

Cultural diversity and its impact on social problems in classroom

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Introduction

- Migration background is often associated with less social and economic capital, and due to residential segregation, also with lower social adjustment (Hjern et al., 2013; Marées & Petermann, 2010; Nauck & Genoni, 2019).
- Students are characterized by different individual pre-conditions referring to the cultural or social background influencing social relations in school.

Theoretical Background

Discrepancies in the current state of research on the social interaction in schools with cultural diversity:

- Students with a migration background
 - show higher levels of social problems in school (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020)
 - are more at risk to be bullied (Fandrem et al., 2009)
- Positive effects of higher cultural diversity in classrooms (Hjern et al., 2013; Peetsma et al., 2001).
- But higher social problems if students with migration background are in schools with a lower cultural diversity (Hjern et al., 2013).

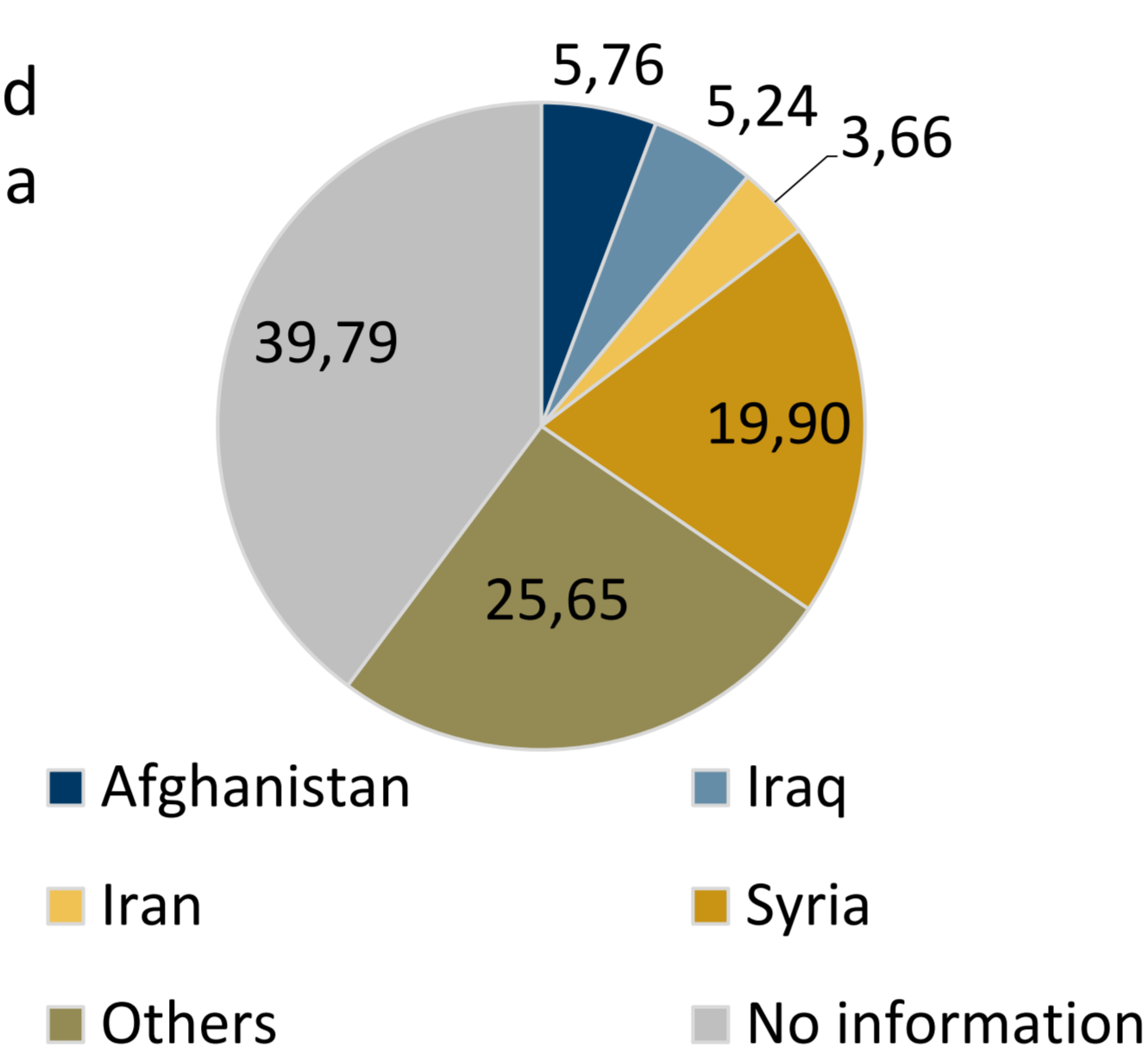
The empirical study

Research question:

Do students with migration background report less social problems in classes with a higher cultural diversity?

