



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Research in Developmental Disabilities

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/redevdis

Do learners with special education needs really feel included? Evidence from the Perception of Inclusion Questionnaire and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Jeffrey M. DeVries^{a,*}, Stefan Voß^b, Markus Gebhardt^a^a Technical University of Dortmund, Emil-Figge-Str. 50, 44227 Dortmund, Germany^b University of Rostock, Albert-Einstein-Str. 21, 18059 Rostock, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Special education needs
 Inclusive education
 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
 Perception of Inclusion Questionnaire
 Academic self-concept
 Self-perception

ABSTRACT

Background: School inclusion is an important right of students in school systems around the world. However, many students with special education needs (SEN) have lower perceptions of inclusion despite attending inclusive schools.

Aims: This study examined perceived levels of inclusion, academic self-concept and developmental problems in inclusive schools.

Methods and procedures: The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Perception of Inclusion Questionnaire were administered at two measurement points (6th and 7th grade; $n = 407$, including 48 with SEN) at multiple inclusive schools. Responses were compared based on gender, grade level, and SEN. Factor structure and measurement invariance were evaluated. **Outcomes and results:** Factor structures of both questionnaires were confirmed. Academic self-concept and emotional inclusion were lower for learners with SEN. However, these effects shrank in grade 7. Similarly, academic self-concept increased between grade 6 and 7. Lastly, learners with SEN had a higher level of conduct problems.

Conclusions and implications: Both instruments remain suitable for use in comparisons in inclusive schools. Significant differences exist for learners with SEN in inclusive classrooms, although these differences may shrink over time. We recommend the continued use of the Perception of Inclusion Questionnaire for information about school inclusion and for learners with SEN.

What this paper adds?

This paper contributes to the literature on inclusion in three important ways. First, the study examines participants across multiple schools in an inclusive school system, providing an *in situ* measurement of how included learners both with and without special education needs (SEN) perceive themselves to be included in their classes. Second, this paper uses an important new instrument to assess perception of inclusion, the perception of inclusion questionnaire (PIQ). The PIQ is evaluated alongside a well-researched instrument, the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ), allowing for a comparison between both scales. Besides data on the social inclusion and the emotional inclusion, the PIQ provides valuable information about the self-concept of learners, which the SDQ does not assess. Further, we examine the factor structure and invariance of both measures across SEN, gender, and grade level. Third, we found that learners with SEN feel a lower academic self-concept and feel less emotionally included across both

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: jeffrey.devries@tu-dortmund.de (J.M. DeVries).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2018.07.007>

Received 8 March 2018; Received in revised form 17 July 2018; Accepted 19 July 2018
 0891-4222/ © 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

measurement points and less socially included in the 6th grade (although not the 7th grade). Further, the difference between these groups shrinks from 6th to 7th grade. This novel interaction was unaccounted for in previous research; therefore, it necessitates more work to investigate the nature of inclusive schooling related to perceived social and emotional inclusion for children with SEN.

1. Introduction

While inclusion in schools is an agreed-upon international goal (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006), many students with special education needs (SEN) remain excluded socially and emotionally from regular classroom experiences (Banks, McCoy, & Frawley, 2017; Bossaert, Colpin, Pijl, & Petry, 2013; Prince & Hadwin, 2013; Schwab, Gebhardt, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2013). Similarly, learners with SEN are at risk for a lower academic self-concept (Elbaum, 2002; Li, Tam, & Man, 2006; Wei & Marder, 2010). Emotional, social, and academic inclusion at school can reduce the negative risks faced by such students with SEN (Grütter, Gasser, & Malti, 2017; Schwab, 2017). However, differing inclusive schools may vary on how much access learners with SEN may have and how much support such students receive, resulting in greater or lower benefits from inclusion (Prince & Hadwin, 2013).

This study will examine students in inclusive schools in order to identify the relationship between higher perceived inclusion and emotional, social, and conduct problems. We will use a well-established instrument, the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) alongside a newer instrument, the perceptions of inclusion questionnaire (PIQ; Venetz, Zurbriggen, & Eckhart, 2014). We will evaluate these instruments' applicability for learners with and without SEN and we will examine how both instruments relate to gender and SEN across two measurement points (6th and 7th Grade).

