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**BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION IN ETHNICALLY
MIXED SCHOOLS: AN INTERVENTION ON
PERSPECTIVE TAKING***

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Abstract

We evaluate the impact of an educational program that aims to build social cohesion in ethnically mixed schools by developing perspective-taking ability in children. The program is implemented in Turkish elementary schools affected by a large influx of Syrian refugee children. We measure a comprehensive set of outcomes that characterize a cohesive school environment, including peer violence incidents, the prevalence of inter-ethnic social ties, and prosocial behavior. Using randomized variation in program implementation, we find that the program significantly lowers peer violence and victimization on school grounds. The program also reduces the likelihood of social exclusion and increases inter-ethnic social ties in the classroom. We find that the program significantly improves prosocial behavior, measured by incentivized tasks: treated students exhibit significantly higher trust, reciprocity, and altruism toward each other as well as toward anonymous out-school peers. We show that this enhanced prosociality is welfare improving from the ex-post payoffs perspective. We investigate multiple channels that could explain the results, including ethnic bias, impulsivity, empathetic concern, emotional intelligence, behavioral norms, and perspective-taking. Children's increased effort to take others' perspectives emerges as the most robust mechanism to explain our results. *JEL Codes:* I24, I28, C80

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Building Inter-Ethnic Cohesion in Schools: An Intervention on Perspective Taking

The researchers evaluate the impact of an educational program that aims to build social cohesion in ethnically mixed schools by developing perspective-taking ability in children. The program is implemented in Turkish elementary schools affected by a large influx of Syrian refugee children. The research team measures a comprehensive set of outcomes that

characterize a cohesive school environment, including peer violence incidents, the prevalence of inter-ethnic social ties, and prosocial behavior. Using randomized variation in program implementation, the researchers find that the program significantly lowers peer violence and victimization on school grounds. The program also reduces the likelihood of social exclusion and increases inter-ethnic social ties in the classroom. The researchers find that the program significantly improves prosocial behavior, measured by incentivized tasks: treated students exhibit significantly higher trust, reciprocity, and altruism toward each other as well as toward anonymous out-school peers. The researchers show that this enhanced prosociality is welfare improving from the ex-post payoff perspective. The researchers investigate multiple channels that could explain the results, including ethnic bias, impulsivity, empathetic concern, emotional intelligence, behavioral norms, and perspective-taking. Children's increased effort to take others' perspectives emerges as the most robust mechanism to explain the results.

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