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# The socioeconomic and family situation of Flemish families with a child with special needs as indicators for policy effectiveness

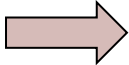

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- Why this research topic?
- Dataset and method of analysis
- The socioeconomic situation of Flemish families with a child with special needs (I)
- The impact on service use:
  - Special needs education (II)
  - Child care (III)
  - Personal budgets (IV)
- Conclusion



- Reorganisation of the care sector of persons with a disability  Citizenship model  
  
personal budgets and inclusive services
- European social policy: Children (with a disability) as a risk group
- Importance of suitable social policy measures within the citizenship model



Risk of ineffectiveness of initiatives for some target groups

➔ Matthew effects

## 2 objects of study:

1) The socioeconomic strength of families with a **child with special needs** and the influencing factors

↳ as perceived by the family

2) The impact of the socioeconomic factors on service use





## Dataset and method of analysis

- 'Care for young children in Flanders' project



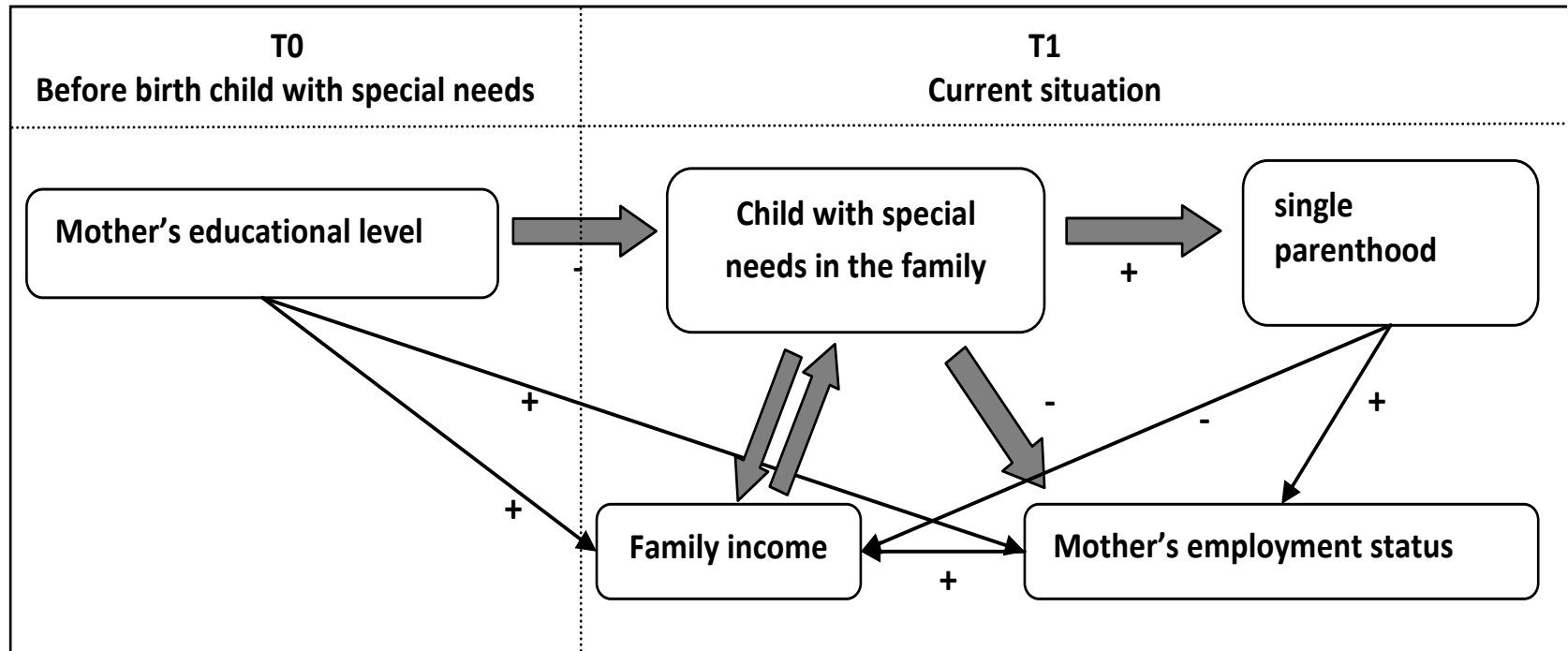
2800 families with the youngest child between the ages of birth and 15 years were questioned in 2005

