

Researching Children's Values in Primary Schools: Methodological Challenges of Conducting Surveys among Young Children

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Outline

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1. Research Objectives and Sample

Methodological challenges, lessons learned and solutions in conducting a survey among primary school children

Q1. What kinds of *adaptations* need to be applied to research instruments and instructions' procedures when preparing a survey in primary school classes?

Q2. Which *methodological challenges* can be anticipated when conducting an analogue or a digital survey with children at this young age? Which *solutions* can be suggested?

Sample

$N = 1'138$ pupils (575 boys, 563 girls) between 5 and 9 years of age ($M = 6.82$, $SD = .50$;

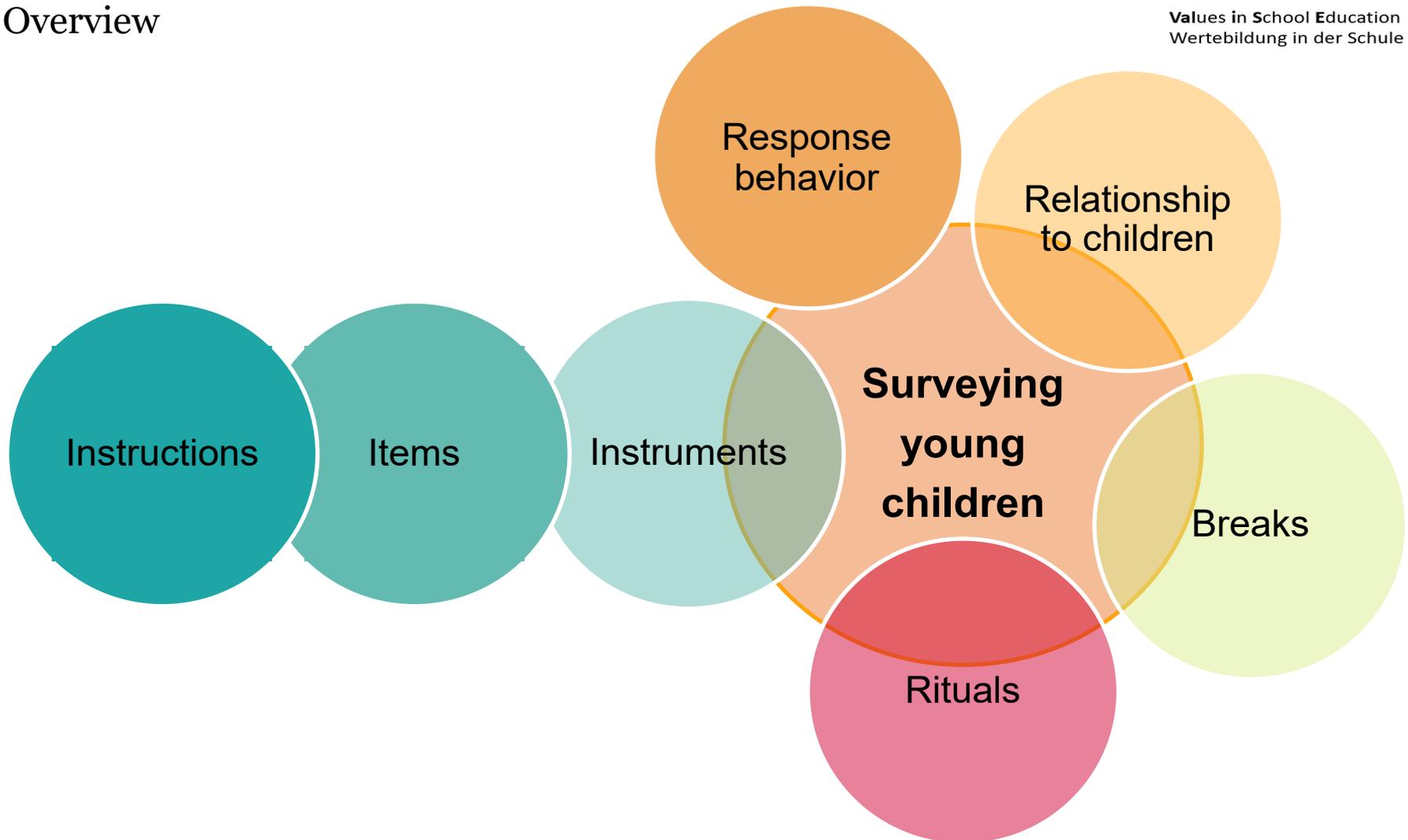
- Analogue: $n = 834$ (422 boys, 412 girls)
- Digital: $n = 304$ (153 boys, 151 girls)

