



School and community resources and the social-emotional and academic adjustment of refugee children

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WHAT THE RESEARCH IS ABOUT

Objective: To determine to what extent school and community resources predict social-emotional and academic outcomes for refugee children.

Research Justification: Refugee children are thought to face multiple, intersecting challenges, associated with pre-migration trauma and post-migration adaptation struggles. However, much of the research pertaining to the well-being of refugees has focused on specific psychiatric symptomatology and challenges. *Very few studies have focused on how our communities and schools can support the adjustment needs of refugee children.*

Practical Goal: Provide evidence for the specific ways in which neighbourhood, school, and family/personal resources are associated with the adjustment of refugee children.

Intended Primary Audience: Service providers, Educators, Families, the Public, and Policy makers

HOW WAS THE DATA OBTAINED

Data were sourced from a population-based data linkage that included migration-related information from the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Permanent Residents file, grade 4 academic scores (numeracy/literacy) from the Ministry of Education's Foundation Skills Assessment data, and self-report survey data (social support, well-being, school experiences, personal relationships) from the Human Early Learning Partnership's Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI).

Using these datasets, we statistically examined how neighbourhood, school, and family/personal resources were associated with the social-emotional and academic adjustment of 850 refugee children (214 1st generation, 636 2nd generation) who attended grade 4 between 2009-2016 in any of the ten largest school districts in British Columbia.

Results are separated for G1 (1st generation) and G1+2 (1st and 2nd generation combined) refugee children.

WHAT THE STUDY FOUND

Neighbourhood resources

Academic adjustment

- *Residing in a low-income neighbourhood* was related to lower numeracy and literacy scores among G1+2 refugee children.

Social-emotional adjustment

- No significant associations were identified relating neighbourhood resources to any social-emotional variables.

School resources

Academic adjustment

- No significant associations were identified between school resources and the academic variables.

Social-emotional adjustment

- Higher levels of *support from adults at school* was related to higher levels of life satisfaction (for G1+2 children) and self-esteem (for G1 and G1+2 children), and lower levels of sadness (for G1+2 children).

- *Supportive school climate* was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (for G1 and G1+2 children) and optimism (for G1/2 children), as well as higher levels of self-esteem (for G1 and G1+2 children).

Family/personal resources

Academic adjustment

- *Children from families receiving subsidized health insurance* had lower literacy scores.

Social-emotional adjustment

- Higher levels of *support from adults at home* was related to higher levels of life satisfaction (for G1+2 children), optimism (for G1 and G1+2 children), and self-esteem (for G1 and G1+2 children), as well as lower levels of sadness (for G1 and G1+2 children).

- *Peer belonging* was related to higher levels of life satisfaction, optimism, and self-esteem for both G1 and G1+2 children, as well as to lower levels of sadness (for G1+2 children) and anxiety (for G1+2 children).

- *Having experienced bullying* was related to higher levels of sadness (for G1 and G1+2 children) and anxiety (for G1 and G1+2 children).

CONCLUSION

Guided by social ecological theories that describe dynamic interactions between multiple contexts in which children grow up, and the developmental importance of access to culturally-meaningful resources, this study points to the importance of social contexts at the neighbourhood-, school-, and family/personal-level for supporting refugee children's social-emotional adjustment.

Note. All inferences, opinions, and conclusions drawn in this report are those of the authors, and do not reflect the opinions or policies of the Data Steward(s).