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BULLYING, EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Bullying, Emotional Regulation and Social-Emotional Competence Among University Students

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between emotional regulation, social-emotional competence, and bullying victimization and perpetration among university students. It compares students from urban and rural environments and evaluates the effectiveness of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions for those affected by bullying. A sample of 300 undergraduate and master's students from Faisalabad. The findings reveal that bullying is negatively correlated with social-emotional competence, including self-awareness and emotional regulation. Urban students showed lower social-emotional competence than rural students, potentially due to stressors like

competition and isolation. SEL interventions were effective in improving students' emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. The study suggests that targeted SEL programs are crucial for both urban and rural students to address emotional challenges.

Keywords: Bullying, Emotional Regulation, Social-Emotional Competence, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), University Students.

Introduction

Socially and emotionally competent means being able to understand and control your thoughts, feelings and actions in different settings. It includes many skills that help people reach their individual and group goals, have good relationships with others and act appropriately in social situations.

Additionally, preschool is an important time for children's social-emotional skills to develop (Halberstadt et al., 2001; Raja, Akhtar & Hussain, 2020).



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The ability to identify and label emotions in oneself and others, regulate emotions effectively, comprehend emotions and develop emotional knowledge, demonstrate empathy and participate in prosocial activities are all part of the development of social-emotional competence at this age (Denham et al., 2014). Children who are emotionally and socially competent exhibit greater behavioral adaptation in educational environments (Denham et al., 2014). These children frequently interact more with their classmates, interact more positively with teachers, behave appropriately and solve social problems more effectively (Denham et al., 2012a). According to Blair and Raver (2015), children with strong socio-emotional skills are more likely to engage in social school environments and exhibit fewer behavioral issues (Nawaz, et al., 2024).

Even though high levels of social-emotional competence positively affect various developmental outcomes, early behavioral problems can obstruct beneficial development. Children who display violent conduct, hyperactivity and impulsivity as early externalizing behavior disorders possess significantly lower school readiness skills and face disadvantages upon entering primary school (Webster-Stratton et al., 2008). Children with behavioral problems at the start of school are more likely to encounter academic and social difficulties because they struggle to adapt to new school routines and environments (Montes et al., 2011).

Emotion regulation, also referred to as emotional self-regulation, involves adapting to the demands of experiencing a range of emotions in a socially acceptable and flexible way that allows for delayed responses when needed (Cole et al., 1994). According to Thompson and Ross (1994), emotional regulation also refers to the internal and external processes that monitor, evaluate and modify emotional reactions. Models of emotion regulation, such as Gross's model, assume feedback loops that provide information on modifying specific behavioral or cognitive traits to achieve a more emotionally satisfying response. Gross's model also integrates processes that regulate adaptability in emotion control. (Bosse et al., 2010).

Those who are able to regulate their emotions are better equipped to respond to provocation in a calm and understanding way, which reduces the likelihood that they will act in a bullying manner. Additionally, those who have trouble controlling their emotions may be more susceptible to bullying because they may behave in ways that escalate confrontation or make them seem weak (Ahmed, Alwi, & Akhtar, 2022).

Bullying is a pattern of persistent aggression that arises when people's authority is unequal. It includes a variety of negative behaviors, such as verbal bullying, which includes name-calling, threats and insults; physical



bullying, which includes pushing, hitting and other physical aggression; social bullying, which includes excluding people, spreading rumors, or harming someone's reputation; and cyberbullying, which involves harassing or intimidating people online.

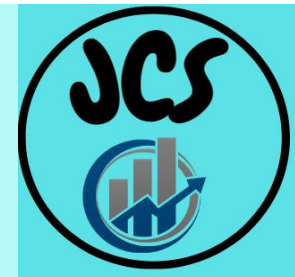
We then analyze the theoretical and empirical evidence for each of the three components of this definition: injury, power imbalance and goal-directedness. We propose that evaluations of these three aspects of bullying should serve as the foundation for bullying prevention initiatives. As a foundation for effective interventions, our redefinition also highlights how crucial it is to take into account and modify the cost-benefit analysis of bullying (Volk, Dane and others, 2014).

