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Social Participation through Cohesion (SoPaKo)

First Results of the Intervention Study

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What we know:

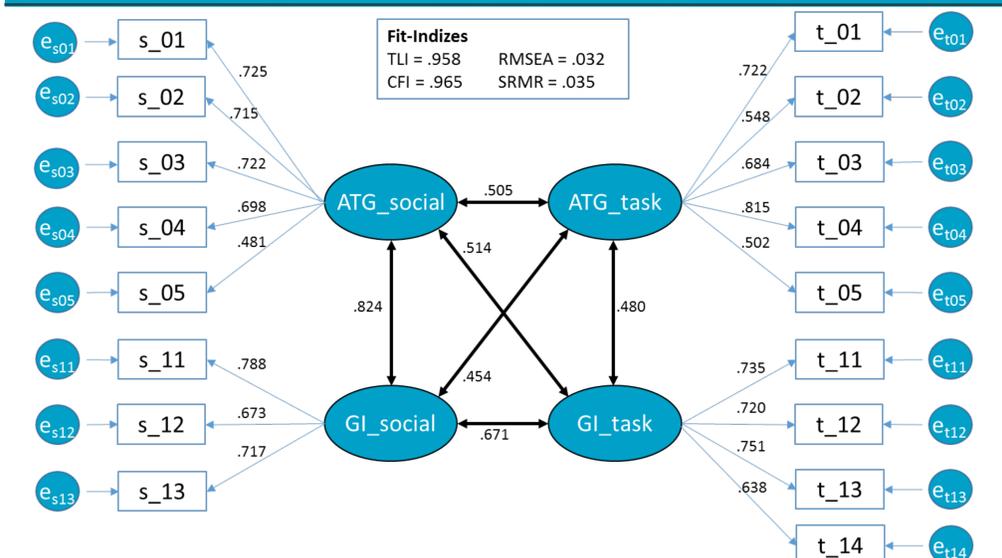
- goal of inclusive education: **social participation** of children with **special educational needs (SEN)**
- empirical research reveals that **inclusive instruction itself is not sufficient** to ensure social participation for all children (e.g. Huber, 2008)
- **trainings** were developed to strengthen the SEN children's social participation, mostly focusing only the SEN children and thereby **accepting the risk of stigmatization**

What is new:

- focus of **our classroom-based intervention** is the **class as a whole** → Using **cohesion** of the group „the resultant of all forces acting on members of groups to remain in the group“ (Festinger, 1950, S. 274)
- based on the 4-facet-model of Carron et al. (1985) – mainly used in context of sport – we **transfer** this model to the **context of school**: **“Gruko4”** (van Ophuysen, 2016)
- revealing instrumental group functions: fulfilment of group tasks and the affective need to belong

Cohesion Facets		
	Social (being together with classmates)	Task (learning & working together)
Attraction to Group (ATG)	wish for social interaction beyond lessons (e.g. during break time, leisure time), to participate in group activities	wish for participation during lessons (e.g. in cooperative tasks)
Group Integration (GI)	perception of similarity and connectedness between children of the class in terms of social activities beyond lessons	perception of similarity and connectedness between children of the class related to the group tasks

“Gruko4” - Confirmatory Factor Analysis



Example items (1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree)	number of items	Cronbach's α	mean (SD)
GI_social: In my class we all stick together.	3	.806	3.26 (0.81)
GI_task: My class is a really good learning community.	4	.797	3.29 (0.76)
ATG_social: I like the kids in my class.	5	.875	3.41 (0.74)
ATG_task: I like the tasks during lessons.	5	.774	3.27 (0.72)

“Gruko4” documentation – t1

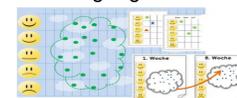
→ “Gruko4” presents an appropriate instrument to assess group cohesion in primary schools

Goal of the SoPaKo-Intervention

- strengthening cohesion in primary school classes
- thereby increasing social participation of individual students, especially those with very low school achievement and/or behavioral problems

