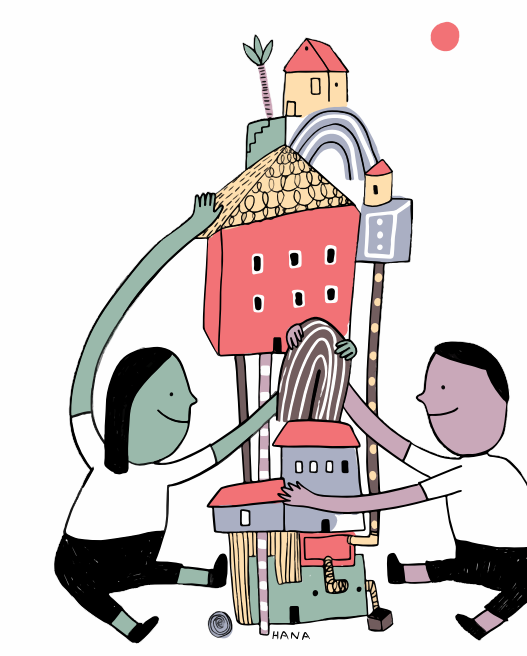


# IF THEY WANT ME TO, I WILL: THE ROLE OF NORMS IN PREDICTING ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEE PEERS



## Authors

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## 1 Introduction

Norms have been shown to predict a variety of intergroup outcomes among children. However, only recently have researchers started to analyse perceived social norms and their relative contributions to intergroup outcomes (McKeown & Taylor, 2018; Pehar et al., 2020; Tropp et al., 2016). Perceived social norms may influence attitudes by providing a sense of what is socially acceptable or unacceptable, while personal norms may influence attitudes by reflecting an individual's own moral principles and values. Furthermore, when multiple norms are present in a context, the most salient norm will define the behaviour (Stok & de Ridder, 2019).

## 2 Aim

The study aim was to explore predictive power of social norms related to the school context and personal norm of exclusion for three intergroup outcomes related to refugee children in the context of limited opportunity for intergroup contact.

## 3 Method

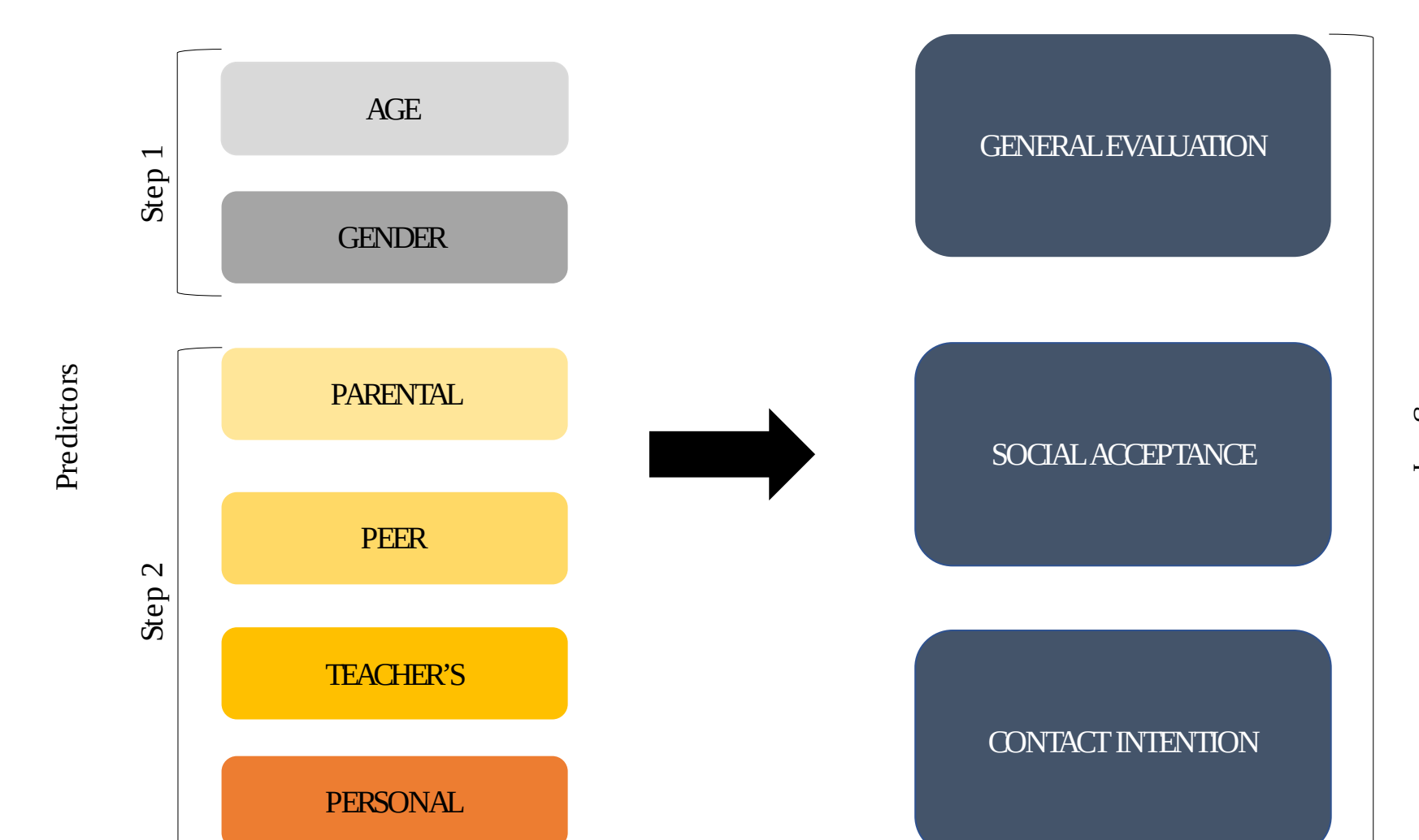
In autumn 2021, we conducted a survey in 52 classes in 17 primary schools from four cities in Croatia. A paper-pencil method was applied in a classroom setting. In total, 761 host-community children from 2nd to 8th grade who attended classes with refugee children participated in the study. The pupil's age ranged from 8 to 15 years ( $M = 10.1$   $SD = 1.9$ ). The sample was gender-balanced with 48% of girls participating in the study

