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THE REASONS FOR TURKISH MIGRANT CHILDREN ATTENDING GENERAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS[2]

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the possible causes of Turkish migrant children aged between 6 and 11 years old attending general special schools. The sample investigated consisted of 20 Turkish students in general special education and Turkish primary school students with special educational needs (SEN) and 31 Turkish primary school students. The investigation involved a non-verbal intelligence test (CPM) and a reading comprehension test (ELFE 1-6), the Kaufmann Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC). A parent questionnaire about the behaviour of children and adolescents was also carried out (CBCL / 4-18). The statistical analysis was performed according to the normal distribution method for the calculation of group comparisons, such as the T-test and U-test based on Mann-Whitney to compare two groups. According to results of this study, the language-based test is an important factor in the transfer of Turkish migrant children from primary school to general special school.

Key words: Turkish migrant children, general special school, intelligence, reading comprehension, behavioural problems.

INTRODUCTION

Turkish migrant children present limitations, for example they do not attain adequate academic achievements and the discrepancy between choice of school and real opportunities constitutes a difficulty. In this regard there are different factors which lead to the transfer of a child from a primary or secondary school to a state special school.

The law on compulsory education governs the compulsory attendance of special schools in Austria. This law establishes special educational needs in § 8 Para. 1 as follows: “School-age children who are not able to succeed in lessons in primary and secondary schools as a result of physical or psychological disabilities but are still capable of school attendance must (...) fulfil their general schooling in a special school appropriate to their school aptitude” (Gruber and Ledl, 1992, p.20). One reason for a child’s admittance to a special school is the first condition, if schooling cannot be fulfilled according to the general school curriculum, the educational tasks and objectives are described in greater detail according to educational ability. The particular learning requirements of these children may sometimes necessitate an alternative teaching

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structure and a different kind of lesson to those offered in a mainstream school. In such cases it should be considered whether it is necessary to admit the child into a special school. The identification of a special educational need by means of a special educational needs report is a requirement for the transfer of a child to a special school. The assessment procedure offers parents the option to choose between a special school and the integrated schooling of their child in the mainstream school system. A special educational needs (SEN) requirement is pronounced for individual subjects (according to the state special school curriculum in special schools or integration classes) (BMUKK Online 2009, 1–2).

Studies investigating the reasons for the identification of a special educational need in the case of migrant children offer an inconsistent picture. Membership of an ethnic group (Luciak and Kramann, 2009, Eisenhut, 2008, Unterwurzacher, 2007, Punz, 2007) and social status represent the most important factors for placing migrant children within the sphere of special education (Unterwurzacher, 2007, Begemann, 2002, Weiß, 2001, Klein, 1980). Cultural (Luciak & Liegl, 2008) and linguistic disparities (Luciak & Liegl, 2008, Punz, 2007, Kottmann, 2006) of migrant children are of crucial importance if a special educational need is identified (Luciak, 2009, p.381). Behavioural problems, family background (Luciak, 2009, Punz, 2007), migration and a lack of second language knowledge support the decision to transfer a child to a special school (Punz, 2007). Luciak and Liegl (2008) were able to determine that sporadic school attendance, a high number of missed lessons and low parent participation in school activities also served as a basis for the identification of special educational needs. Eisenhut (2008) outlined extra-curricular tutoring, adapted lesson types and alternative parental attitudes to school as other reasons for diagnosing special educational needs. Alongside these factors, gender also plays a significant role in the sphere of special education. The number of male pupils at special schools is almost twice that of female pupils. Only four out of ten migrant children are female (Weiss/Unterzuwacher, 2007).

The consideration of the state special school attendance of Turkish migrant children forms an important indicator for their participation opportunities in the Austrian education systems. The findings of numerous studies on the state special school attendance of Turkish migrant children show that the different reasons for this predominantly result from low intellectual and linguistic abilities, academic achievement-specific situations, culture-specific factors and social behaviour (Brodesser, 2015; Baumert & Maaz, 2012; Lerhmann & Hoffmann, 2009; Walter, 2008; Darwisch et al, 2003). In multiple scientific, empirical studies it has been determined that Turkish migrant children are over-represented in state special schools or in primary schools with special educational needs provision (Brodesser, 2015; Powel & Wagner, 2014). In order to compare the achievements of children attending state special schools and state primary schools, an average achievement level among the abilities of the special school pupils are at least two school years under the competencies (Wocken & Gröhlich, 2009; Rauer & Schuck, 2007; Wocken, 2000; 2005; Katzenbach, Rauer. Schuck & Wudtke, 1999; Tent, Witt, Zschosche- Lieberum & Bürger, 1991). When comparing the two school types, a difference of at least two years indicates for special school pupils. Furthermore, special school pupils with a migration background attain even poorer achievements than those without a migration background (Lehmann, Nikolova & Peek, 2004).