Sample:

- $N = 1000$ students from 10 middle and community schools (class level 5 to 9) in one German state;
- 50.4 % female; 49.6 % male;
- 19.4 % with a migration background (first or second generation)



Instruments and procedure:

- Measurement of perceived social problems in classroom by a five-point Likert-scale (high values indicate an absence of social problems, $\alpha = .84$; cf. Hascher, 2004).

Analyses:

- Step 1 Multilevel Regression:** Investigation of level 1 (students' perception of social problems in class) and level 2 effects (cultural diversity in class).
- Step 2 T-Test:** Investigation of mean differences between the groups (students with/without migration background and students in classes with low/high cultural diversity).

Results

Step 1: Multilevel Regression

Table 1. Results of the multilevel regression of the absence of social problems with Random Intercept.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Estimate	S.E.	Estimate	S.E.
Intercept	4.02***	0.06	4.04**	0.07
Migration background	0.15 ⁺	0.09	0.02	0.15
Proportion of students with migration background	-0.01*	0.00	-0.01*	0.00
Migration background*proportion of students with migration background			0.01	0.00

Notes. ** $p \leq .01$. * $p \leq .05$. + $p \leq .10$.

Step 2: t-Tests

Left side of the figure: Comparison of classes with low cultural diversity ($N = 294$) and high cultural diversity ($N = 200$). $T(492) = 2.03$, $p = .04$.

Right side of the figure: Comparison of students with ($N = 93$) and without migration background ($N = 107$) in classes with high cultural diversity. $T(198) = -1.83$, $p = .07$.

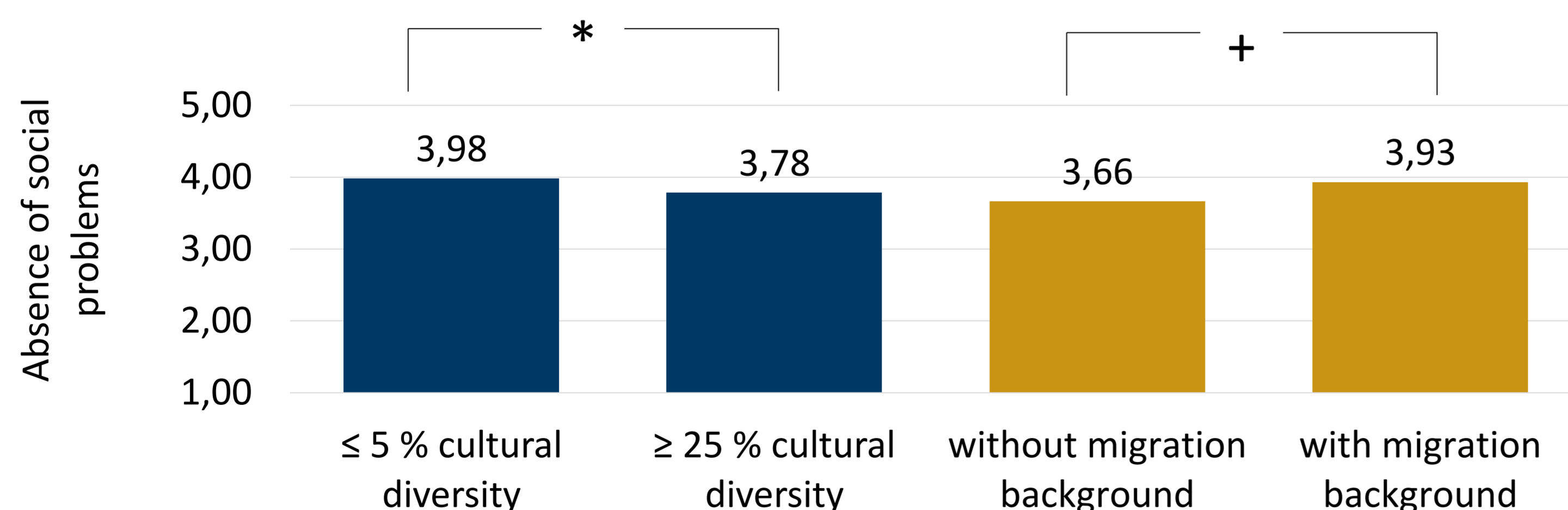


Figure 1. Mean-values of absence of social problems for the sub-groups.

Discussion

Summary:

- More social problems in classes with higher cultural diversity, as well as less social problems of the sub-group of students with migration background in those classes (Hjern et al., 2013).

Ethnic density effect:

Within homogeneous groups, consequently an absence of social problems may be observed (Shaw et al., 2012).

Limitations:

- unbalanced sample size;
- higher representation of students with migration background in classrooms with a higher cultural diversity;
- no possibility to analyze the sub-group of students with migration background in classrooms with a lower cultural diversity.

Conclusion

Integration of lower percentage of students with migration background in classrooms with more natives seems not to be conducive for the minority group (Hjern et al., 2013).

A high percentage of students with migration background seems to impose the level of social problems in classrooms.

Implication:

Professionalization of teachers with respect to students' cultural and social diversity, especially migration. Consideration of cultural diversity for composing classrooms.

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