A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS PROMOTING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH ETHNIC MINORITY AND IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND

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Abstract

The literature shows that children from an ethnic minority or immigrant background often face social exclusion in partner countries of the European Union. Educational settings play an important role in forming the intergroup orientations of children and can potentially promote pro-social behaviour, thus supporting peers to be inclusive towards each other and overcome ethnic and cultural differences. The purpose of the study was to identify interventions that promote social inclusion of ethnic minority and immigrant children in formal and non-formal educational settings by shaping the intergroup relations and orientations of children as well as their social skills. A systematic search was conducted in three databases (Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest). After excluding duplications, 2565 studies were assessed for eligibility. We included studies written in English, with participants between the age of 5 and 12, examining both majority and minority samples. We found 12 eligible studies. Data was synthetized regarding the content and common elements of interventions, methodological characteristics, and contextual factors of feasibility. Six studies used qualitative methods, other five used quantitative methods, while one used a mixed approach for measuring the effect of the interventions. Our results show that most interventions for inclusion are implemented in a formal educational setting, mainly focusing on children aged between 5-10. Three studies involved parents in the intervention. The studies focused on the following inclusive approaches: multiculturality, positive peer-interactions, prejudice reduction, social and communicational skills, interactivity, cooperation.

Keywords: Social inclusion, education, ethnic minority, systematic literature review.

1. Introduction

The European Union Social Cohesion policy (European Commission, 2021) clearly states that social inclusion in European education is a priority, yet children from an ethnic minority or immigrant background often face social exclusion in partner countries of the European Union (Madanipour & Weck, 2015). In an environment where social inclusion is not promoted, peer victimization, peer-rejection and friendlessness emerge more easily (Juvonen et al., 2019). In addition, social exclusion and perceived prejudice not only have a negative impact on psychological well-being but can also affect academic achievement and progress in the school environment (Hood et al., 2017). Educational settings play an important role in forming the intergroup orientations of children (Cooper & Slavin, 2001) and can potentially promote pro-social behaviour (Alan, 2021), thus supporting peers to be inclusive towards each other and overcome ethnic and cultural differences. Training of social skills can also be beneficial for children at risk of social exclusion as the promotion of these skills can result in higher levels of social interactions (Denham et al., 2007).

1.1. Objectives

We hypothesize that the intervention programs aiming to support the inclusion of children from ethnic minority or immigrant background are procedurally and methodologically diverse. The purpose of the study is to identify interventions that promote social inclusion of ethnic minority and immigrant children in formal and non-formal educational settings by shaping their intergroup relations and orientations of children as well as their social skills. Based on the data, our aim is to collect all the reported interventions and best practices that are available in the current literature, furthermore we would like to identify the main characteristics of these interventions.

2. Methods

A systematic search was conducted in Scopus (n=667), Web of Science (n=1050) and ProQuest (n=898). After excluding duplications, 2565 studies were screened based on title and abstract. 54 papers were assessed for eligibility. We found 12 eligible studies. We included published and unpublished studies, written in English. Our inclusion criteria were: 1. The study had to assess an intervention promoting positive peer interaction and cooperation between immigrant/ethnic minority children and/or promoting social acceptance and belonging of minority groups to support the inclusion of the children with immigrant/ethnic minority background, 2. We included studies examining participants between the age of 5 and 12, from both majority and minority samples, 3. We included both qualitative and quantitative data. Data was synthetized regarding the content and common elements of interventions, methodological characteristics, and contextual factors of feasibility and then analyzed with a thematical approach.

2.1. Method table

Table 1. Method Table.

First author,date	Location	Age	Minority status	Name of program	Outcome
Auh 2021	Gyeonggi, Korea	n.d.	Participants from China, Vietnam, Thailand, USA, Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar	Global Cultural Citizenship Education (GCCE)	**Qualitative methods** Surveys, formative and summative evaluations, interviews
Boucher 2021	Turkey, Europe	n.d.	Refugee children from Syria	Preschool Summer Camp Program	**Quantitative methods** Friendship network (1 measure) Prosocial behaviour (1 measure)
Canabate 2021	Spain, Europe	4-8	Immigrant children	Cooperative Learning Techniques	**Qualitative methods** Analysis of reflective narratives
Gabrielli 2020	Italy, Europe	10-12	Italian children	Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow program (YTT)	**Quantitative methods** Implicit prejudice (1 measure)
Isaac 2022	Los Angeles, USA	$M = 7$	Latino children from immigrant background	Bridging Cultures Project	**Qualitative methods** Ethnographic Observations Reporting of videotapes Hypothetical Scenarios Teacher Interviews
Khalfoui 2023	Spain, Europe	7-9	Romani, African, Asian	Succesful Educational Actions (SEAs)	**Qualitative methods** Observation Discussion groups
Lopez&Kirk 2021	Spain, Europe	9-11	Romani, African, Latin-American, Caucasion, Sub-Saharan	Sport Education	**Qualitative methods** Focus group
O'Donell 2014	California USA	5-12	Latino	YMCA Family Involvment Project	**Quanitative methods** Family involvment (1 measure)
Pirchio 2017	Italy Europe	7-9	Caucasian, Asiatic, other ethnicities	School and Family together for the integration of immigrant children (SOFT)	**Quantitative methods** Immigrant rejection (1 measure)

Spyropoulou 2020	Greece Europe	9-12	Greek, Albanian, Italian, other ethnicities	Friendship Project – Greek version (FP-GR)	**Quantitative methods** Attitudes Towards Refugees (1 measure)
Weidinger 2015	Romania Europe	4-12	Romani	Families and Children in Education (FACE)	**Quantitative methods** Self-concept (1 measure) **Qualitative methods** Learning material adaptation
Zake 2010	Latvia Europe	5-7	Romani	Step by step program	**Qualitative methods** Questionnaires Interviews Observations

3. Results

Six of the identified studies used qualitative methods for measuring the effect of the interventions, while other five used quantitative approach. One study used mixed methods for the measurements. Our literature review shows that most interventions for inclusion are implemented in a formal educational setting, focusing on children aged between 5-12. Three identified studies involved parents in the interventions. The studies included in the research focused on the following inclusive approaches: multicultural values, empathy for others, positive peer-interactions, prejudice reduction, social and communicational skills, interactivity, cooperation.

4. Conclusions

Children from ethnic minority and immigrant background often face various challenges in EU countries. The research aims to offer relevant insights for policy makers and educators in Europe, by overviewing literature on educational and social inclusion.

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