METHOD

Study Participants/Selection of Test Subjects

Turkish migrant children were the study participants of this research. The study focussed on Turkish migrant children in school years 1-4 (aged 6-11) who received schooling either at a state special school, in a primary school with special educational needs (SEN) provision or who attended a primary school. The participating Turkish migrant children who attended a state special school or received schooling in a primary school with SEN provision were organised into state special school groups. The random sample consisted of 51 Turkish migrant children, of which 31 were primary school pupils and 20 were state special school pupils. The data referred to in this study was collected both in a variety of Turkish associations and in our practice in Wörgl during the period from December 2011 to the end of December 2015.

Conduct of Investigation/Investigation Procedure

Before the beginning of the study, contact was established with the chairman of each Turkish association by telephone or in person. Information was shared in a personal discussion about the objective of the study, the place, time and type of study. After communicating this information, contact was also established by telephone or in person with the parents. The parents were informed of the objective and process of the study. After these stages, a location for carrying out the investigation was arranged in agreement with the parents. By selecting a familiar location it was possible to reduce many of the parents' existing doubts and much of their anxiety and lack of confidence, therefore increasing motivation and concentration. The children were included in the research with the approval of their parents.

Before the start of each investigation and the completion of parent questionnaire, the intention and procedure of the investigation were explained to the parents and children in a personal discussion. It was thereby pointed out that no individual results would be published, but rather the results would be considered in groups and all names would remain anonymous. On the subject of anonymity, the investigations took place either at our practice in Wörgl or in one of the Turkish associations in Wörgl, Kufstein and Innsbruck.

During the investigation, a non-verbal intelligence test, a reading comprehension test and six sub-tests from the Kaufmann Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) were carried out with the respective Turkish migrant children at the place of investigation. The investigation with the children lasted between 60 and 80 minutes. After the investigation with the children, a Child Behaviour Checklist was also completed with the parents. This lasted approximately 60 minutes. The conduct of the tests and the completion of the questionnaire took no longer than 150 minutes.

Investigation Procedure and Used Tests

Coloured Progressive Matrices (CMP)

The selection of this non-verbal intelligence test was made predominantly according to the criteria of non-verbal and non-cultural assessment. The Coloured Progressive Matrices (CPM) test was developed for the non-verbal assessment of the general intelligence potential in children (Raven, 1976). The Raven's Matrices test can be conducted with children aged from 4

years and 9 months to 11 years old. The test comprises the three sub-tests A, Ab and B, which each contain twelve coloured tasks. The tasks themselves consist of geometric shapes or patterns which must be completed and each task is organised in the same way, with one task per page (Schmidtke et al, 1980).

This non-verbal intelligence test can be conducted without the use of spoken or written language. As a non-verbal test, the CPM is also well suited to cultural-comparative investigations (Schmidtke et al, 1980). It serves as a "non-verbal assessment of the observational function and of clear thinking" (Brickenkamp, 1975, p.184), as an indicator of cognitive abilities which is relatively independent from education and the socio-cultural environment. The duration of the test is approximately 20-30 minutes.

Grading: A correct answer is awarded a mark of 1, an incorrect answer is awarded a mark of 0. A total of 36 marks may be awarded.

Reliability*:* The test repetition reliability of this procedure is indicated as r=.90. The split-half reliability was between r=.82 and r=.94 for the younger children and higher for two age groups (third and fourth school year, ages 8-9 and 9-10 respectively). Interculturally comparable investigations achieved a reliability of r=.61 to r=.98 (Bulheller & Häcker, 2006)

A Reading Comprehension Test for School Years One to Six [ages 6-12] (ELFE 1-6)

This test by Lenhard and Schneider (2006) serves as an assessment of reading ability at word, sentence and text level in school years 1-6. It can be conducted as an individual test, but also as a group test. The test structure comprises three sub-tests which are measured at the following levels: word, sentence and text comprehension test.

Word Comprehension Test: This sub-test consists of 72 images with five words. The children should match the correct word to each image within three minutes.

Sentence Comprehension Test*:* This consists of 28 sentences. The children also have three minutes to complete the 28 sentences.

