

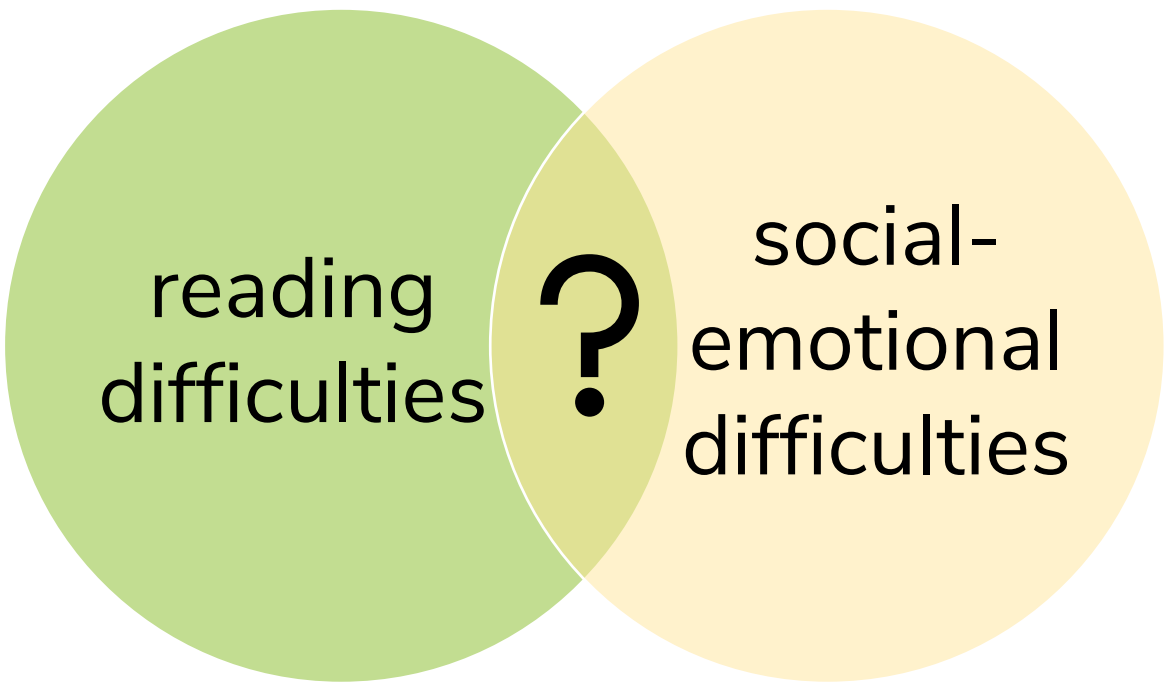
Examining the Co-Occurrence of Reading and Socio-Emotional Difficulties in Austrian Second Graders

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Introduction

Students with low reading skills are at heightened risk to experience social-emotional difficulties. Previous research has demonstrated this link with internalizing and externalizing problems as well as social withdrawal (Francis et al., 2019; Vieira et al., 2024).

This study aims to explore this association specifically in early school years, using self reporting scales for Grade 2 students measuring social-emotional skills.



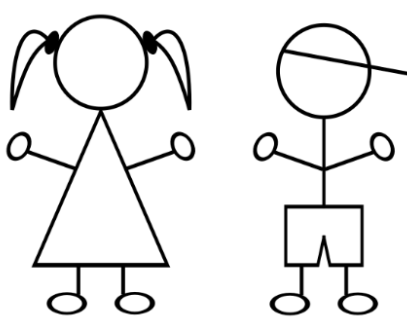
Research Questions:

- How are reading skills and student rated social-emotional skills associated?
- Are there differences between students with low (PR < 16) and high (PR > 84) reading skills regarding their social-emotional skills?

