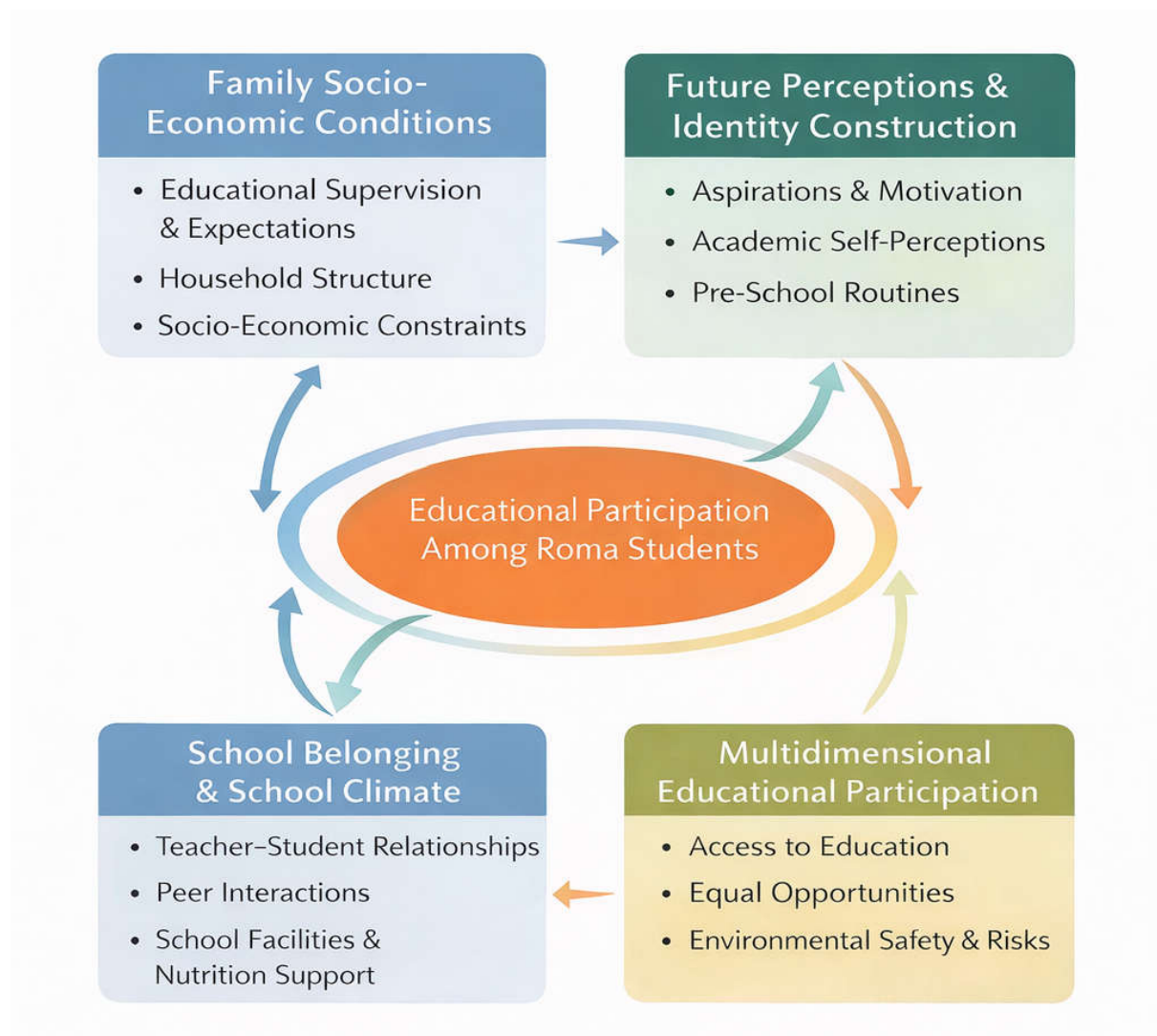
In contrast, engagement in paid or unpaid work exhibited minimal associations with identity-related dimensions, indicating that early labor participation may not support the development of positive educational identities and may instead function as a competing demand that limits academic focus.