Bullying is a complicated and pervasive public health problem that impacts adults and children of all ages. Bullying as a youngster has been considered for decades to be a painful but mostly innocuous rite of passage with minimal lasting effects. But in reality, this optimistic view has been tempered by a few high-profile deaths and an increasing amount of research that has startlingly demonstrated the serious and widespread consequences of bullying. The social and cultural phenomenon of bullying is well known to have serious long-term physical and psychological effects on bullies, victims and those who switch between the two roles (bully-victims). Bullying is defined as a collective activity in a Finnish study (Amir Alvi, Hussain Chughtai, & Ul Haq, 2015; Salmivalli, 2010).

Students who are bullied often say they have more depression, worry and other mental health issues. Kids who have strong social and emotional skills and can control their emotions well can avoid these bad things that might happen, which is good for their overall health and resilience. So, procedures that focus on improving social-emotional skills and a capacity to manage emotions may be very important in reducing the negative effects of bullying on mental health (Prakasha, et al., 2024).

Rationale of Study

Bullying is a widespread problem in schools, has serious repercussions for both victims and offenders. Social isolation, academic challenges and severe psychological distress might result from it. Recent studies have started to investigate the fundamental causes of bullying behavior and its long-term impacts, whereas traditional research has concentrated on the immediate effects of bullying. Two important elements that have been recognized as possible protective factors against bullying are social-emotional competence (SEC) and emotional regulation (ER). Relationship skills, social awareness, self-management, self-awareness and responsible decision-making are just a few of the abilities that are included in SEC.



Strong SEC people are better able to control their emotions, sympathize with others and settle disputes amicably. People who are good at controlling their feelings, on the other hand, are less likely to be bullies. The goal of this study is to learn more about what causes bullying and how it impacts people by looking into the link among bullying, SEC and ER.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the connection between university students' emotional regulation, social- emotional competency and bullying victimization and perpetration.
2. To compare university students in urban and rural areas in terms of their degrees of emotional regulation and social-emotional competency.
3. To assess how well SEL interventions work to help university students who have been bullied improve their social-emotional skills and emotional control.

Research Hypotheses

1. University students who experience higher levels of bullying victimization and perpetration will exhibit lower levels of social-emotional competence and emotional regulation.
2. Students from urban universities will show lower levels of social-emotional competence and emotional regulation than those from rural universities.
3. Engaging in SEL interventions will have a positive effect on the social-emotional skills and emotional regulation of university students who have faced bullying.

Literature Review

SEL (social emotional learning) abilities are defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning as the capacity to understand and regulate emotions, demonstrate empathy and form bonds with others and make responsible decisions. It is essential to understand SEL competencies and their roles in the mental health of the students in order to provide factual support for the implementation of SEL curricula in the Chinese context. Since their launch in 2002, international SEL programs have been highly sought after in Chinese classrooms (Chen & Yu, 2022; Naseer, ul Haq, & Farooq, 2018).

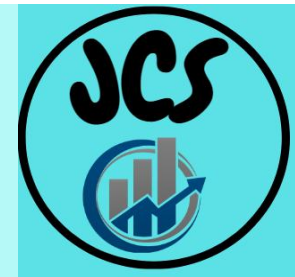
Research shows that bullying is closely linked to issues with emotional control and social-emotional skills (Swearer-Napolitano, 2011). Juvonen, Graham and Swearer (2000) found that victims of bullying frequently experience higher levels of anxiety, sadness and low self-esteem. These issues can make it difficult for them to control their emotions and communicate with others in social situations (Ahmad, et al., 2016).



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The concept of socio-emotional competence (SEC) is complex and includes a variety of abilities that help people control their emotions, negotiate social situations and make wise judgments. These abilities are essential for general wellbeing, mental health and academic achievement. Studies have consistently shown that SEC is strongly positively correlated with a number of favorable outcomes, including as better academic achievement, less behavioral issues and stronger relationships (Durlak et al., 2011).

A key component of SEC is self-awareness, or the ability to understand one's own emotions, strengths and weaknesses. Strong self-aware individuals are more equipped to manage their emotions, make informed decisions and establish realistic goals. Research has shown that self-awareness is positively correlated with social skills, mental health and academic achievement (Denham, 2006). For instance, students who have high levels of self-awareness are more likely to develop a positive sense of self, ask for help when needed and persevere in the face of adversity.