- Over-representation of families with a child with special needs (=774) and socioeconomic disadvantaged families  
sub-file: over-representation neutralized (n=262)
- Several regression analyses



# (I) The socioeconomic situation of families with a child with special needs

Initial hypothetical conceptional model of :

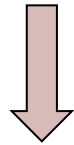


Focus on primary model (broad arrows)



## Mother's educational level as a causal factor

- Mother's educational level: retrospective variable
- Previous studies: better-trained mothers have healthier children



**Fundamental cause:** differential distribution of control over health and its implications for the resulting distribution of health outcomes.



# Mother's educational level as a causal factor

- Confirmation for Flanders:

	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sub-file
Mother's educational level (reference category = higher education)		<b>.000</b>		
Primary education or less	<b>1.134</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>3.108</b>	
Lower secondary education	<b>.820</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>2.270</b>	
Higher secondary education	<b>.244</b>	<b>.147</b>	<b>1.277</b>	
Number of children in the family (reference category = 1)		.000		
2	1.255	.000	3.507	
3	1.609	.000	4.999	
4	2.375	.000	10.753	
Mother's age	.052	.000	1.053	
Constant	-5.053	.000	.006	

Cox & Snell R<sup>2</sup> = 0.077; Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> = 0.140 ; n=1857

As the mother's educational level increased, the likelihood of having a child with special needs in the family decreased





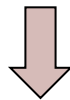
## The effect on the familial relationships

- Does the presence of a child with special needs affect the familial relationship (increase single parenthood)?

Existing research: Yes

In Flanders: Yes

- Other influencing factors in Flanders: the risk of single parenthood increased as the mother's educational level and the mother's health status decreased.



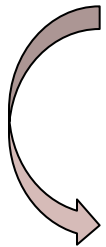
Risk group: low educated single mothers with a child with special needs



## The effect on mother's employment status

Literature has shown that the health problems or disabilities of children have a negative impact on the employment of the mother (more inactive and more part-time).

In Flanders, mothers of children with special needs are more likely to be unemployed



**BUT**, the socioeconomic variables have a more direct influence on employment status than the presence of a child with special needs in the family do.



# The effect on mother's employment status

Mother's employment status		B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Unemployed	Intercept	-.863	.110	
	Mother's age	.027	.014	1.027
	Child with special needs in the family	<b>.316</b>	<b>.118</b>	<b>1.372</b>
	One child in the family	-1.204	.001	.300
	Two children in the family	-.994	.005	.370
	Three children in the family	-.298	.445	.742
	Single mother	<b>-1.042</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.353</b>
	Primary education or less	<b>2.240</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>9.392</b>
	Lower secondary education	<b>1.286</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>3.619</b>
	Higher secondary education	<b>1.120</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>3.066</b>
	Housing property	-.430	.026	.650
	Mother with poor health status	3.293	.000	26.930
	Mother with reasonably good health	1.111	.000	3.038

Reference category for the dependent variable = Full-time work  
Cox & Snell R<sup>2</sup> = 0.155; Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> = 0.176