Text Comprehension Test*:* This consists of 20 short stories. The children have seven minutes to read up to 20 short stories and to tick the correct question answer.

Including an introductory briefing, the test lasts around 20 to 30 minutes. The time allocated for the completion of the tasks is between 10 and 16 minutes.

Grading*:* Each correct answer is awarded a mark of 1, an incorrect answer is awarded a mark of 0.

Reliability: The internal consistency of the ELFE for the word comprehension test is Cronbach's α =.97, for the sentence comprehension test Cronbach's α =.93 and for the text comprehension test Cronbach's α =.92.

Validity: ELFE 1-6 correlated with the WLLP (Würzburg quiet reading test) r=.710, with Knuspel- L (Test 4) r=.454 and with teacher assessment for reading r=.705.

Kaufman-Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC)

The K-ABC monitors the intelligence and ability level of children aged from 2.6 years to 12.5 years (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1982). The German-language version of the K-ABC was

standardised using a random sample of 3,098 children from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and South Tyrol (Melchers & Preuß, 2005).

The K-ABC consists of 5 combined proficiency scales and 16 sub-tests. In order to achieve my research objective, the following sub-tests were selected and used: number repetition, word sequences, triangles, spatial memory, picture completion and photo series.

The duration of the test was approximately 30 minutes for two-year-olds, 50-60 minutes for five-year-olds and 75-85 minutes for the over-sevens. (Implementation and evaluation manual, p.3).

Reliability: The reliability tests were performed using the split-half method and the test repetition method. The test correlates according to Spearman-Brown for the five scales across all eleven age-groups in the range of r=.83 to r=.98.

Validity*:* Extensive construct validation was carried out with the following components: developmental stages (age differentiation), factor analysis, conformity and differentiation validity (individual/holistic thinking; Successive-Simultaneous Battery) and correlation with other tests (correlation of the individual combined proficiency scales with the combined performance in the WISC-R of r = .57 to r = .79, and in the AID of r = .50 to r = .86).

Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL/4-18)

The CBCL/4-18 questionnaire was produced in a sufficiently evaluated German and Turkish version. For this study the German version of the CBCL/4-18 was used. This questionnaire ascertains the parents' opinions of the skills, behavioural problems and emotional problems of children and young people aged between 4 and 18 years old. The first section of the questionnaire contains questions about the children's/young people's skills, the second part consists of 120 items which assess behavioural problems, emotional problems and physical complaints. The following demonstrate the scales of this procedure:

a. Proficiency scales: activity, social skills and school. These three skills proficiency scales form the combined proficiency scale 'skills'.

b. Syndrome scales: 8 cross-evaluation syndrome scales: social withdrawal, physical complaints, anxiety/depression, social problems, schizoid/obsessive compulsive, attention difficulties, anti-social behaviour and aggressive behaviour.

From these syndrome scales, the scales social withdrawal; physical complaints; anxiety/depression were summarised in the overarching scale "internalising problems". The overarching scale "externalising problems" as well as a "combined value scale for problem behaviour" (internalising, externalising) were formed from the anti-social behaviour and aggressive behaviour scales .The remaining three scales (social problems; schizoid/obsessive-compulsive and attention difficulties) were not assigned to an overarching scale. The evaluation concerns the time period of the previous six months.

Grading: An item is awarded

- a mark of 0 if the statement is false;
- a mark of 1 if the statement is sometimes or partly true;
- a mark of 2 if the statement is often true; (Döpfner et al., 1998).

Reliability: The reliability of this questionnaire could be broadly confirmed in the German random sample (N = 2,856) and the data of the media analysis '94 (MA '94) (N= 22,313). In total, an adequate representativeness was surmised (Döpfner et al 1998, p.34-35). The internal consistency of this procedure is indicated as r>.85 (http://www.testzentrale.de). The questionnaire takes around 20 minutes to complete.

Statistical Data Analysis

The statistical data analysis was completed using the statistics programme SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows Version 23.0. Firstly, the following areas were formed from the six sub-tests of the K-ABC.

Auditory perception: number repetition, word sequences

Visually selective attention: photo series

Visually mnestic functions: spatial memory

Executive functions: triangles, picture completion and photo series (Gamper et al., 2004, p.16).