## 4 Results and discussion

The results on all outcome and predictor variables in our sample are above-average, showing that in general, pupils positively evaluate refugee peers, accept social relations with them and are willing to engage in contact with them in the future. Children also perceive their social environment as supportive towards refugee peers and have a positive personal norm relating to refugee children (Table 1).

Further, we conducted three separate two-step hierarchical regression analyses for each of the three outcomes. We simultaneously regressed all predictor variables onto the outcome variables in step 2 in order to examine the unique contribution of each, while controlling the age and gender in step 1. For better insight, only significant predictors are depicted below.

Results show that the relative importance of norms differed between the three outcomes. The study suggests that peer and personal norm are predictive for all the outcomes, while teachers may have a greater influence on attitudinal outcomes and parents may play a more important role in predicting behavioural outcomes. Regarding the sociodemographic variables, age was a relevant predictor for general attitude and, together with gender, significantly predicted social acceptance. The predictive power of norms becomes more pronounced for outcomes that are closer to real behaviour such as contact intentions (39%) than for attitudes such as general evaluation of refugee children (24%).



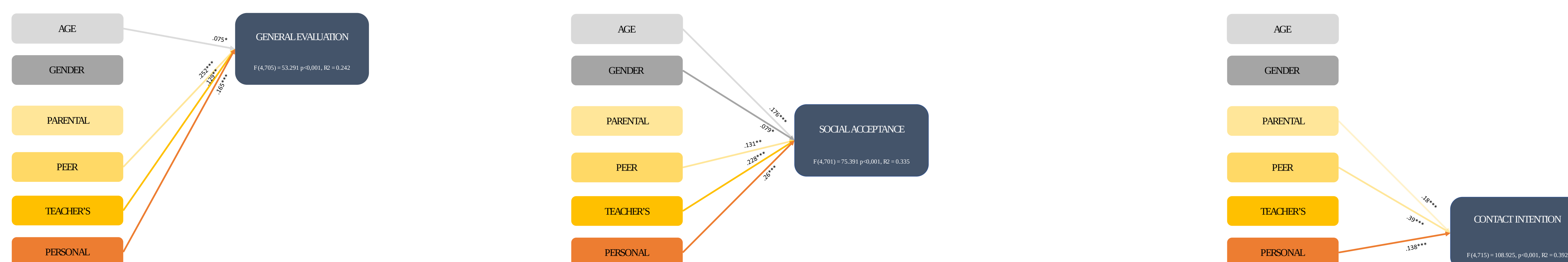
**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for outcome and predictor variables

Variable	Scale	Items	Reliability	Range	M	SD	N
Outcomes	General evaluation	1	–	0 - 10	7,6	2,2	727
	Social acceptance	5	.686	0 - 1	3,9	1,3	723
	Contact intention	3	.890	1 - 5	3,3	1,3	734
Predictors	Parental norms	3	.860	1 - 5	4,3	0,8	738
	Peer norms	3	.866	1 - 5	3,7	1,1	737
	Teacher norms	3	.760	1 - 5	4,1	1,0	735
	Personal norm	3	.840	1 - 5	4,3	0,9	733

**Table 2.** Correlations of all measured variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. General evaluation	–	.48**	.44**	.03	.10**	.36**	.42**	.37**	.34**
2. Social acceptance		–	.47**	.14**	.15**	.44**	.38**	.42**	.43**
3. Contact intentions			–	-.083*	.13**	.40**	.58**	.49**	.38**
4. Age				–	-.06	.01	-.16**	-.05	.00
5. Gender <sup>a</sup>					–	.08*	.11**	.05	.16**
6. Teacher's norms						–	.50**	.66**	.31**
7. Peer norms							–	.61**	.39**
8. Parental norms								–	.36**
9. Personal norm									–

Note. a Male = 1, Female = 2.  
\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$



## 5 Conclusion

The results highlight the crucial role played by social and personal norms within the school context in shaping attitudes towards refugee peers. These findings have important implications for educators and policymakers, particularly in light of the growing diversity of classrooms in Croatia.

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This work was conducted as a part of project IRCIS (Integrating refugee children in schools: a mixed-method study on the efficacy of contact-in-school interventions for building positive intergroup relations among refugee and host-society children) and supported by the Swiss Enlargement Contribution in the framework of the Croatian-Swiss Research Programme (project number IZHRZ0\_180568).

Project website: <http://psihologija.ffzg.unizg.hr/projekti/ircis>  
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