

# 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).

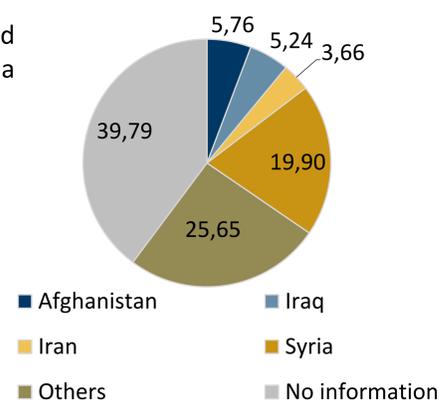
## The empirical study

### 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 <sup>+</sup>	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.  $T(198) = -1.83$ ,  $p = .07$ .

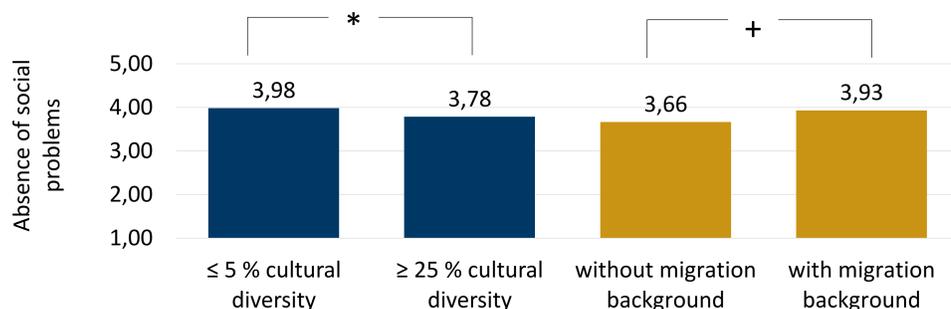


Figure 1. Mean-values of absence of social problems for the sub-groups.

## 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.

## References

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