Methods

Sample:

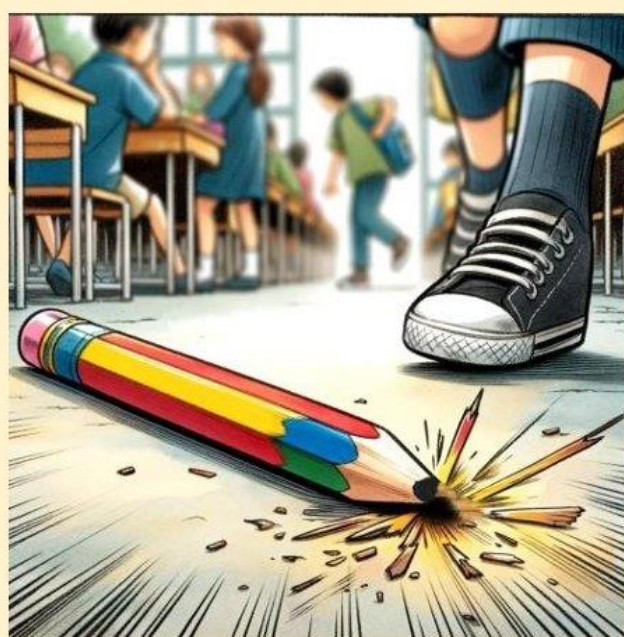
- N = 478 Grade 2 students (M = 7.96 years, SD = 0.29)
- 66% German as their family language
- 48.5% male, 51.5% female
- Subsample for second analysis (after removing outliers):
 - 85 students with low reading skills (PR < 16)
 - 72 students with high reading skills (PR > 84)



Instruments:

- Reading fluency:** one minute word- and pseudoword-reading → DiLe-D (Paleczek et al., 2017)
- Social-emotional skills:** GraSEF - Screening to assess social-emotional skills (adapted from Kogler et al., 2025; 5-point likert scale)
 - prosocial behavior (5 items, $\omega = .72$ [.67-.76])
 - emotion regulation strategies for anxiety (9 items, $\omega = .84$ [.82-.87])
 - internalizing behavior (11 items, $\omega = .82$ [.79-.84])
 - externalizing behavior (11 items, $\omega = .82$ [.78-.85])
 - social withdrawal (11 items, $\omega = .71$ [.66-.75])
 - problem-solving/assertive behavior (11 items, $\omega = .74$ [.69-.79])

You have a new colored pencil. You really like it. Lia comes to you and wants to borrow it. She walks around with it. Suddenly, the pencil falls to the floor and the tip breaks off. What do you do?



	1 no	2 rather not	3 maybe	4 rather yes	5 yes
(A) I cry because Lia broke my pencil.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(B) I am angry with Lia and shout at her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(C) I tell Lia: "Please take better care of my things."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(D) I pick up the pencil and say nothing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(A) internalizing behavior, (B) externalizing behavior, (C) problem-solving/assertive behavior, (D) social withdrawal