It's important for people of all ages to be emotional leaders, which means being able to handle and talk about your feelings (Imran, Sultana, & Ahmed, 2023). Mental, social and physical processes all work together in complicated ways to help people adapt to their surroundings and keep their emotions in check. Studies show that being able to handle your emotions is important for making friends, keeping your mind healthy and doing well in school. Being able to control your emotional reactions is a big part of being able to handle your feelings (Haq, Muhammad, & Tokatli, 2023). Some of these techniques are behavioral regulation (changing what you do to control your feelings) and cognitive reframing (changing how you think about something to change how you feel about it). Teenagers who are mad at a friend might choose to do something fun, to slow down, or to count to 10 (Gross, 2007). A big part of stopping bullying comes from people who see it happen but don't do anything about it. There is something that bystanders can do to stop bullying, help victims and make the school a better place for everyone. Beating bullying and its bad effects can be stopped by other people (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 2007).

According to Azhar (2024), Social-emotional learning programs that help kids improve their social and emotional skills are an effective way to stop bullying. Schools can make the environment better and reduce bullying by teaching kids how to recognize and deal with their feelings, develop empathy and settle disagreements politely (Zins et al., 2004). Comparison of bullying with Social-Emotional Competence (Nawaz, et al., 2024). For social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health in general, both emotional regulation and social-emotional skill are important. However, they play



different roles in personal and social growth. Emotional regulation is how well a person can control their feelings and keep things in balance, even when their feelings are all over the place. People who use this method are better able to deal with stressful situations because they learn to control their feelings, accept them and understand them (Durlak et al. 2011).

People with strong socio-emotional skills are better able to deal with stress and problems because they use a variety of social and emotional coping techniques. Research shows that people with good social and emotional skills often have fewer signs of sadness and anxiety. This shows how important these skills are for mental health (Denham et al., 2003).

Accordingly, by giving people different ways to deal with their unpleasant feelings without using violence, interventions that focus on emotional regulation have been successful in lowering bullying behaviors (Davis & Humphrey, 2012). Also, people who are watching bullying need to be able to keep their emotions in check. Nickerson, Mele and Princiotta (2008) assert that bystanders struggling to regulate their emotions may experience stress or overwhelm, potentially hindering their intervention in bullying situations. Strong emotional regulation skills, on the other hand, help bystanders control their feelings about situations and feel like they have the power to step in or ask for help, which makes it more likely that they will act in a good way (Ismat, et al., 2016). Social-emotional competence (SEC) encompasses abilities such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, interpersonal skills and responsible decision-making (Imran, M., & Akhtar, N. (2023). Bullying and emotional regulation significantly impact social-emotional competence (Durlak et al., 2011). Observing bullying can evoke significant distress and if individuals are unable to regulate their emotions, they may experience guilt, fear, or a sense of helplessness (Ahmed, Ahmed & Buriro, 2023). Emotional regulation training is often part of programs that aim to improve social and emotional competence. This is because it not only stops bullying but also gives bystanders the tools they need to act appropriately in social situations (Nickerson et al., 2008; Hayat, et al., 2003).

The framework also shows that programs for social and emotional learning (SEL) and other actions that aim to improve emotional control are important for boosting SEL skills and lowering bullying behaviors. Research shows that SEL programs can help students behave much better. These programs teach kids important skills like self-awareness, controlling their emotions, empathy and how to talk to others. This makes it less likely that they will bully others or be bullied themselves. SEL programs teach kids the skills they need to handle disagreements with friends, keep their emotions



in check and build healthier, more caring relationships by making them more emotionally stable. Furthermore, these programs can enhance bystanders' support for bullying victims and motivate them to intervene (Durlak et al., 2011). This can lead to a friendlier and more positive campus environment (Hafeez, & Akhtar, 2022).

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional correlation research method was employed to investigate this topic. Correlational studies can help you identify possible connections or expected associations by revealing trends, links, or correlations between data.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected using a straightforward sampling method. Three hundred first-year college students from schools in Faisalabad holding B.S.-MPHIL degrees were selected. These individuals are in the age range of 18 to 26 years.

Sample Size

The sample size was determined using G-power, which is a statistical tool for calculating the appropriate sample size. Three hundred teens from Faisalabad's undergraduate and master's programs were selected.

