

Relative Levels of Hope and Their Relationship with Psychological Characteristics among Rural Multicultural School Students

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship among levels of hope, social distance, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence. The subjects for the study were 211 students from three multicultural elementary schools in the rural part of Korea. Results from hierarchical cluster analysis placed students into low, middle, or high hope groups. First, there was a median level of hope at multicultural elementary schools. Second, pathways thinking scored slightly higher than agency thinking. Third, agency and pathways thinking were significantly and negatively related to social distances, but were positively related to self-esteem, and the subscales of emotional intelligence with the exception of emotional expression. Fourth, social distance, self-esteem, emotional awareness, emotional empathy and emotional regulation scored higher in the high hope groups than in the low hope groups.

Keywords: *Multicultural Elementary School, Hope, Multicultural Family
Agency Thinking, Pathways Thinking*

1. Introduction

In Korea, due to an increase of multicultural families, there is also an increase in multicultural children attending school. Chungnam province, survey area of this study, is especially noted in the top five of the country in the number of children of multicultural families attending middle school and high school [15].

When children of multicultural families who attend elementary, middle, and high schools all over Korea are divided into those from urban and rural areas (Urban areas are known as “Si”, and rural areas are known as “Eup” and “Myeon”), the number of multicultural family children in urban areas is higher than the rural areas; however, in rural areas, the number of multicultural family students comprises a higher percentage than urban areas. This demonstrates the fact that the highest percentages of those children of multicultural families are spending their childhoods in rural areas with lower educational environments than urban schools; thus, rural area schools should draw more political concerns and receive more academic attention.

Specifically, the small and/or multiple classes consisting of few students in rural schools cause difficulty in running a variety of educational programs for students. Also, problems with class organization, faculty promotions and placements, division of labor, and other difficulties in running the school combined with an increasing burden of teaching staff duties cause the teachers to avoid seeking employment in rural schools [5]. This keeps rural schools from competing at the same level as urban schools. In addition, most multicultural families in rural areas comprise the poorest social strata. The poverty of these families causes the different levels of education [18]. Eventually, this causes the children of multicultural families to become trapped within the lower levels of education. Thus, regarding the situation of increasing the population of multicultural families in rural areas, the poor school environments of rural areas, the poor social strata of multicultural families, and the difficulties which the children of multicultural families must experience, etc. require multicultural education for revitalization. If there continues to be a lack of multicultural education in rural schools, eventually students from the rural area multicultural families would potentially become a social threat in Korea. Furthermore, when they reach adulthood, this could result in high social costs [12].

Meanwhile, there is a growing trend of previous research that focuses on rural area schools [3, 5, 10, 13, 14], rural area multicultural families [11, 17] and, children from rural area multicultural families [1, 11, 20, 23]. However, most research mainly used case-oriented qualitative researches to investigate the

difficulties of women in rural area multicultural families, academic achievements of children from multicultural families, the differences between multicultural and monocultural children, and such related factors. However, there are no researches focusing on multicultural schools in rural areas so far, especially not on the hope of the future-oriented perspectives for these multicultural children from their points of view.

Therefore, this study was carried out to analyze the relationships among levels of hope, social distance, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence of multicultural elementary school students in rural Korea. Based on the results, the research suggests possibilities to mitigate social distance, increase self-esteem, and develop emotional intelligence of rural multicultural school students.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants and procedure

The subject schools of this study were collected by using purposive sampling methods. The criteria to select the schools was that they are located in rural areas, are small schools with fewer than 100 total students, and are elementary schools with more than 10% of multicultural students. Thus three elementary schools at Chungnam province were chosen and the total students of the schools were the subjects of this study. The subjects were: C elementary school - 75 students (35.5%); Y elementary school - 79 students (37.5%); M elementary school - 57 students (27.0%).

The data for the study were collected over two months, from March to April 2012. All 211 students of the three elementary schools were asked to answer the self-reporting questionnaires administered by class teachers. The researchers asked the teachers to explain the words which are difficult to understand for the young students such as 1-3 graders.

General characteristics of the subjects are: within grades 1-6, grade 3 of the lowest group was 13.3% and grade 2 of the highest was 19.4%, which indicates an insignificant variation between grades. In terms of gender, 56.9% were males and 43.1% were females. In addition, there were 58 multicultural students (27.7%) and 153 monocultural students (72.3%).

Table 1. General characteristics of the subjects

Characteristics	N (%)	Characteristics	N (%)	
Grades	Grade 1	Gender	Males	
	Grade 2			Females
	Grade 3			
	Grade 4			
	Grade 5			
	Grade 6		Groups	Multicultural
Total	Monocultural			
	211(100.0)	Total	211(100.0)	

2.2. Survey Tools

2.2.1 Hope

To measure the level of hope among rural elementary school students, the dispositional hope scale

which was invented by Snyder [21] and was adapted by Choi Yoo Hee [3] and others (into a form useful for this research situation in Korea, called the K-DHS) was utilized. The K-DHS is a 12-items Likert-type scale; four items assessing agency thinking, four items assessing pathways thinking, and four distracters. It is a 4-point Likert scale; 1=definitely false to 4=definitely true and a higher score of the scale indicates higher levels of hope. The Cronbach's α of agency thinking in the current study was .695 and Cronbach's α of pathways thinking .689.