Before starting the data analysis of the cognitive tests, all of these test values were converted into intelligence values. T-values were used in the parent questionnaire (CBCL/4-18). In the evaluation of the study, the procedures of the descriptive statistics and normal distribution were calculated first. According to normal distribution, procedures for the calculation of group comparisons were used, such as the T-Test and the Mann-Withney U-Test for the comparison of two groups. The level of significance for the study was expected to be (.05).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 demonstrates the mean values, standard deviations and *p-values* of the investigated group.

Table 1: Mean values, standard deviations and *p-values* of the investigated group

Variables	**State special school (N=20)**		**Primary school (N=31)**		***p-value***
Gender (male/female)	12/8		18/13		
Non-verbal intelligence	92.35	5.64	95.09	11.27	0.191
German Reading Ability	83.77	14.82	97.29	11.36	**0.001****
Auditory perception:	92.00	8.37	102.09	9.08	**0.000*****
Visually selective attention:	85.50	10.37	90.00	8.75	0.065
Visually mnestic functions:	97.50	11.86	101.77	12.41	0.093
Executive functions:	87.25	7.52	96.65	7.32	**0.000*****
Internalising	63.85	9.23	60.45	10.63	0.124
Externalising	64.45	12.96	55.74	10.62	**0.003****
Overall Behavioural Problems	59.95	8.78	54.00	9.50	**0.012***

As is made clear in Table 1, the mean value difference between Turkish pupils of state special schools and Turkish pupils of primary schools in the overall *non-verbal intelligence* (CPM) is shown to be not significant (p=.191). Statistically no important differences exist between the two. Non-verbal intelligence was not a significant factor.

In comparison to Turkish pupils of primary schools, the Turkish pupils of state special schools showed significant differences in the range of the *German reading ability* (ELFE) (p=.001), *auditory perception* (p=.000) and *executive functions* (p=.000). In the area of *visually selective attention* (p=.065) and *visually mnestic functions* (p=.093) there were no significant results.

If the social behaviour of the Turkish migrant children is considered, peculiarities can be seen on the sub-scales *externalising* (p=.003) and *overall behavioural problems* (p=.012). The sub-scale *internalisation* demonstrated no significant difference (p=.124).

CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate the different reasons for the transfer of Turkish migrant children from a primary school to a state special school. Turkish migrant children who received schooling either at a state special school or in a primary school with SEN provision were compared with those who attended a primary school. The study focussed on determining which factors represent the main basis for transfers to special schools.

The results concerning non-verbal intelligence present non-verbal intelligence as playing a significant role. No significant differences in non-verbal intelligence could be determined for Turkish migrant children of both school types. This means that the main cause of the transfer to state special schools is not moderated/defined by non-verbal intelligence. As there are few other studies in German-speaking countries which have previously investigated the reasons why Turkish migrant children attend special schools, these results must be discussed cautiously. In accordance with the reported findings of the literature, comparable results of non-verbal intelligence are also demonstrable for the Turkish migrant children in this study (Tarakci, 2011; Lehmann & Hoffmann, 2009, in Brodesser, 2015). In contrast, Turkish migrant children showed low scores in the language- and culture-oriented intelligence tests (Te Nijenhuis et al., 2004).

Regarding reading ability, there was a significant difference between the reading ability in German of the Turkish pupils of state special schools and that of the Turkish pupils of primary schools. Linguistic competence is a decisive factor in the transfer of Turkish migrant children to state special schools. Important in relation to the variables investigates, the language level makes a significant contribution to transfers to state special schools or to the school career of Turkish migrant children. This finding corresponds to the previously mentioned results of earlier studies (Lehmann & Hoffman, 2009; Lehmann, Nikolova & Peek, 2004). Furthermore, findings show lower-than-average reading abilities in Turkish migrant children (Baumert & Maaz, 2012; Walter, 2008b). In addition, the lack of linguistic abilities can have a negative impact on academic achievements (Petermann et al., 2008).

To investigate behavioural problems, this study used a questionnaire to compare Turkish pupils of state special schools with Turkish pupils of primary schools. In comparison to the Turkish pupils of primary schools, Turkish pupils of state special schools demonstrated multiple

significant externalising and combined behavioural problems. In contrast, no such significant differences existed in the sub-test "internalisation". This contradicts results of other studies which simultaneously showed a greater number of internalising and externalising behavioural problems in Turkish migrant children. (Darwisch et al., 2003; Bengi-Arslan et al., 1997). Consistent with previously conducted studies with migrant children in Europe and in the USA, a greater number of internalising behavioural problems could be determined (Belhadj Kouider, Koglin & Petermann, 2014; 2015; Sirin et. al, 2015). Moreover, Belhadj Kouider et al (2014) were also able to demonstrate that in Europe there is clearly a high risk concerning the development of internalising behavioural problems in children.