Taken together, these findings underscore that pre-school routines are not neutral daily practices but formative experiences that influence how Roma students perceive themselves, envision their futures, and engage with education. Domestic responsibilities and basic care practices, in particular, appear to shape identity constructions and educational aspirations in meaningful ways.

Integrated Conceptual Model of Educational Participation Among Roma Students

The integrated conceptual model derived from the qualitative findings demonstrates that Roma students' educational participation emerges through the dynamic and reciprocal interaction of four interrelated domains: family socio-economic conditions, future perceptions and identity construction, school belonging and school climate, and the multidimensional structural dimensions of educational access and participation. Rather than functioning as isolated or linear determinants, these domains operate as interconnected systems that collectively shape students' educational engagement, continuity, and trajectories.

Figure 5 Integrated framework of educational participation among Roma students



At the foundational level, family approaches and socio-economic conditions constitute the primary contextual framework influencing students' educational experiences. Parental supervision, educational expectations, and aspirations for occupational mobility were found to be closely intertwined with household structure, economic instability, and limited access to social security. The relational analyses revealed that families' educational attitudes were significantly shaped by structural constraints, indicating that parental aspirations are not merely individual preferences but are embedded within broader socio-economic vulnerabilities. These findings suggest that educational participation among Roma students is situated within systemic patterns of disadvantage that directly affect both material resources and the capacity for sustained parental involvement in schooling.

Building upon this familial context, students' future perceptions and identity constructions emerged as a central mediating domain linking structural conditions to educational continuity. Students' aspirations, motivational experiences, and academic self-perceptions were closely associated with both their daily routines and school experiences. In particular, caregiving responsibilities and domestic labor were found to play a formative role in shaping future-oriented narratives characterized by resilience, responsibility, and pragmatic expectations. Moreover, higher levels of motivation, positive academic self-perceptions, and stronger future expectations were associated with longer study durations and lower levels of grade repetition, underscoring the critical role of future-oriented identity processes in sustaining educational engagement.

The domain of school belonging and school climate functioned as a pivotal relational and institutional bridge connecting family conditions and identity processes with actual educational participation. Supportive teacher–student relationships, positive peer interactions, and access to basic school facilities were consistently associated with stronger emotional attachment to school. Conversely, experiences of discrimination, unsafe school environments, and limited institutional resources undermined students' sense of belonging and engagement. The strong associations between school climate and future expectations indicate that inclusive and supportive school environments reinforce students' aspirations and educational motivation, while exclusionary experiences constrain identity development and participation.

Importantly, concrete institutional supports—particularly school-based nutrition programs—emerged as powerful facilitators of both school belonging and sustained participation. The frequent co-occurrence between nutrition support and positive school climate highlights how addressing basic needs enhances emotional well-being, reinforces students' attachment to school, and strengthens their capacity to engage in learning processes. This finding emphasizes the significance of holistic school support mechanisms in socio-economically marginalized contexts.

The fourth domain, conceptualized as the multidimensional nature of educational participation, integrates structural elements including access to education, equal opportunities, and environmental safety. The analyses demonstrated that students' perceptions of school belonging were closely linked to experiences of educational access and environmental risk. In contexts characterized by neighborhood insecurity, transportation barriers, and economic hardship, educational participation was frequently disrupted despite students' positive attitudes toward school. These findings highlight that motivation and emotional attachment alone are insufficient to sustain participation without supportive structural conditions.

Collectively, the integrated model illustrates that Roma students' educational participation is produced through the continuous interaction of socio-economic constraints, identity processes, relational school experiences, and structural access conditions. Family vulnerabilities shape parental involvement and educational expectations, which in turn influence students' identity construction and future-oriented aspirations. These aspirations are either reinforced or undermined by school climate and belonging, which are further mediated by structural barriers related to access, safety, and resources.

