Theoretical background

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- Students academic success is influenced by
  - Individual background factors (cognitive abilities, socio-economic status, etc)
  - Contextual factors (school, relationship with peers, school culture, etc) (Goddard, 2003)
    - **Social capital**

Theoretical background

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- **Social capital**

"the collection of present or future resources that derive from a more or less institutionalised, durable network of mutually known and appreciative connections'' (Bourdieu, 1973)

→ *the support from family, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, as well as functional contacts among others with lecturers and tutors in higher education.*

Theoretical background

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- **Social capital theory**
  - Students derive benefits from building social networks
    - Obtaining institutional resources, information, and support to achieve success in higher education (Goddard, 2003)

- What is the social capital of students in higher education?
  - More specifically: focus on **first-generation students**
    - Students whose parents do not hold a bachelor's degree or higher

Research Objective & Question(s)

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- **Meta-research question:** To what extent do students' social networks influence their academic career and outcomes in higher education?

- **Subquestions:**
  - To what extent is there a difference between first-gen students and other students in:
    - the **social support** they receive
    - their **social network**
    - Their **study-success**
    - The amount of **stress** they experience during their study

Methods

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- Quantitative research design
  - Online survey (Qualtrics)

- Future steps:
  - Qualitative research design
  - In depth focus groups
    - Belgium and the Netherlands
    - Both (First)- generation students
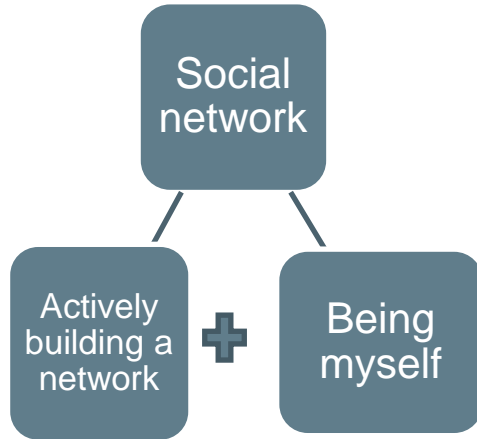   - In depth exploration of the quantitative findings

Instruments

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- One measurement moment

- Self-constructed questionnaire (based on literature study) with variables:
  - Demographics
  - Study success
  - Stress
  - Social network
  - Social support

Instruments

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Instruments

- Responses
  - 5 point likert scale: fully disagree - fully agree
  - Amount of stress: score between 0- 10
  - Study-success
    - The amount of courses they took last semester
      - The amount of courses they participated in the exams
        - The amount of exams they passed

Analysis

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- Descriptive analysis + normality check

- Mean scores

  - Differences between groups: (first)-generation students

    - (Mann-Whitney U)

- Correlational analysis

  - Differences in correlations between groups: (first)-generation students

    - Spearman Rho

Analysis

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- Dependent variable(s)
  - Amount of stress
  - Study success

- Independent variable(s)
  - Social network (α = 0.92)
    - Actively building a network (α = 0.84)
    - Being myself (α = 0.93)
  - Social support (α = 0.81)
    - Receiving support and encouragement from others (α = 0.76)
    - Actively discussing study content with others (α = 0.72)

Participants

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- Target group: all 2nd,3rd and 4th year-students
- Total responses: 362
    Total full responses: **216**

- 119 First-generation students
    Mean age = 23.50 (SD=6.07)
- 97 Non first-generation students
    Mean age = 23.04 (SD=5.17)

Participants

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	First-gen students		Non first-gen students		Total
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*
Sex					
Male	36	30.3	42	43.3	78
Female	82	70	54	55.7	136
Nonbinary	1	0.8	0	0	1
Rather not tell	0	0	1	1	1
Country					
Belgium	53	44.5	37	38.1	90
Netherlands	66	55.5	60	61.9	126
Total	119	100	97	100	**216**

Results

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Measure	First-gen students		Non first-gen students		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*P*
Stress[A]	**6.24**	2.24	5.62	2.55	**0.08**
Study-success[B]	4.39	1.14	**4.63**	0.94	0.39

A. Scores varied between 0 (no stress) and 10 (high stress)
B. Scores varied between 1(no, or almost no success) and 5 (all exams succeeded)

Results

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Measure	First-gen students		Non first-gen students		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*P*
Building a network	3.52	0.80	3.49	0.78	0.99
Being myself	3.99	0.82	3.90	0.86	0.60
(Total) Social Network	**3.72**	0.74	3.67	0.76	0.76

All scores ranged between a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 5

Results

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Measure	First-gen students		Non first-gen students		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*P*
Receiving encouragement	3.75	0.76	3.73	0.70	0.76
Actively discussing	3.45	0.87	3.38	0.75	0.50
(Total) Social support	**3.61**	0.69	3.57	0.63	0.68

All scores ranged between a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 5

Results: correlational analysis (total respondents)

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R	Study-success	Social network	Building a network	Being myself
Stress	-0.129	-0.290	-0.221	-0.345
p	0.58	<0.001*	0.001*	<0.001*

* significance: $p < 0,05$

R	Social support	Receiving encouragement	Actively discussing
Study-success	0.143	0.069	0.180
p	0.036*	0.314	0.008*

* significance: $p < 0.05$

Results: correlational analysis (divided)

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	Variable	First-gen students		Non first-gen students	
		R	*p*	R	*p*
Stress	**Study-success**	**0.014**	**0.88**	**-0.29**	**0.004***
Stress	Social network	-0,186	0,042*	-0,416	<0,001*
	Building a network	**-0,117**	**0,207**	**-0,339**	**<0,001***
	Being myself	-0,252	0,006*	-0,457	<0,001*

* significance: *p* < 0.05

Results: correlational analysis (divided)

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		First-gen students		Non first-gen students	
	Variable	R	*p*	R	*p*
Study-success	Social support	**0,243**	**0,008***	-0,013	0,901
	Actively discussing	**0,262**	**0,004***	0,035	0,731

* significance: *p* < 0.05

Conclusion

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- "Trends" differences between first-gen and non first-gen students
  - Stress – social network and social support

- Stress ⟷ social network

  ?

- Study-succes ⟷ social support

- Need to gain more insight in the 'ins and outs' of 'how' social support is provided

  - In-depth qualitative research

Discussion

- Results offer support for the importance of building a social network and receiving social support
  - How can we encourage students to make more use of available support?
  - How to effectively organise and improve this support?
  - How to effectively support students in building a social network?

- What can teachers do?

- What does this mean for our educational institutions?

Want to know more?

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You want to talk further?

Contact us via email or connect via linkedin

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