2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

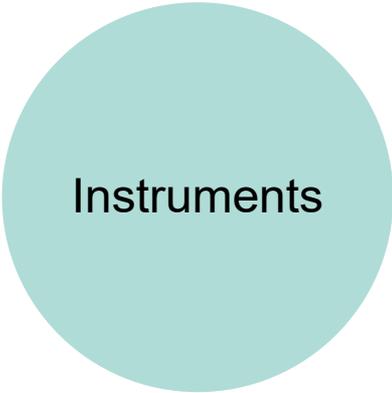
Overview

VALISE

Values in School Education
Wertebildung in der Schule



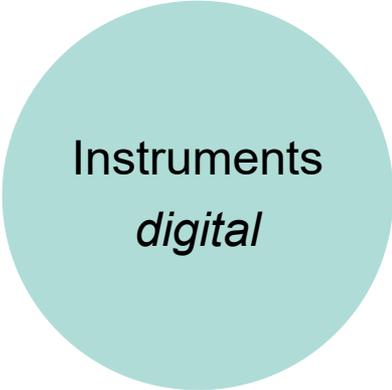
2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



Instruments

- Importance of (pre-)piloting: testing of scales/items with individual children and then piloting with classes ($n = 10$ classes)
- Little writing and use of simple language in questionnaire
- Use of pictorial items
- Answer options: smileys
- «No answer» - option

2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



Instruments
digital

- Switch off all obstacles that exist on tablets (automatic screen saver, pop-up messages, automatic translation help etc.) - very time consuming
- Confident and quick problem solving
- No reliance on infrastructure at schools (bring own pre-set tablets, internet hotspots)
- Class set of paper questionnaires as a back up
- Excitement to work with a tablet might have influenced the concentration/answers (different means than the analogue questionnaires)

2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

Instruments

Example of pictorial items, own adaptation of IOS Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

Which picture shows best how close you are to your classmates?

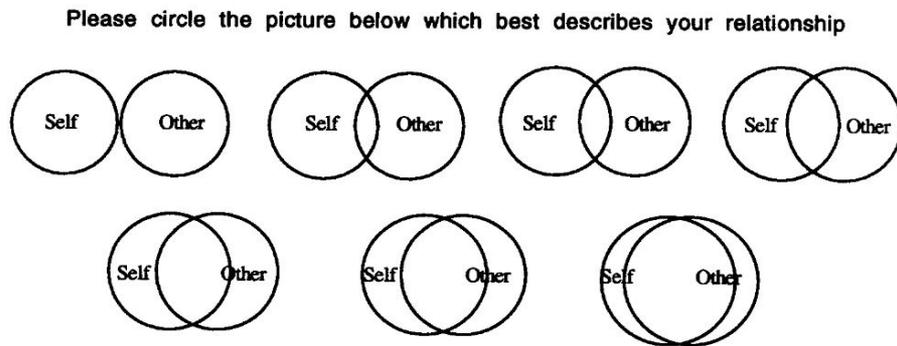


Fig. 2. The Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)



Fig. 3. Adaption of the IOS Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

Instruments

Example of smiley answer scale, own adaptation of school climate (Berson & Oreg, 2016)

5. In my school I feel safe.

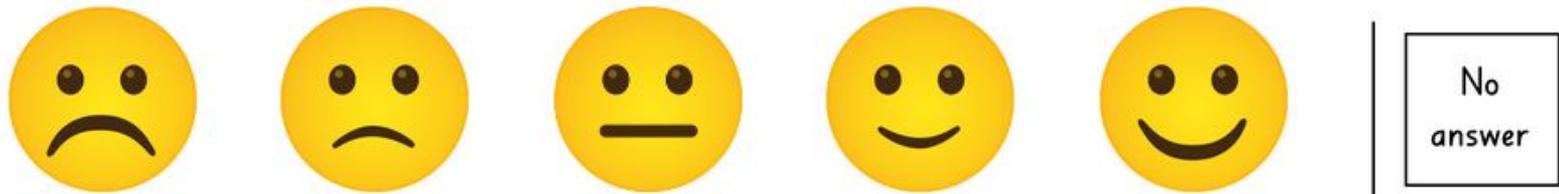


Fig. 4. Adaption of the school climate scale
(Berson & Oreg, 2016)