Notably, educational disengagement manifested through absenteeism and grade repetition was not solely the result of individual academic difficulties but emerged from interconnected systems of vulnerability and resilience. Many students experiencing absenteeism articulated strong aspirations and positive perceptions of school, suggesting that structural barriers rather than lack of motivation frequently hinder sustained participation. Conversely, students who avoided grade repetition and maintained longer study routines demonstrated stronger alignment between supportive family engagement, positive school experiences, and future-oriented identity constructions.

In sum, the conceptual model positions educational participation among Roma students as a holistic, relational, and structurally embedded phenomenon shaped by overlapping social, institutional, and psychological dimensions. Effective interventions must therefore adopt integrated approaches that

simultaneously address family socio-economic vulnerabilities, strengthen inclusive school climates, support positive identity development, and remove structural barriers to access and safety.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide robust empirical support for conceptualizing Roma students' educational participation as a multidimensional process shaped by the dynamic interplay of family socio-economic conditions, future-oriented identity constructions, school belonging and climate, and structural access factors. Consistent with existing research on educational inequality among marginalized populations (Bereményi & Carrasco, 2018; Messing, 2017), the present results demonstrate that families' educational attitudes and aspirations are deeply embedded within socio-economic constraints. Parental involvement and supervision were actively pursued by many families; however, precarious employment, limited income, and restricted institutional support constrained their capacity to translate aspirations into sustained educational opportunities. These findings reinforce the argument that low educational participation among Roma communities reflects structural exclusion rather than a lack of value placed on education.

The strong interconnections between family conditions and students' future perceptions highlight the central role of identity construction in educational continuity. Students who articulated higher motivation, positive academic self-concepts, and future aspirations were more likely to engage in sustained study practices and avoid grade repetition. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of future-oriented beliefs and academic self-perceptions in promoting persistence in education (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Oyserman et al., 2015). At the same time, the influence of caregiving responsibilities and domestic labor underscores how early life contexts shape identity narratives that simultaneously foster resilience and impose constraints on educational engagement.

School belonging and school climate emerged as critical mediating domains linking socio-economic conditions with students' educational trajectories. Supportive relationships with teachers and peers reinforced students' emotional attachment to school and strengthened their aspirations, corroborating extensive literature identifying school belonging as a key predictor of engagement and persistence (Goodenow, 1993; Wentzel, 2010; OECD, 2019). Conversely, experiences of discrimination, unsafe environments, and limited resources undermined belonging and reinforced educational vulnerability, reflecting patterns documented in Roma education across Europe (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2014).

Importantly, the multidimensional nature of educational participation revealed that emotional engagement alone was insufficient to sustain schooling in the presence of structural barriers. Environmental safety risks, transportation difficulties, and unequal access to resources consistently disrupted attendance and continuity. These findings align with ecological perspectives emphasizing that educational engagement is shaped by interactions across individual, relational, and environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; UNESCO, 2020). The prominent role of nutrition programs further illustrates how addressing basic needs operates as a protective factor that enhances both school belonging and sustained participation.

Taken together, the findings support an integrated framework in which Roma students' educational participation is embedded within interconnected systems of socio-economic vulnerability, identity formation, school relational environments, and structural access conditions. Absenteeism and grade repetition emerged not as isolated academic failures but as outcomes of complex social processes. While many students demonstrated strong aspirations and positive attitudes toward schooling, structural constraints frequently undermined their ability to maintain consistent participation.

These results highlight the necessity of holistic and multi-level educational interventions. Policies and practices aimed at improving Roma students' educational outcomes should simultaneously strengthen family support mechanisms, enhance inclusive and safe school climates, promote positive identity

development, and remove structural barriers to access and resources. Without addressing these interconnected dimensions, efforts focused solely on academic remediation are unlikely to produce sustainable improvements in educational participation and equity.