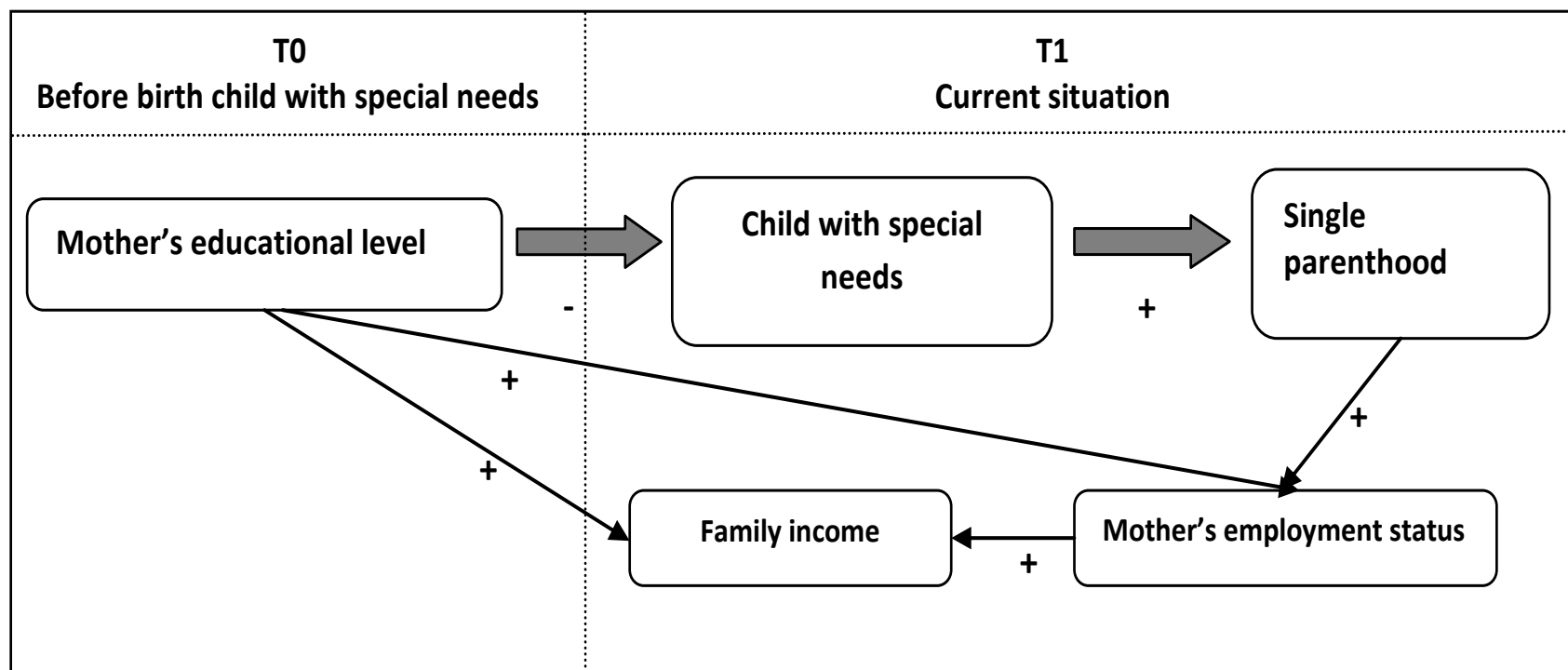
## The correlation with family income

- Literature states that on average the median income of households with children with special needs is lower than that of households with children who do not have disabilities
- Are the Flemish families of children with special needs at a greater financial disadvantage?  
NO, when the mother's employment status and educational level are held constant.



## The socioeconomic situation of families with a child with special needs

Two of the four presumed correlations in general literature are confirmed in our analyses on Flemish data.





## The impact on service use

- Disadvantages faced by families supporting a child with a disability may be attributed to their reduced capabilities and reduced access to social and material resources (Emerson et al, 2009).
- Examples of the socioeconomic influence:
  - Special needs education
  - Child care
  - Personal budgets



## II Special needs education

- History of segregating children with special needs in special schools
- Inclusive education in Flanders since 1980
  - Parents must have the necessary social skills and the material resources
- Intake in special schools:
  - 25% of the deprived students under the age of 12 are in special schools, whereas 5% of the whole population is



### III The use of child care

- Only 29% of the children with special needs used child care services outside the nuclear family (<-> 57% of the children without special needs)
- There is a high use of target group specific child care services by the children authorised by the Flemish Agency for people with a disability.
- High use of collective (semi-) residential institutions





### III The use of child care

Influencing factors of child care use:

- Mother's employment status
- Mother's educational level
- Family income
- Number of children in the family
- Age of the child
- The presence of special needs

**The socioeconomic factors of the family are more determining for the use of external child care services than the disability status of the child**



## IV Personal budgets

- More instruments and more possibilities to combine  
    ➔ enriching, but complicated