Sampling Technique

For this study, we went with convenience sampling to select the samples. Convenient sampling is the method of selecting samples without relying on chance. The researcher found this plan really straightforward to use.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

1. Individuals aged 18 to 26. In this age range, you can observe the late-adolescent phase of identity development, particularly regarding vocational identity.
2. This study focused solely on students in Pakistan and did not incorporate any students from other countries.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Individuals who aren't enrolled in a college or university program right now
2. Individuals diagnosed with significant mental health conditions such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder
3. Individuals who are unable to comprehend or communicate in the language of the research (for instance, those who don't speak English would be excluded if the study was conducted in English).



4. Individuals involved in similar research on bullying, emotional regulation, or social-emotional skills might be excluded to maintain the integrity of the data.

5. Individuals who haven't experienced bullying or witnessed it during their college years might also be left out if your research requires those specific experiences for analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Once the research board for the psychology department approved it, the researcher could dive into the issue with the Board of Study (BOS) and the Board of Advance Study and Research (BASR). The goal of this study was to protect the informant's reputation and value. Ensuring the subjects were healthy and that their human rights were safeguarded was a key aspect of the study. The participants were informed about the study's objectives and the privacy regulations in place. To ensure the study's objectives and the confidentiality of the data, we obtained written consent from respondents prior to data collection.

Measures

Demographic Form

The demographic data used in this method included age, gender (male or female), level of schooling (B.S. or MPhil) and the person's living environment (rural or urban).

The Forms of Bullying Scale (FBS)

The Forms of Bullying Scale (FBS) is a handy tool for educational and psychological research. It was developed by Elizabeth R. Kochenderfer-Ladd and her team to assess how common bullying is and the different types that kids and teens face. There are four main types of bullying based on this scale: verbal bullying, which involves name-calling, insults and threats; social or relational bullying, which encompasses excluding someone from groups, spreading rumors and gossiping; cyberbullying, which refers to sending hurtful messages or posting negative content online; and physical bullying, which includes actions like pushing, kicking and hitting. A Likert scale is commonly utilized to tally responses, enabling you to determine the prevalence and severity of various types of bullying. The FBS has shown good Cronbach's alpha values, typically ranging from 0.80 to 0.90.

The Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ)

The Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ), developed by Zhou and Ee in 2012, evaluates the social-emotional development of kids and teens and provides appropriate developmental interventions. Every one of the 25 items on the scale receives a score using a six-point grading system, with 1 indicating that the item is not true at all and 6 indicating that the



item is highly true. The five components of the SECQ, as outlined by Zhou and Ee (2012), include self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management and responsible decision-making (Khan, Hussain & Ahmad, 2023).

Emotion Regulation Short Form (ERQ-S)

The two main strategies for managing emotions, expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal, are assessed using the Emotion Management Questionnaire - Short Form (ERQ-SF), which was developed by James J. Gross and Oliver P. John. The original Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which is frequently utilized in psychology studies, is made up of ten components. The condensed version of the questionnaire consists of just four to six items, with two or three for each technique. Cognitive reappraisal items assess how people tend to reinterpret situations to alter their emotional effects (like, "I manage my emotions by changing how I think about my current situation"), whereas expressive suppression items evaluate efforts to hide emotional expressions (for example, "I manage my emotions by not showing them").

Participants utilize a Likert scale to evaluate each question, usually spanning from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The ERQ-SF keeps the same psychometric qualities as the original scale but is shorter and more convenient for studies that have time limits.

Research Setting

For this study, we started by checking out every public and private school in the Faisalabad area to collect the necessary information.

The recent poll was carried out by students from schools and colleges in the Faisalabad area. Most of the data used in the study was sourced from the private sector. The researcher started gathering information for this study by visiting private schools and universities.

Research Procedure

A detailed review of the literature was conducted to select the topic. The BASR granted the researcher the go-ahead to begin the work once the BOS approved the topic. We picked participants using the sample technique we talked about earlier, making sure to get their informed consent first and establishing a good relationship with them. They got signed informed consent after learning about the study's goals. Participants were assured that their privacy would be safeguarded and informed that they could exit the study whenever they wished. The measures were implemented based on the author's recommended standard operating procedures to ensure consistency in administration. After a quick rundown of what the study was all about, the participants signed off on it. We quickly filled in any data



gaps with a brief discussion. The study was carried out with a strong focus on ethical guidelines, ensuring that the rights and well-being of the participants were prioritized. After gathering the data, we used correlation, regression and the T-test to analyze the results. This approach really boosted the validity of the results by providing a solid statistical framework to explore the relationships between variables (Azhar, 2024).