With regard to the cognitive partial performances, Turkish pupils of state special schools differ from Turkish pupils of primary schools in the areas of "auditory perception and executive functions", however in the areas of "visually selective attention and visually mnestic functions", they do not. In comparison with earlier findings, comparable results were seen in the area of auditory perception (Mand, 2012; Weber et al., 2007; Nuckle, 2004) and in the area of executive functions (Michael & Robers, 2008; Alloway et al., 2005). Furthermore, Michael and Robers (2008) were able to report that the pupils of state special schools were unable to catch up to the level of their peers in mainstream schools.

In relation to visually selective attention, the findings correspond to those of older studies (Rualand, et al., 2012; Savaga et al., 2006). However, Schlegel (2006) was able to confirm that the construct of selective attention in state special schools indicates a delay in development.

With regard to the visually mnestic functions of Turkish migrant children, my study produced results comparable to those of Te Nijenhuis et al (2004). No significant differences were apparent. In contrast, Michel und Robers (2008) report the low significant memory capacity of state special school pupils. Moreover, low memory capacity of migrant children was present in the earlier studies (Mand, 2012; Goldhammer et al., 2011).

The conclusion can be drawn that Turkish migrant children who attend a state special school do not demonstrate lower-than-average intelligence. The findings of this study also indicate that a lack of German language skills can lead to a transfer to a special school. As regards the cognitive sphere, auditory perception and executive functions play an important role in the transfer of Turkish migrant children to a special school, while visually selective attention and visually mnestic functions do not have a great influence over the transfer to a special school.

In relation to behavioural problems, externalising and general behavioural problems represent a key reason for the transfer of Turkish migrant children to a special school. In contrast, internalising behavioural problems does not have a great influence over the transfer to a special school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to achieve more exact results in future research, a larger random sample could be used. In addition, a comparison could be made between native pupils of state special schools and Turkish pupils of state special schools. Furthermore, an inclusion of the school level, particularly the teacher-parent level and the teacher-pupil level, would be highly sensible and appropriate. Subsequently, it would be useful to simultaneously take into account a study's quantitative and qualitative aspects.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to explore the possible causes of Turkish migrant children aged between 6 and 11 years old attending general special schools (GSS). The random sample consisted of 51 Turkish migrant children, of which 31 were primary school pupils and 20 were state special school pupils. The data referred to in this study was collected both in a variety of Turkish associations and in our practice in Wörgl during the period from December 2011 to the end of December 2015. This study focuses on non-verbal intelligence, reading comprehension, four other intelligence dimensions and the social behaviour of Turkish migrant children.

The investigation involved a non-verbal intelligence test (Raven Coloured Progressive Matrices) and a reading comprehension test (ELFE 1-6: a reading comprehension test for first to sixth graders by W. Lenhard, W. Schneider), the Kaufmann Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) by P. Melchers & U. Peru. A parent questionnaire about the behaviour of children and adolescents was also carried out - CBCL / 4-18 by M. Döpfner, J. Plück, S. Bölte, K. Lenz, P. Melchers & K. Heim).

The statistical data analysis was performed using the statistical program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows, version 17.0 and version 23.0. The statistical analysis was performed according to the normal distribution method for the calculation of group comparisons, such as the T-test and U-test based on Mann-Whitney to compare two groups. According to the findings of the study, the Turkish students in general special education and Turkish primary school students with special educational needs (SEN) achieved low average values in the German-reading as Turkish primary school students. There is a statistically significant difference between Turkish students in general special education and Turkish primary school students (p=.001). In terms of speaking and culture-free intelligence and internalisation, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups (p=.0191). A meaningful difference was not found between the groups in visually selective attention (p=.065) and visually mnestic functions (p=.093) and a meaningful difference was

found between the groups in the dimensions of auditory perception (p=.000) and executive functions (p=.000). On the other hand, the results of the social behaviour of the Turkish migrant children on the sub-scales *externalising* (p=.003) and *overall behavioural problems* (p=.012) are meaningful. A meaningful difference between the groups in internalising (p=.124) was not found.

According to results of this study, the language-based test is an important factor in the transfer of Turkish migrant children from primary school to general special school. In addition to the language-based test, it would be useful to use language and culture-free intelligent tests and behaviour measurement methods during the transfer process.