The Effect of Rural and Urban School Systems on Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development

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**Introduction**

Several studies have been conducted to determine the differences between urban and rural public-school's influence on its students. People are informed about the differences between urban and rural school areas, but not about the development of their child. We wanted to look into the effects of a school’s location has children’s cognitive and social-emotional development. Will a student develop differently depending on which environment they are schooled in? Is so, to what extent? These are just some of the questions my partner and I have. We believe children in an urban school setting will have a higher level of cognitive development than students in rural areas. We also believe rural students will have a higher level of social-emotional development than their urban counterparts. Urban students were found to have a slightly higher level of social-emotional development. Students from both regions were shown to have equal levels of academic performance. One method to increase social emotional development in rural school districts is to higher more councilors and school phycologists to be more available to children.

**Effects on Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development**

Cognitive Development

We believe that rural students have a higher cognitive level than urban students. I believe that students in rural areas have parents that most likely went to college, which in some cases imply that they have a stable job, with money coming into the household, and they raise their children to work hard in school so that they can also go to college. It is a fact that there are more black students in urban schools than rural. There are a lot of disadvantaged families who live in Urban, and their children make lower grades than students in rural areas, mainly because there are a lot of low funding public schools. I found an article that tested different disadvantages schools that were in rural and urban areas, they stated that one schools in a rural area scored scored higher than the urban school. Also, the article stated that the “rural Appalachian students exhibited a strong positive correlation with academic ability, reading achievement, and generalization ability.” (Wulff, 1974, page 3).

Social-Emotional Development

Children are in a large social setting at school, and must develop the necessary skills to interact with their environment. School counselors, school phycologists, and teachers all promote social-emotional growth for their students (Lindsey M. Nichols et all 2017). Children use social-emotional skills when interacting with others and when attempting to understand them self (Ormrod and McDevitt p446). One theorist of emotional development is Erik Erikson, who founded psychological stages based on universal crises people encounter in their lives (Ormrod and McDevitt p401). These stages of emotional development view an individual’s concerns about them self and of others, including school settings (Ormrod and McDevitt p402). Children are likely to encounter the stages of Initiative v. guilt, industry v. inferiority, identity v. role confusion, and sometimes intimacy v. isolation during their period in school (Ormrod and McDevitt p402). After ‘passing through’ a stage, the individual will obtain an emotional asset or defect until the stage’s crisis is resolved (Ormrod and McDevitt p402). Teachers, counselors, and school phycologists teach students how progress their emotional development so they can interact in a socially acceptable way.

An individual’s level of attachment determines how comfortable a student can become when forming bonds with other people. Teachers foster the building of bonds between other students and with themself. Children’s emotions and self-esteem are also heavily influenced by everyday events occurring at school (Ormrod and McDevitt p418, 447). Having friends is immensely important for young children to build their confidence and develop necessary social skills (Ormrod and McDevitt p447).

Many people in a rural community may not seek emotional or cognitive help due to fear of prejudice and rejection, and this transfers into school environments (Lindsey M. Nichols et all 2017). A study published in 2017 sought to find... (Lindsey M. Nichols et all 2017 p 39). It is typical for multiple schools in a rural region to share a single school phycologist. This requires the phycologist to travel between the schools, which is time they cannot assist students. Other specialists and social-emotional professionals have difficulty finding and keeping jobs in rural school districts due to a small budget (Lindsey M. Nichols et all 2017 p40).

**Findings**

*Academic Anxiety and Wellbeing Amongst Rural and Urban Adolescents*

Conducted by Kohli, Malik, and Mamta

Students are affected by several social-emotional feelings during adolescence and other development periods. Anxiety and one’s wellbeing are two of the most common phycological factors which effects a student’s everyday life (Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013). 0l factors (Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013). These can lead a child to develop poor self-esteem and negatively affect a child’s academics (Kohli, Malik, Mamta 2013). Kohli, Malik, and Mamta organized two groups with 50 14-16-year-olds in each group (2013). They measured the participants scores using the Academic Anxiety Score for Children and the General Well Being Scale (Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013).

Levels of Anxiety Students Experience

(Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013 p150)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Rural |  | Urban | . |
| Level of Anxiety | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| High | 0 | 0% | 6 | 12% |
| Average | 39 | 78% | 29 | 58% |
| Low | 11 | 22% | 15 | 30% |

This indicates urban students may have slightly higher levels of anxiety while students in rural environments have average levels of anxiety (Kohli, Malik, Mamta 2013 p150). Urban students had higher academic scores than rural students, which implies urban students have a higher level of emotional development to achieve high grade while managing internal conflict (Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013 p150).

