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Structure:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Theoretical framework
  - 2.1 The transition during elementary to secondary school
  - 2.2 Achievement goals
  - 2.3 Frame of reference effects
- 3 Research questions
  - 3.1 Deduction of research questions
  - 3.2 Structure of the studies
- 4 Achievement goals and school achievement during the transition from elementary to secondary school
  - 4.1 Summary and abstract
  - 4.2 Introduction
  - 4.3 Achievement goals
  - 4.4 Achievement goals and school achievement
  - 4.5 Research questions and hypotheses
  - 4.6 Study 1
  - 4.7 Study 2
  - 4.8 Overall discussion
- 5 Achievement goals and school achievement: The transition to different school tracks in secondary school
  - 5.1 Abstract
  - 5.2 Introduction
  - 5.3 Achievement goals
  - 5.4 The development of achievement goals
  - 5.5 The relation between achievement goals and school achievement
  - 5.6 The German school system
  - 5.7 Research questions
  - 5.8 Method

- 5.9 Results
- 5.10 Discussion
- 6 Effects of tracking on students' self-concept, intrinsic motivation, and achievement goals during the transition to secondary school
  - 6.1 Abstract
  - 6.2 Introduction
  - 6.3 Aspects of tracking
  - 6.4 Effects of tracking
  - 6.5 The present investigation
  - 6.6 Method
  - 6.7 Results
  - 6.8 Discussion
- 7 Final discussion and prospect
- 8 Summary

## **Abstract**

The transition from elementary to secondary school is a very important event in the life of every student that is associated with a decline in motivation (e.g., Anderman & Maehr, 1994). Achievement goals are considered part of motivation, which relation to school learning has often been proved (e.g., Schunk, Pintrich, Meece, 2008). There are no studies- especially in the German-speaking area- that investigated achievement goals with a representative sample for students in grade four. Thus, the question arises, whether achievement goals can be measured validly and reliable at the end of elementary school and how they are related to school achievement at this age. Furthermore, there is a lack of research investigating the development of achievement goals at the transition to different school tracks on the one hand and the longitudinal analysis of the relation between achievement goals and school achievement on the other hand. In this context, the reference-group effect on the development of achievement goals was examined. Current research on reference-group effects mostly referred to student academic self-concept, motivation, interest, and educational aspirations (e.g., Trautwein, Lüdtke, Marsh, Köller & Baumert, 2006). Moreover, the question arises as to what the possible reference-group effect can be explained after controlling for student classroom grade in grade five. To answer the questions, the data of the TIMSS-transition study were analyzed. In studies 1 and 2 ( $N = 5,242$  and  $N = 294$ ) it was determined that achievement goals can be measured reliable and in most parts validly at the transition to secondary school. Furthermore, performance-approach goals turned out to be detrimental to school achievement. The focus of study 3 ( $N = 1,646$ ) was the longitudinal analysis of achievement goals. A decline in all three types of achievement goals, independent of the school tracks, was proved. In addition, mastery goals were positively related to school achievement before and after the transition, whereas performance-approach goals were negatively related to school achievement at the end of elementary school and at the beginning of secondary school (academic track). In study 4 negative reference-group effects were found for self-concept and motivation. There was only a small effect on mastery goals. This effect disappeared after controlling for classroom grades in grade five. Overall, the results revealed a general decline in achievement goals at the transition to all school tracks and a detrimental effect of performance-approach goals on school achievement among this age group.