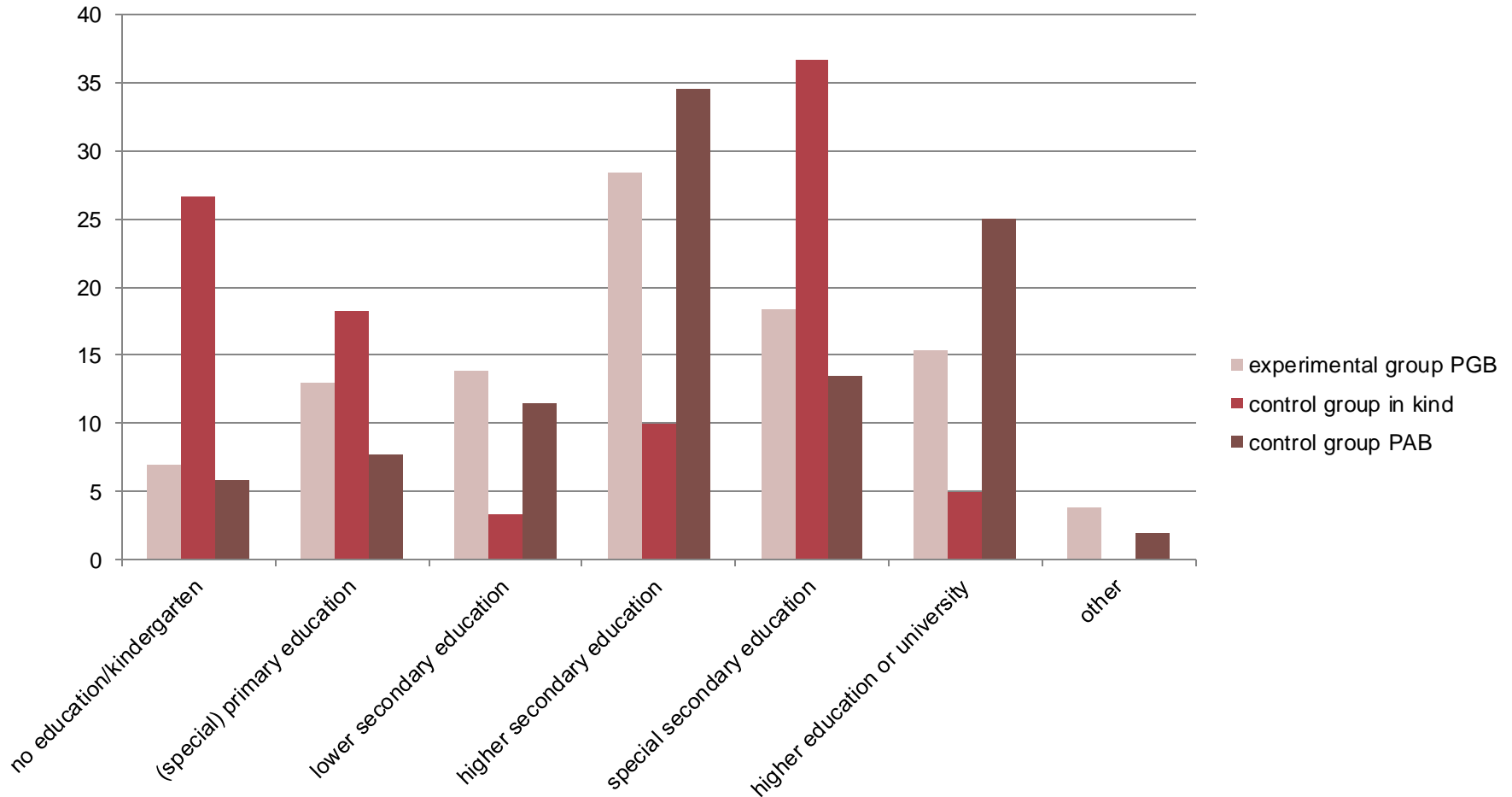
Research demonstrates that Matthew effects are operative:

- care consultant
- the lower skilled persons with a disability are underrepresented in the personal budget system



## IV Personal budgets

Graph 1: educational level of the respondents of the experiment PGB (%)





## Conclusion

- Weaker socioeconomic position
- The danger of the reorganization of the Flemish care sector of persons with a disability
  - ➔ Matthew effects
- Both general and specialized forms of formal support are excessively oriented towards the child with special needs alone
  - ➔ should be more directed towards all family members of the child with special needs and their interrelationships



## Conclusion

- The social inclusion policy is not yet fully realised in the care practice for children with special needs.
- Non-disability-related factors influence the policy effectiveness of measures taken in the framework of the citizenship paradigm.