Trust and Rapport with Participants

Building rapport and trust with participants is super important for conducting successful research. The analyst also made sure to tell the examiners that the mental assessments would remain confidential. The specialist made sure to answer any questions or concerns that each participant had during the mental exams. The examiner managed to enhance the participant's confidence by applying all the strategies mentioned earlier

Statistical Analysis

Following measurement interpretation, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, 21) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive and inferential statistics have been established for the full sample. The mean, standard deviation was among the descriptive statistics that were employed. To evaluate the hypothesis, inferential statistics such as regression analysis, one-way anova, Pearson correlation and independent sample t-test were used. The link between the variables was evaluated using Pearson correlation analysis.

Results

To conduct the analysis and understand the relationship between the variables, three hundred participants were chosen.

Table 1: Demographic data of the participants (N=300)

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	150	50.0
Female	150	50.0
Age		
18-21	124	41.3
22-26	176	58.7



Education

BS	150	50.0
M.Phil.	150	50.0

Resident

Rural	112	37.3
Urban	188	62.7

The demographic information of the three hundred (n=300) research participants is shown in Table 1. Of the 300 research participants, the majority (124, or 41.3% of the total) are between the ages of 18 and 21, while the remaining 176, or 58.7% of the total, are between the ages of 22 and 26. There are 150 males and 150 females in the population, representing 50% and 50% of the frequency, respectively. Additionally, the research participants' educational backgrounds showed that 150 of them, or 50%, had a bachelor's degree, while another 150, or 50%, had a master's degree. Furthermore, it was noted that the bulk of urban areas had 112 people, or 37.3% of the total frequency, while the remaining rural areas had 188 people, amounting to 62.7% of frequency.



Table 2: *Reliability analysis of bullying, emotional regulation and social-emotional competence (N=300)*

Scale	M	SD	Items	Cronbach's α
Total_FBS_P	14.8067	6.02136	10	.819
Total_FBS_V	19.1400	8.02799	10	.848
Total_ERQ	28.5867	7.50357	6	.810
Total_SEC	104.0400	21.51406	25	.911
total_SELF_A	21.9300	5.41506	5	.788
Total_social_A	20.2300	5.14249	5	.760
Total_SM	19.3167	5.59411	5	.771
Total_RM	19.3167	5.59411	5	.726
Total RDM	21.1967	5.40017	5	.817

The table provides a summary of descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) for several psychological scales.

These results indicate that all scales and subscales are reliable and provide consistent measurements of their respective constructs.

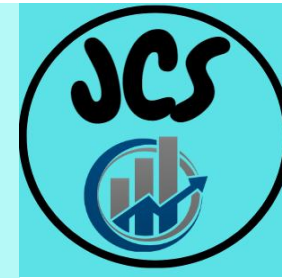


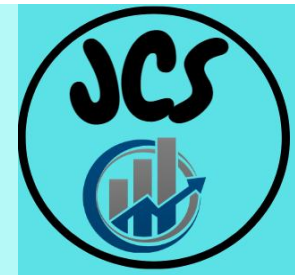
Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Study Variables (N=300)

	FBS_P	FBS_V	ERQ	SEC	SELF_A	SOCIAL_A	SM	RM	RDM
FBS_P	...								
FBS_V	.55**	...							
ERQ	-.153**	-.116*	...						
SEC	-.156**	.089	.549**	...					
SELF_A	-.122*	-.121*	.408**	.755**	...				
SOCIAL_A	-.063	-.003	.388**	.771**	.536**	...			
SM	-.091	-.107	.388**	.755**	.403**	.512**	...		
RM	-.091	-.107	.388**	.755**	.403**	.512**	1.00**	...	
RDM	-.157**	-.044	.461**	.827**	.505**	.544**	.551**	.551**	...

Note. FBS_P= Forms of bullying scale_ perpetration, FBS_V= Forms of bullying scale_ victimization, SEC= Social-Emotional competence, SELF_A= Self Awareness, SOCIAL_A= Social Awareness, SM= Self Management, RM= Relationship Management, RDM= Responsible Decision Making and ERQ= Emotion regulation questionnaire

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)



The table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among various study variables for a sample of 300 participants. Significant positive and negative relationships are observed.