Intervention

- based on a model of team building interventions – that proved to be successful fostering cohesion in sport teams (Carron & Spink, 1993) – and on the intervention “SirLus” (University Zürich, Prof. Moser Opitz)
- learning-based and social activities carried out by teachers
- practiced in dyads or groups of students during regular lessons
- weekly changing dyads
- weekly reflection



Design & Instruments

- **longitudinal waiting control group design** with 48 primary school classes (grades two and three) three times of measurement during the school year 2017/2018
- **school achievement tests**
math performance (DEMAT1+, 2+, Krajewski et al., 2002, Krajewski et al., 2004)
reading performance (ELFE II, Lenhard et al., 2018)
- **student questionnaires**
sociometric data - ratings & nominations (playing & working)
“Gruko4” (assessment of four facets of group cohesion; van Ophuysen, 2016)
self-perceived social participation based on FEES (Rauer & Schuck, 2004)
- **teacher questionnaire**
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, teacher version, Goodman, 1997)

First Results t1

Assumption: higher social participation is to be found in high cohesive classrooms – especially for children with SEN

Analysis: Two factorial ANOVA with

dependent variable:

- self-perceived social participation

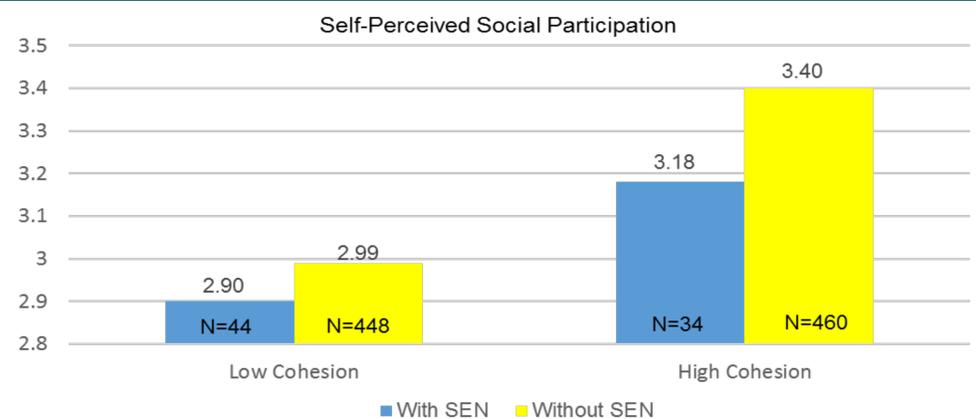
independent variables:

- cohesion => high vs. low (cut-off point = median mean values of *Group Integration – social* at classroom level)
- Special Educational Needs => no vs. yes (cut-off point = group centered SDQ +1.5 SD)

Sample

N=46 classes – grades 2 & 3 - from N=11 schools from North Rhine-Westphalia
N=986 (female=512, male=474) Mean age: 7,6 years (SD=0,74; min=6, max=11)

ANOVA: with BcA-Bootstrapping-Method (1000 Bootstrap-Samples)



→ Higher self-perceived social participation is found in high cohesive classrooms

Conclusion & Perspective

first results are promising:

- confirmatory factor analysis confirms the four-factorial structure of the cohesion construct
- higher social participation is found in high cohesive classrooms

next steps regarding t1:

- testing **other facets of social participation** operationalized by social network data (e.g. in-/outdegrees, reciprocity, acceptance, rejection)
- testing **other operationalizations of cohesion** operationalized as well by social network data (e.g. density)
- taking a look at **other types of SEN-children** (DEMAT- (maths) and ELFE- (reading) data - **low school achievement**)

next steps regarding t2 & t3: testing our assumptions that

- our intervention can increase cohesion in classes and
- individual social participation of all children, especially those with low school achievement and behavioral problems, thus increases

→ **hierarchical linear analysis** with group integration cohesion facets on level 2 and attraction to group facets on level 1

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