1.1. Socioemotional inclusion and academic self-concept

School inclusion is related to social, affective, and self-concept outcomes for children with SEN (for a review, see Prince & Hadwin, 2013). Learners with SEN may lack key social skills (Schwab et al., 2013; Wight & Chapparo, 2008). They may face greater prejudice (Avramidis, 2010) and bullying (Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2010), and are at a greater risk to feel excluded at schools (Grütter et al., 2017; Schwab et al., 2013; Schwab, 2017). Recent large-scale studies found that students with SEN felt less included at school (Stiefel, Shiferaw, Schwartz, & Gottfried, 2017) and that they had fewer friends and experienced negative peer relationships than other students (Avramidis, Avgeri, & Strogilos, 2018; Banks et al., 2017; Huber, Gerullis, Gebhardt, & Schwab, 2018). A lack of inclusion is also related to many negative emotional-developmental outcomes, including depression, (McGraw, Moore, Fuller, & Bates, 2008), substance abuse, and other mental health problems (Arslan, 2018; Bond et al., 2007), as well as poorer academic outcomes (Szumski & Karwowski, 2015; Van Ryzin, Gravelly, & Roseth, 2009) such as a reduced academic self-concept (Bear, Minke, & Manning, 2002). Children with SEN are at an even greater risk of poor academic outcomes due to worse feelings of inclusion and a lower academic self-concept (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003; Korhonen, Linnanmäki, & Aunio, 2014; Szumski & Karwowski, 2015).

1.2. The Perceptions of Inclusion Questionnaire

The Perceptions of Inclusion Questionnaire (PIQ; Venetz et al., 2014; Venetz, Zurbriggen, Eckhart, Schwab, & Hessels, 2015) is designed to measure three areas critical to inclusion: social inclusion, emotional inclusion, and academic self-concept. Academic self-concept (see Elbaum, 2002; Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003; Prince & Hadwin, 2013) describes a learner's self-concept in the specific domain of school. Relatedly, emotional inclusion refers to a sense of well-being at school and social inclusion describes the sense of connectedness (e.g., friends) at school (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003; Schwab et al., 2013; Stiefel et al., 2017; Szumski & Karwowski, 2015). The PIQ measures these three constructs (academic self-concept, emotional inclusion, and social inclusion) with four items each on a 4-point Likert scale ("not at all true" to "certainly true"). It can be self-administered or taken by a child's teacher or parent, and it is designed for 8- to 16-year-olds.

The PIQ is based on the longer questionnaire to assess the dimensions of integration of pupils (FDI; in German: Fragebogen zur Erfassung der Dimensionen der Integration von Schülern; Haeberlin, Moser, Bless, & Klaghofer, 1989). The FDI was the first instrument developed in Switzerland to assess levels of perceived inclusion by students at schools. It had a big influence in the discussion of implementation of inclusion in the German speaking countries (Gebhardt, Schwab, Krammer, & Gasteiger, 2012; Sauer, Ide, & Borchert, 2007; Schwab et al., 2013; Schwab, Gebhardt, Krammer, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2015). The FDI included 45 items across 3 factors, and the PIQ was able to reduce the scale to 12 items across the same 3 factors (4 items per factor), while maintaining a high Cronbach's alpha (all $\alpha \geq .80$) and good model fits (Venetz et al., 2014).

English, German, and other language versions of the PIQ are available online to educators and researchers (see Venetz et al., 2015). The scale was further evaluated by Zurbriggen, Venetz, Schwab, and Hessels (2017), where its 3-factor structure was confirmed. Overall, the test items behaved normally. However, one item was found to lack measurement invariance between learners with learning disabilities and those without. Zurbriggen et al. (2017) concluded that more work is necessary to compare the instrument in general across differing SEN. Furthermore, a comparison of the scale with other established scales will allow for additional cross-validation of its latent variables. This study seeks to close this research gap by comparing the PIQ with the SDQ.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6848087>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6848087>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)