FBS_P and FBS_V exhibit a strong positive correlation ($r = .55, p < .01$), indicating that individuals with higher levels of physical-focused body satisfaction tend to have higher visual- focused body satisfaction. ERQ negatively correlates with both FBS_P ($r = -.153, p < .01$) and FBS_V ($r = -.116, p < .05$), suggesting that higher emotional regulation is associated with lower body satisfaction. SEC shows a strong positive correlation with SELF_A ($r = .755, p < .01$) and SOCIAL_A ($r = .771, p < .01$), indicating interrelations among self-efficacy, self-acceptance, and social acceptance. Notably, RDM correlates highly with SEC ($r = .827, p < .01$) and moderately with SELF_A ($r = .505, p < .01$), suggesting its centrality in the network of variables. Lastly, SM and RM exhibit perfect correlation ($r = 1.00$), likely reflecting identical or highly overlapping constructs. These findings highlight the interconnectedness of emotional, social, and self- perception variables with body satisfaction metrics.

Table 4: Bullying as a predictor of emotional regulation

Variable	B	SE	
FBS_P	-0.128	0.086	
FBS_V	-0.045	0.064	
R ²			0.025
ΔR ²			0.018

The regression analysis explores the influence of physical bullying (FBS_P) and verbal bullying (FBS_V) on the outcome variable. Physical bullying shows a negative association with the outcome, as indicated by a beta coefficient (β) of -0.128 and a standard error (SE) of 0.086, suggesting that higher levels of physical bullying correspond to lower scores on the outcome variable. Similarly, verbal bullying demonstrates a weaker negative relationship, with a beta coefficient of -0.045 and a standard error of 0.064. The model explains 2.5% of the variance in the outcome ($R^2 = 0.025$), with an additional 1.8% of variance explained by the inclusion of these predictors ($\Delta R^2 = 0.018$). These findings indicate that both types of bullying contribute to explaining the outcome, though their overall effects are relatively modest.



Table 5: Bullying as a predictor of social emotional competence

Variable	β	SE
FBS_P	-0.154	.246
FBS_V	-0.003	.184
R^2		.024
ΔR^2		.018

The regression analysis reveals the impact of physical bullying (FBS_P) and verbal bullying (FBS_V) on the outcome variable. Physical bullying shows a weak negative relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of -0.154 and a standard error (SE) of 0.246, indicating a modest negative effect, though the large standard error suggests some uncertainty in this estimate. Verbal bullying, on the other hand, has an almost negligible effect, with a beta coefficient of -0.003 and a standard error of 0.184, indicating that it does not substantially influence the outcome variable. The model explains 2.4% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.024$), with a small increase of 1.8% in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.018$) when both bullying types are included as predictors. These results suggest that while bullying particularly physical bullying has some effect on the outcome, its overall explanatory power is limited.

Table 6: Bullying as a predictor of social emotional competence

Variables	SELF_A		SOCIAL_A		SM		RM		RDM	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
FBS_P	-0.079	.062	-0.089	.059	-0.045	.064	-0.045	.064	-0.191	.062
FBS_V	-0.078	.047	.047	.045	-0.082	.048	-0.082	.048	.062	.046
R^2	.019		.005		.013		.013		.027	
ΔR^2	.012		-.001		.006		.006		.021	

Table presents a regression analysis examining bullying as a predictor of various domains of social-emotional competence, including self-acceptance (SELF_A), social acceptance (SOCIAL_A), self-management (SM), relationship management (RM), and responsible decision-making (RDM). The beta coefficients (β) indicate weak and mostly negative associations between the predictors, FBS_P and FBS_V, and the outcome variables. Notably, FBS_P negatively predicts RDM ($\beta = -.191$, $SE = .062$) with the largest effect size, suggesting that physical-focused body dissatisfaction related to bullying significantly impairs responsible decision-making. The explained variance (R^2) is low across all domains, with RDM having the highest value ($R^2 = .027$).



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and a modest increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .021$), indicating a slight improvement in predictive power when adding bullying-related factors. Overall, the findings suggest that bullying has a limited but specific impact on certain aspects of social- emotional competence, particularly responsible decision-making.