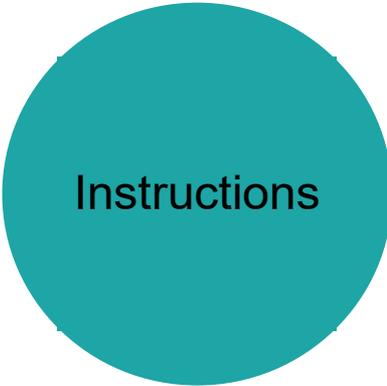
2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



Items

- Minimization of number of items as much as possible (e.g., choice of items due to factor loadings)
- Use of simple language
- English-German translation: linguistic nuances partially decisive (e.g., to argue)
- If an item is not understood ask a child, who has understood the statement whether he/she would like to explain the sentence to his/her classmates

2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions



Instructions

- Step by step instructions
- Standardization:
 - Word for word is read aloud
 - Use of same example for every item
 - Instruction team: lead & support
 - Only well-trained personnel to conduct the survey in the classes

2. Methodological Challenges and Solutions

Rituals

- Ritual (e.g., instrument, noise) that the teacher and every child knows to calm the class

Breaks

- Plan 1-2 breaks (movement breaks, play breaks, free play) to maintain concentration
- Clarify in advance with the teacher whether s/he also takes such small breaks → rituals

Dealing/ relationship with children

- Very important!
- Introduction of every child (name, hobby)
- Anonymous survey

Response behavior

- Children copying each other
- Social desirability
- Response tendencies

3. First Results

Overview

→ Adaptation of scales successful

- **Children's value structure:**
 Multidimensional scaling (MDS) confirms Schwartz's value structure
- **Value-related school climate** (School climate scale, Berson & Oreg, 2016): MDS confirms Schwartz's value structure
- **Children's value priorities:**
 - *Benevolence* the most important value (M= 3.53; SD=.68)
 - *Power* the least important value (M=2.35; SD=.92)
 - Gender differences
 - High in *security* values (M=3.33; SD=.74)

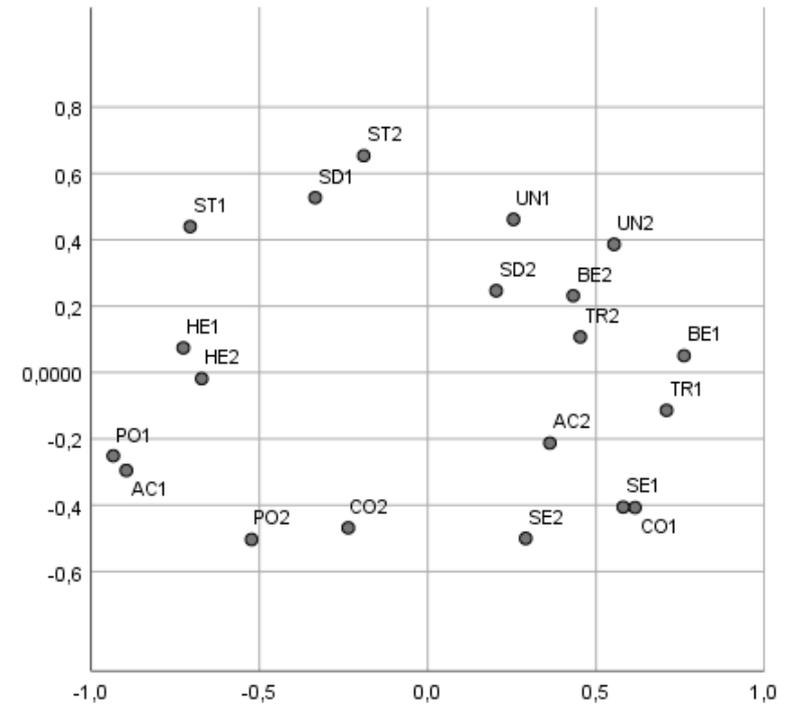


Fig. 5. MDS-matrix of childrens' value structure (Source: Own calculation T1)

4. Conclusion

- Heterogenous initial situation on class and individual level
- Importance of «whole package», not «only» the instrument/s (e.g., questionnaire)
- Importance to respond to digitalisation, also in surveying young children
 - Development of digital tools
 - More data is needed

5. References

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Thank you
for your attention.