

# **Wellbeing and peer exclusion in early adolescence: The role of school achievement and classroom context**

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# Negative affect in early adolescents

Relevant correlates related to being in school:

- Low school achievement (Huang et al., 2015)
- Lack of social support - from peers and teachers (Rueger et al., 2010)
- Unfavorable school climate (Clark et al., 2022)



# Peer exclusion in early adolescents

Relevant correlates related to being in school:

- Being a member of a group with numeric minority – ethnicity, SES (Lintner et al., 2023)
- Low school achievement and motivation (Buhs et al., 2010)

Early adolescence as a sensitive period:

- Heightened school problems and higher importance of peers for personal well-being (Killen a Rutland, 2011)



# Research questions

- (1) Does school achievement (either as *grades* or *test scores*) protect students from negative affect and peer exclusion?
- (2) Does school achievement interact with teacher support (*individual* and *classroom*) and classroom achievement norms (either as *grades* or *test scores*) in prediction of negative affect and peer exclusion?

# Methods

## Sample:

- 2548 early adolescents (54% boys and 46% girls)
- sixth-graders from 134 primary schools in the Czech Republic

## Instruments:

- *Negative affect* - average of five negative emotions: worry, anger, fear, and sadness (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988)
- *Peer exclusion* - nominations received, reluctance of classmates to sit in the pew with the person (Lintner et al., 2023)
- *School achievement* - grades on last report card or SCIO test results
- *Teacher support* - average of 9 items, e.g., "Our teacher/teacher of [subject name] is friendly to me."; "Our teacher/teacher of [subject name] praises me when I do well." (Fauth et al., 2014)



# Results: Main effects of school achievement

Research question 1:

Does school achievement (either as *grades* or *test scores*) protect students from negative affect and peer exclusion?

- *For negative affect: Yes, partially*, only in Math when operationalized as grades.
- *For peer exclusion: Yes, partially*, only in Math when operationalized as test scores.

# Results: Main effects on negative affect

Predictors	<i>B (SE)</i> achievement as GRADES	<i>B (SE)</i> achievement as GRADES
Individual-level variables		
<b>Gender (0 = girl, 1 = boy)</b>	<b>-0,38 (0,04)***</b>	<b>-0,35 (0,04)***</b>
Minority ethnic background	ns	ns
Family SES	ns	ns
Achievement in Math	<b>-0,57 (0,26)*</b>	ns
Achievement in Czech	ns	ns
<b>Individual teacher support in Math</b>	ns	<b>-0,17 (0,04)**</b>
<b>Individual teacher support in Czech</b>	ns	<b>-0,07 (0,04)*</b>
Classroom-level variables		
<b>Classroom teacher support in Math</b>	ns	ns
Classroom teacher support in Czech	ns	ns
Classroom achievement in Math	ns	ns
Classroom achievement in Czech	ns	ns

# Results: Main effects on peer exclusion

Predictors	<i>B (SE)</i> achievement as GRADES	<i>B (SE)</i> achievement as GRADES
Individual-level variables		
<b>Gender (0 = girl, 1 = boy)</b>	<b>0,02 (0,01)**</b>	<b>0,03 (0,01)**</b>
Minority ethnic background	<b>0,04 (0,01)**</b>	<b>0,03 (0,01)*</b>
Family SES	<b>-0,01 (0,00)**</b>	<b>-0,01 (0,00)**</b>
Achievement in Math	ns	<b>-0,08 (0,04)*</b>
Achievement in Czech	ns	ns
<b>Individual teacher support in Math</b>	<b>0,06 (0,03)*</b>	<b>-0,02 (0,01)**</b>
Individual teacher support in Czech	ns	ns
Classroom-level variables		
<b>Classroom teacher support in Math</b>	ns	ns
Classroom teacher support in Czech	ns	ns
Classroom achievement in Math	ns	ns
Classroom achievement in Czech	ns	ns