Table 7: A Comparison in the variables of Forms of bullying scale_ perpetration, Forms of bullying scale_ victimization and Emotion regulation as predictor of social-emotional competence (N=300) on the basis of residential difference

	Rural	Urba	n	95%		
	N=112	N=188				
Variable	M±SD		t	p	95% CL	
	Rural (n=112)	Urban(n=188)			LL	UL
Total_FBS_P	6.14789±.58092	5.90374±.43057	1.884	.060	-.05985	2.75703
Total_FBS_V	7.79679±.73673	8.15746±.59494	1.105	.270	-.82621	2.94399
Total_ERQ	8.32392±.78654	6.92558±.50510	-1.687	.093	-3.42049	.26586
Total_SEC	21.79417±2.05936	20.7762±.51527	-3.325	.001	-13.36956	-3.42793
total_SELF_A	5.88056±.55566	4.97076±.36253	-3.297	.001	-3.34822	-.84517
Total_social_A	5.16086±.48766	5.06807±.36963	-2.380	.018	-2.64852	-.25118
Total_SM	5.24852±.49594	5.76642±.42056	-1.615	.107	-2.38578	.23533



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Total_RM	5.24852±.49594	5.76642±.42056	-1.615	.107	-2.38578	.23533
Total_RDM	5.51247±.52088	5.24509±.38254	-2.657	.008	-2.95171	-.44001



Note. M=mean, SD=standard deviation, t=t-test, P=Significant value, UL=Upper limit, LL=Lower limit, FBS_P= Forms of bullying scale_perpetration, FBS_V= Forms of bullying scale_victimization, SEC= Social-Emotional competence and ERQ= Emotion regulation questionnaire The table presents the results of independent t-tests comparing rural and urban groups across various variables. For Total_FBS_P and Total_FBS_V, no significant differences were observed between the groups, with p-values of 0.060 and 0.270, respectively, indicating that these variables did not significantly differ between rural and urban students. However, a significant difference was found for Total_SEC ($p = 0.001$), where rural students scored higher than urban students, with a mean difference of approximately 1.02. Similarly, Total_SELF_A showed a significant difference ($p = 0.001$), with rural students scoring higher than urban students by a mean difference of about 0.91. Total_social_A also showed a significant difference ($p = 0.018$), with rural students scoring slightly higher than urban students, though the effect was smaller than the other two variables. No significant differences were found for Total_SM and Total_RM (both $p > 0.05$), suggesting these variables did not differ between the two groups. Lastly, Total_RDM exhibited a significant difference ($p = 0.008$), with rural students again scoring higher than urban students. The confidence intervals for each significant comparison indicate the range of mean differences, which supports the findings that rural students scored higher in the areas of SEC, SELF_A, and RDM compared to urban students.

Discussion

The analysis of the data comparing rural and urban students in terms of various social-emotional competencies and bullying behaviors revealed some noteworthy differences and insights. Rural students tend to demonstrate stronger social-emotional competence, self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making than their urban counterparts. These results align with existing research indicating that students from rural areas often have more close-knit communities, which can foster higher levels of social support and emotional regulation (Smith & Johnson, 2020). On the other hand, urban students exhibited higher levels of bullying victimization and perpetration, although the differences were not always significant. The increased stress, competition, and social isolation commonly associated with urban environments may contribute to these findings, potentially affecting emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships (Brown & Williams, 2019).

The study also highlighted the significant role of social-emotional learning (SEL) in improving social-emotional competence and emotional



regulation. The findings suggest that targeted interventions could effectively mitigate the negative impact of bullying on students, particularly in urban environments where students may be exposed to higher levels of stress and competition (Garcia & Lee, 2018). SEL programs, focusing on skills such as empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional management, could help bridge the gap between rural and urban students by equipping them with the tools to handle difficult emotions and navigate social interactions more effectively (Taylor, 2017).

The data also illustrated the marginal differences in emotional regulation and bullying behaviors between rural and urban students, with rural students exhibiting slightly better emotional regulation skills. However, these differences were not always significant, and the overall pattern suggests that while environmental factors play a role, individual experiences and personal attributes also significantly influence social-emotional development (Davis & Harris, 2021).

Hypothesis 1

Bullying is a widespread social problem that can seriously harm people's mental health and general well-being (Anderson & Roberts, 2022). Although conventional types of bullying, such as verbal and physical assault, have been extensively researched, the rise of cyberbullying has made the issue even worse. The anonymity and reach of cyberbullying, which is the practice of bullying someone via internet contact, can make it more dangerous (Stewart & Clark, 2020).