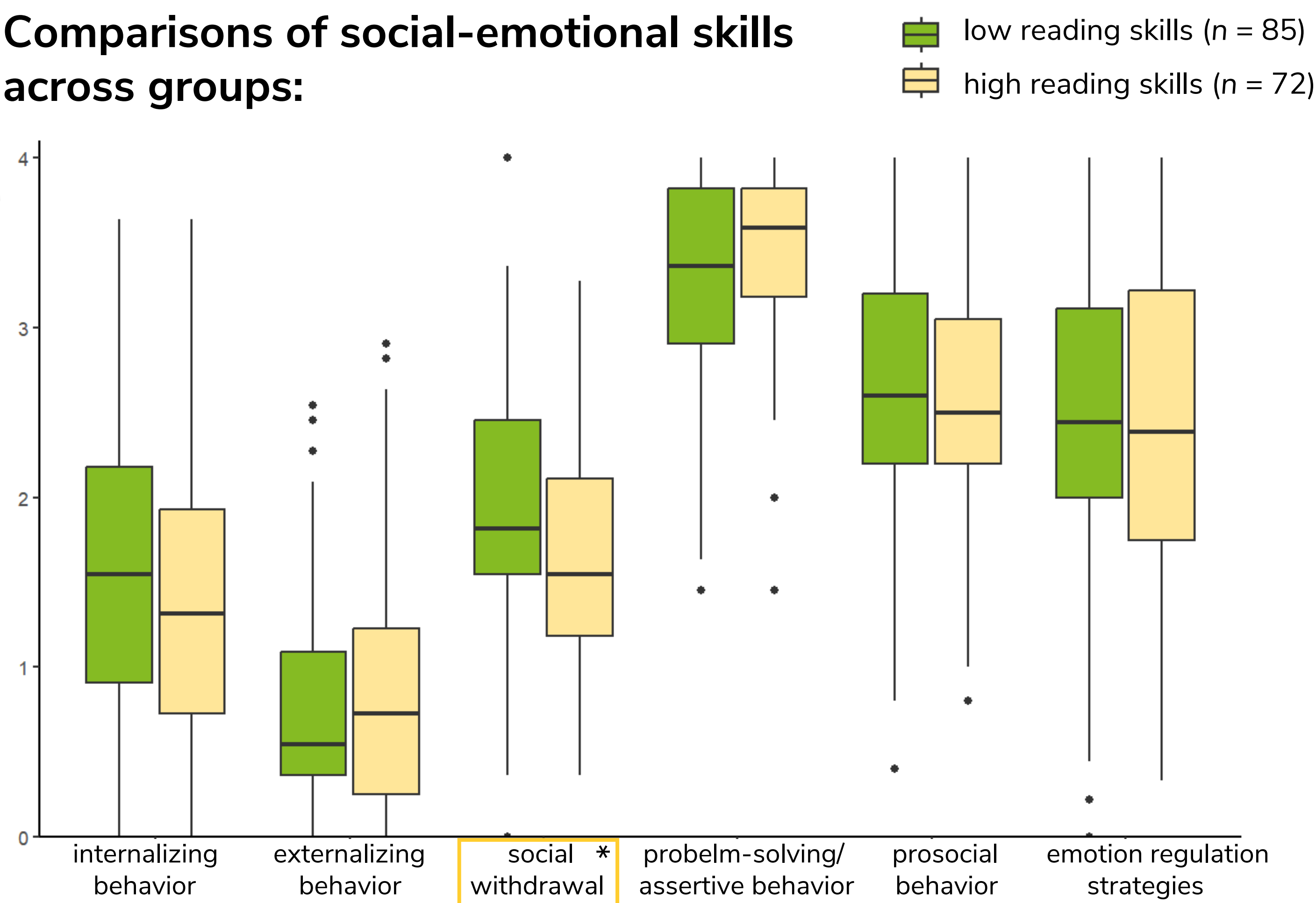
Results

Associations between reading and social-emotional skills:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
¹ word-reading fluency	-						
² pseudoword-reading fluency	.86**	-					
³ internalizing behavior	-.14*	-.10*	-				
⁴ externalizing behavior	.04	.06	.26**	-			
⁵ social withdrawal	-.15*	-.13*	.51**	.17**	-		
⁶ problem-solving/assertive behavior	.06	.09*	.25**	-.22**	.18**	-	
⁷ prosocial behavior	-.08	-.03	.12*	-.17**	.04	.14*	-
⁸ emotion regulation strategies	-.01	.00	.14*	-.21**	.14*	.34**	.42**

Correlation table (n = 478). * p < .05, ** p < .001

Comparisons of social-emotional skills across groups:



MANOVA: significant main effect of group, $F(6, 155) = 2.886$, $p = .011$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$ → medium effect

*Post-Hoc ANOVA: significant difference in social withdrawal, $F(1, 155) = 8.417$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, Cohen's $d = .46$

Discussion

- weak association between students' self-rated internalizing behavior, social withdrawal, and their reading skills
- significant difference in social withdrawal between students with low and high reading skills → students with low reading skills scored higher in social withdrawal
- student ratings offer a different perspective than teacher or parent ratings of social-emotional skills

References:

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