Theoretical Contribution

This study makes several important theoretical contributions to the literature on educational participation among marginalized populations, particularly Roma students. First, it advances existing scholarship by proposing an integrated and multidimensional conceptual framework that simultaneously incorporates family socio-economic conditions, identity construction processes, school belonging and climate, and structural dimensions of educational access. While prior research has often examined these factors in isolation, the present study demonstrates how they operate as interdependent systems that collectively shape educational engagement and continuity. By foregrounding the relational and reciprocal dynamics among these domains, the study offers a more holistic understanding of educational participation as a socially embedded and contextually mediated phenomenon. Second, the findings extend theoretical perspectives on identity-based motivation and educational engagement by illustrating how future perceptions and identity constructions function as mediating mechanisms between structural disadvantage and educational outcomes. The empirical evidence highlights how students' aspirations, academic self-perceptions, and motivational orientations are shaped through both family contexts and school relational environments, while also being constrained by daily routines and socio-economic responsibilities. This contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing the centrality of future-oriented identity processes in sustaining educational persistence among disadvantaged learners. Third, the study enriches theories of school belonging by situating belonging not merely as an emotional or relational construct but as one deeply intertwined with material conditions and structural supports. The strong role of concrete institutional resources—particularly nutrition programs and safety measures—demonstrates that belonging is produced through the intersection of relational care and material security. This integrated perspective challenges purely psychosocial interpretations of school belonging and underscores its structural dimensions in marginalized educational contexts. Finally, by conceptualizing absenteeism and grade repetition as outcomes embedded within interconnected systems of vulnerability rather than individual academic failure, the study contributes to broader sociological and ecological theories of educational inequality. It highlights how disengagement emerges from the interaction of socio-economic constraints, institutional conditions, and identity processes, thereby offering a nuanced framework for understanding educational marginalization.

Policy and Practice Implications

The findings of this study carry significant implications for educational policy and practice aimed at improving participation and outcomes among Roma students and other marginalized populations. At the policy level, the integrated model underscores the necessity of multidimensional intervention strategies that address both socio-economic vulnerabilities and school-based conditions. Policies focused solely on academic remediation are unlikely to yield sustainable improvements without simultaneous efforts to alleviate structural barriers such as transportation challenges, environmental safety risks, and unequal access to educational resources. Expanding school-based support programs—including nutrition services, transportation assistance, and community safety initiatives—can directly enhance both attendance and students' sense of belonging. Family-focused policies are equally critical. Programs that support parental engagement through accessible communication channels, adult education opportunities, and socio-economic assistance may strengthen families' capacity to sustain educational supervision and involvement. Recognizing that parental aspirations are often constrained by material conditions, social policies aimed at reducing poverty and employment instability can indirectly contribute to improved educational participation. At the school level, the findings highlight the central role of inclusive school climates and relational practices. Professional development for teachers and administrators should emphasize culturally responsive pedagogy, relational care, and awareness of the structural challenges faced by Roma students. Strengthening teacher–student relationships and fostering positive peer interactions can significantly enhance students' emotional

attachment to school and future-oriented motivation. Moreover, schools serving marginalized communities should adopt holistic approaches that integrate academic instruction with social and emotional supports. Creating safe, resource-rich environments where students' basic needs are met can reinforce both engagement and educational continuity.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the qualitative design and relatively limited sample size restrict the generalizability of the results to broader Roma populations or other marginalized groups. While the in-depth data provide rich insights into participants' experiences, future studies employing larger and more diverse samples would strengthen the empirical foundation of the proposed conceptual model. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to capture changes in students' perceptions, identity constructions, and educational engagement over time. Longitudinal research could provide valuable insights into how family conditions, school experiences, and future orientations evolve and interact across different stages of schooling. Third, the study primarily relies on self-reported perceptions from students and adult participants. Although triangulation across different participant groups was employed, incorporating additional data sources, such as school records, classroom observations, and policy documentation, could further enhance the robustness of the findings. Future research should aim to quantitatively test the integrated conceptual framework proposed in this study to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the identified domains. Mixed-methods approaches may be particularly valuable in capturing both structural patterns and lived experiences. Additionally, comparative studies across different marginalized communities and educational systems could help identify context-specific and universal mechanisms shaping educational participation. Finally, intervention-based research evaluating the effectiveness of holistic school and community programs would provide practical evidence for translating the model into sustainable educational policies and practices.

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