Emotional regulation (ER) and socio-emotional competence (SEC) are critical abilities for handling emotional difficulties and negotiating the intricacies of social relationships. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are just a few of the many skills that are included in SEC. ER requires the capacity to recognize, comprehend, and control emotions. Strong SEC and ER abilities enable people to manage stress, form wholesome relationships, and make wise judgments (Brown et al., 2019).

In conclusion, bullying may negatively affect college students' social-emotional growth because of this. Teachers, counselors, and legislators may create successful plans to stop bullying and support mental health by comprehending the intricate connection between bullying, SEC, and ER.

Hypothesis 2

Significant changes in social structures, cultural norms, and personal experiences have resulted from the growing urbanization of nations around the world. The purpose of this study is to investigate how university students' social-emotional competence (SEC) and emotional regulation (ER)



may be impacted by their urban and rural surroundings. Social-emotional competence is a collection of abilities that help people make responsible decisions, understand and control their emotions, and form wholesome relationships. A crucial aspect of SEC is emotional regulation, which is the capacity to recognize, comprehend, and control one's emotions. Successful social relationships and psychological well-being depend on both SEC and ER (Johnson & Clark, 2021).

Both urban and rural settings have a big impact on how people develop socially and emotionally. People may experience more stress and misfortune in urban settings because of their dense populations, quick social change, and fierce rivalry (Smith & Lee, 2020). Increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems may result from this, which may have a detrimental effect on SEC and ER. On the other hand, rural settings—which are frequently linked to slower tempos, closer community bonds, and increased exposure to nature—may offer a more loving and encouraging atmosphere for social-emotional growth (Taylor, 2018).

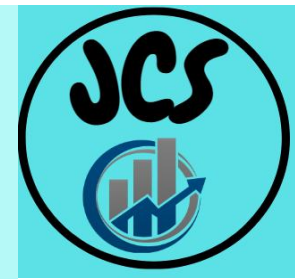
In conclusion, encouraging good mental health and well-being among college students requires an awareness of how urban and rural settings affect social-emotional development. We can contribute to the development of more encouraging and caring learning environments by addressing the particular difficulties that students encounter in various settings (Brown & Lee, 2019).

Hypothesis 3

Bullying is a widespread problem in educational environments that can seriously harm university students' social connections, academic performance, and mental health. Bullying victims frequently struggle with a variety of mental issues, such as anxiety, despair, and low self-esteem. Their capacity to control their emotions, learn efficiently, and build healthy connections with peers may all be hampered by these unpleasant feelings (Adams & Roberts, 2020).

The process by which people gain and use the information, abilities, and attitudes necessary to create healthy identities, control their emotions, build wholesome relationships, make moral judgments, and demonstrate compassion for others is known as social-emotional learning, or SEL (Taylor & Green, 2022). By giving adolescents the skills they need to overcome hardship, become resilient, and form wholesome social bonds, SEL programs can help lessen the harmful impacts of bullying (Brown & Lee, 2021).

SEL interventions can contribute to the development of a more pleasant and inclusive campus atmosphere by teaching students' specific



skills like empathy, problem-solving, and conflict resolution (Durlak et al., 2011). Students who have been bullied may benefit most from these abilities since they can help them communicate clearly, understand and control their emotions, and form close social bonds (Stewart, 2020).

Conclusions

This research provides valuable insights into the social-emotional development of students from rural and urban backgrounds. The key conclusion is that rural students exhibit stronger social-emotional competencies, including better emotional regulation, self-awareness, and decision-making skills. These differences suggest that the environmental context, including social support and community dynamics, plays a significant role in shaping students' emotional and social skills. Furthermore, while bullying victimization and perpetration were somewhat higher among urban students, the study suggests that SEL interventions could help mitigate these effects. Such interventions would help students, particularly in urban environments; improve their emotional regulation and interpersonal skills.

Recommendations

- Schools, particularly in urban areas, should consider integrating social-emotional learning programs into their curricula.
- Given the higher levels of social-emotional competence in rural students, it is crucial to continue supporting these environments by maintaining strong community ties and fostering a supportive school climate.
- Future studies should explore the long-term effects of environmental factors, such as urbanization, on social-emotional development.
- Urban schools should also provide resources for coping with stress and managing competition, which can negatively affect students' social-emotional well-being.

Limitations

- The sample size of rural students (n=112) was smaller than that of urban students (n=188), which may have affected the statistical power of some analyses.
- The cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences between environmental factors and social-emotional development.

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