Levels of Well Being Students Experience

(Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013 p150)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Rural |  | Urban |  |
| Levels of Well Being | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency  | Percentage |
| High | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Average | 18 | 36% | 17 | 34% |
| Low | 32 | 64% | 33 | 66% |

This table illustrates how there is not a difference between rural and urban student’s state of well being (Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013 p151). Two-Thirds of the subject size are equally dissatisfied with them self and the world around them (Kohli, Malik, and Mamta 2013 p151). These students have a negative emotional view, but this doesn’t represent their level of emotional development. More research needs to be conducted about what well being actually is.

This research study found urban students to have slightly more anxiety and are better able to manage it, indicating a higher level of social-emotional development. The researchers did not find a difference between urban and rural student’s well being. Although more information needs to be conducted, this study hints that some developmental domains can fluctuate depending on the region a school is located.

*Rural and Urban Students performance and academic achievement being compared*

Conducted by Fan and Chen

There are results that show “students from rural schools performed as well as, if not better than, their peers in urban schools in math, science, reading, and social studies.” (Chen, Fan, 1998, Page 1). The findings in this very study were based on data that has been collected more than any other studies in the previous years. Although, there are some studies that found that students in urban areas did better than rural students in, math, reading, and lastly science. Also, studies found that students who live in urban areas did better on their ACT’s. However, “in some other studies, students from rural schools were found to have performed better than those from metropolitan areas in academic areas such as reading and mathematics” (Chen, Fan, 1998, Page 5). The research in this study compared rural students and urban students on different subjects which includes math, science, reading, and lastly social studies. The findings show that “in the area of reading, rural students have been shown to have comparable performance with that of their urban counterparts.” (Chen, Fan, 1998, Page 6).



**Discussion**

In the first research paper, an important finding was that anxiety and one’s wellbeing is the most common factor in a student's life. Also, these factors can make a child's academics worse. In the first research paper it was also stated that anxiety can cause rural and urban students to develop nervousness, bad social skills, and lastly poor coping skills (Kohli, Malik, & Mamta 2013). Academic anxiety and wellbeing amongst rural and urban adolescents (*Indian Journal of Positive Psychology, 4*(1), 148-152). Another important finding indicated that urban students have a higher level of anxiety than rural students, the reason is because urban students have a higher level of emotional development to get a high grade. For the second research finding, the research paper stated that they the rural and urban students to see who did better in the subject's math, reading, science, and social studies. We found that rural students performed better than the urban students. In the findings we discovered that the rural students mainly did better on the subjects reading and math, however in the findings in the research paper stated that the urban students did better on their ACT tests. The last important finding was that urban students did better on their ACT’s than rural students.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Emotion and social skills are hard to analyze because they are almost impossible to quantify More research needs to be conducted in how children learn developmental skills and processes, once the method is identified, the process can be further looked into and implemented in all school regions. Once a greater understanding of how emotions and cognition work, researchers will have identified a method for fostering development. Children need to socialize with others to develop social skills, children cannot just be ‘instructed,’ children need to experience it for themselves.

Schools need to improved accessibility to social support during the school day to assist those who are falling behind in their social-emotional development. Effective communication needs to exist between the school phycologist, councilors, and teachers to provide better phycological aid to students (Lindsey M. Nichols et all 2017 p40). Children need to learn how to interact with others, so time should be made each week to instruct students(elementary) how to act, and experiment with their classmates. Schools can have recess with other classes to promote friendships and social-emotional development.

Researchers can conduct as many studies as they want, but the information needs to be transferred to the public. Schools need funding to execute these changes, how can schools change if they have a restricting budget? Without funding, many students will fall behind in their cognitive and social-emotional development domains.

**Conclusion**

All in all, there have been a lot of studies conducted about the differences of rural and urban schools' systems. My partner and I investigated the different aspects of a school's location and find out about their cognitive and social emotional development. After looking at other studies, we can conclude that rural student does in fact have a higher level of cognitive development than urban schools. Also, results that show students from rural schools did better than, their peers in urban schools in math, science, reading, and social studies. Also, children use social emotional skills when they interact with their peers. Another thing to conclude is that anxiety and one’s well-being is very common in a student's life, which can clearly affect a student's grades. Research shows that urban students have higher levels of emotional development because they want to achieve a higher grade. The researchers did not find a difference between urban and rural student’s wellbeing.

**References**

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