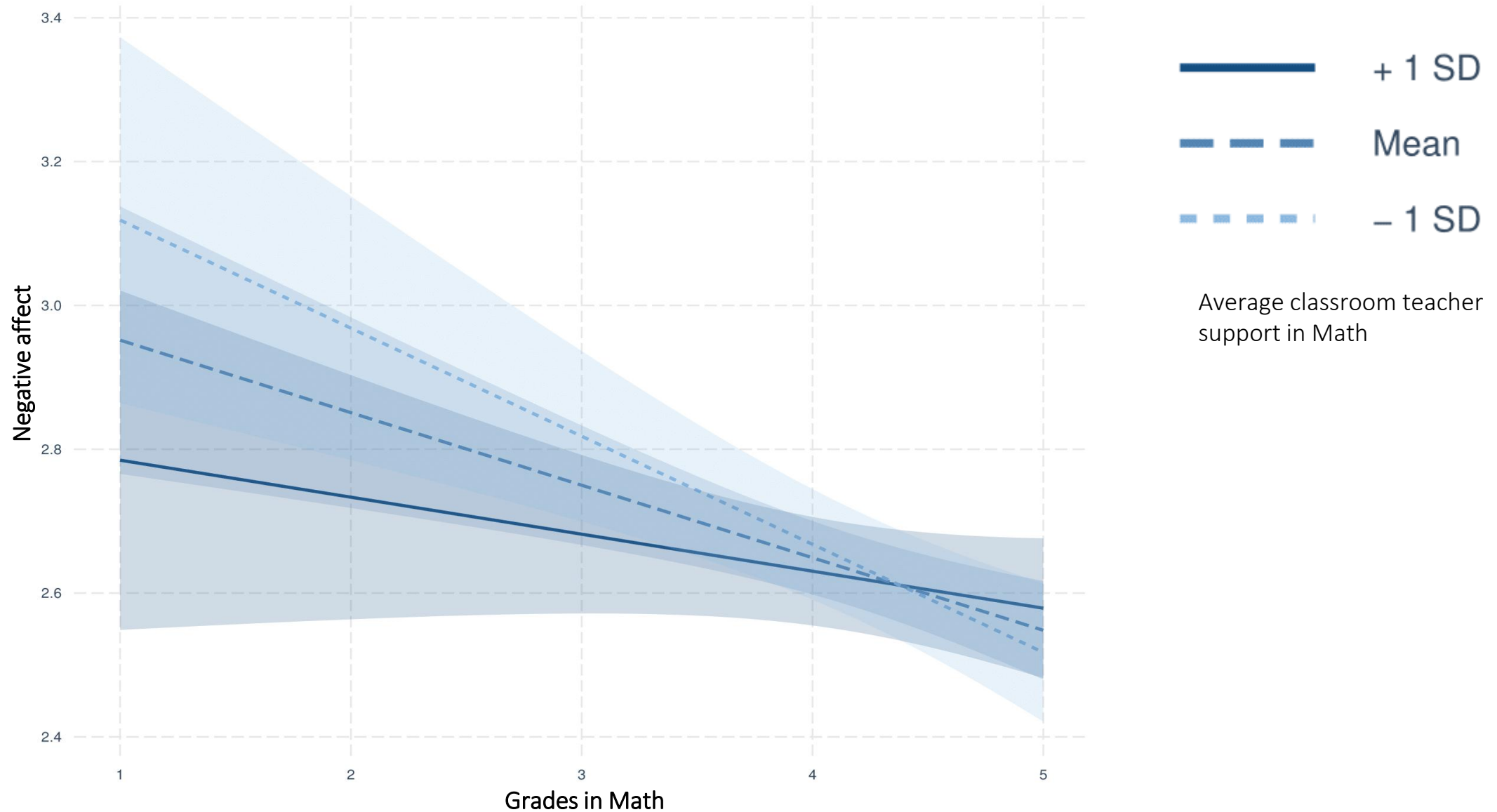
# Results: Interactive effects of school achievement

Research question 2:

Does school achievement **interact with teacher support** (*individual and classroom*) **and classroom achievement norms** (either as *grades* or *test scores*) in prediction of negative affect and peer exclusion?

- *For negative affect: Yes, partially, only with classroom teacher support and Math when operationalized as grades ( $B = 0.02, p < .05$ )*
- *For peer exclusion: No.*

# Classroom teacher support protects



# Summary of the main findings

School achievement:

- ❑ Grades or test scores in Czech did not play a role.
- ✓ Grades in Math predicted negative affect.
- ✓ Test scores in Math predicted peer exclusion.



Interplay of school achievement and classroom context:

- ❑ Individual teacher support had no moderation effects.
- ✓ Classroom teacher support in Math weakened the link between grades in Math and negative affect.
- ❑ Classroom achievement norms had no moderation effects.

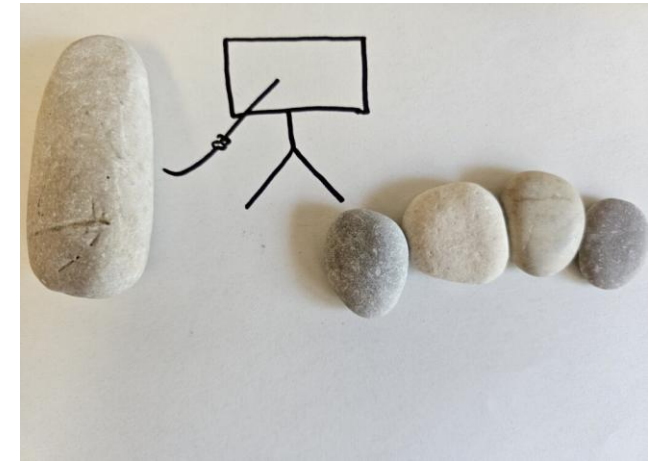
# Limitations

- cross-sectional data retrieved from an age-homogeneous sample
- relatively small proportion of explained variance (12% of negative affect and 22% of peer exclusion)
- non-inclusion of other relevant variables, especially teacher-student relationship and communication (Šed'ová et al., 2016)

# Implications: Teacher education

Foster teacher competences to:

- (1) to promote and evaluate **school achievement** with regard to well-being and inclusion.
- (2) Provide **social support** to individual students and classroom as a whole.
- (3) Prevent and **address peer exclusion**, especially in vulnerable groups.



# Implications: Educational system and schools

- (1) Promote school-wide prevention of mental health problems and peer exclusion with an emphasis on vulnerable groups.
- (2) Improve working conditions for teachers (time, material, methodological) for teachers to better support adolescents.



# Literature

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