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Objective Position, Subjective Social Status and Perception of Economic Inequality: A Comparative Analysis of 37 Nations.

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Abstract Text:

The way that individuals perceive their position in the social hierarchy has been an important topic of research in sociology. The study of social inequality from a subjective approach, has shown that the perception of individuals in relation to their own social status is explained, in part, by individual characteristics such as income, educational achievement and occupation. In the same way, it has been shown that economic inequality and the level of wealth of the national context affect the perception of individuals regarding their social position (Evans & Kelley, 2004; Lindemann & Saar, 2014)

Empirical evidence suggests that, in contexts of greater economic inequality, the subjective status of individuals tends to be lower due to the socioeconomic differences between the lower and the higher status groups. Based on a social comparison approach (Evans & Kelley, 2017; Festinger, 1954), the literature on subjective social status has paid less attention to the role of the perception of economic inequality on the relationship between objective position and subjective social status, which leads us to ask: how does the perception of inequality affect the relationship between objective position and subjective social status? Based on this question, the central hypothesis argues that the association between education, income and occupation, with subjective social status, is positively moderated by the perception of inequality. To answer this question, multilevel models were estimated using data from the 2009 ISSP "Social Inequality IV" module for 37 countries.

In line with previous evidence, the results suggest that the perception of economic inequality is relevant in terms that it positively moderates the relationship between the objective position and subjective social status. These results are particularly salient for individuals with lower educational achievement, lower income and less skilled occupations.

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