2.2.2 Social Distance

To measure the social distances, this research used a revised version of the social distance scale originally developed by Bogardus [2]. The scale comprises of 12 items, and was administered into the 3-point scale to measure elementary students. A higher score of the scale indicates lower levels of social distance. Cronbach's α of social distance in the current study was .902.

2.2.3 Self-esteem

To measure self-esteem, the Rosenberg [6] self-esteem scale was used. This scale has a total of ten questions divided into positive and negative questions. It uses a 4-point Likert scale, and a higher score indicates higher levels of self-esteem. It also has a Cronbach's α =.704 in the current study.

2.2.4 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was measured using an edited version of the emotional intelligence scale adapted by Moon Yong Lin [16] from the emotional intelligence model of Salovey and Mayer [19]. This scale of which components are emotional awareness (8 items), emotional expression (7 items), empathy (7 items), emotional regulation (15 items) and emotional facilitation (10 items) are self-reporting 47 items, and a 3-point Likert type was adapted for the elementary school students. A higher score indicates higher levels of emotional intelligence. The reliability of emotional awareness was Cronbach's α =.717, emotional expression was .661, empathy was .739, emotional regulation was .829, and emotional facilitation was .722.

2.3 Data analysis

Mean, standard deviation, correlations and mean comparison were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and one-way analysis of variance. To group the level of hope for elementary school students from rural multicultural schools, the hierarchical cluster analysis was used. To analyze the differences of social distance, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence of hope groups, the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and post-hoc testing developed by Duncan and Dunnett (T3), were used.

2.4 Designation of Hope Groups

Using the agency and pathways thinking from the hope scale, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted following Ward's (1963) cluster analytic technique. Although the analysis investigated various cluster solutions, changes in the agglomeration coefficients strongly supported a three-cluster solution. The cluster centroids derived from the hierarchical cluster analysis were then used in a subsequent nonhierarchical k-means cluster analysis. A one-way analysis of variance revealed significant differences between clusters on both subscales ($p < .001$), and results from Duncan pairwise comparisons facilitated the labeling of the clusters. Cluster 1 appeared to be theoretically consistent with low hope levels (students having the lowest scores on both the agency and pathways thinking of hope), whereas Cluster 2 appeared to be theoretically consistent with middle levels of hope (students having the middle scores on both the agency and pathways thinking of hope). Students in Cluster 3 with agency and pathways scores were significantly higher than those found in Cluster 1 and Cluster 2. Results yielded 48 students (23.1%) in the lower hope group, 127 students (61.1%) in the middle hope group and 33 students (15.9%) in the higher hope group.

Finally, the result of crosstab analysis to investigate the differences of hope levels between multicultural and monocultural students showed that there was no significant difference.

Table 2. The hope scale agency and pathways scores by cluster

	Agency thinking	Pathways thinking
Cluster 1: low hope		
N	48	48
Mean	1.5521	1.4844
SD	.37882	.41708
Cluster 2: middle hope		
N	127	127
Mean	2.0807	2.1568
SD	.24576	.29726
Cluster 3: high hope		
N	33	33
Mean	2.7727	2.7045
SD	.36638	.50839

3. Results

Descriptive statistics and Pearson bivariate correlation for all variables in the study were reported in Table 3. The level of hope for elementary school students from rural multicultural schools was in the middle level. Pathways thinking were slightly higher than agency thinking. Also, the social distances of these students showed a score of 2.25 out of 3, which are slightly above the middle. This means that social distance is at a low level. Self-esteem was 2.97 out of 4, which are slightly above the middle. The emotional facilitation of emotional intelligences scored the highest with a mean of 2.6467.

Agency and pathways thinking were significantly and negatively related to social distances (higher score indicates lower social distance), but were significantly and positively related to self-esteem, and the subscales of emotional intelligence except for emotional expressions which had no significant differences. In addition, the correlation coefficient between agency thinking and emotional regulation was the highest ($r=.469$, $p<.01$), but pathways thinking is highly related to social distance ($r=.457$, $p<.01$).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlations of hope, social distance, self-esteem and emotional intelligence

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mean	2.0685	2.0885	2.2473	2.9783	2.3382	2.3531	2.0958	2.1028	2.6467
SD	.48072	.50839	.45985	.50690	.39868	.46111	.40662	.40662	.25270
1. Agency thinking	1								
2. Pathways thinking	.572**	1							
3. Social distance	.411**	.457**	1						
4. Self-esteem	.381**	.184*	.271**	1					
5. Emotional awareness	.308**	.369**	.385**	.308**	1				
6. Emotional expression	.126	.069	.121	.329**	.096	1			
7. Empathy	.232**	.285**	.314**	.124**	.194**	-.072	1		
8. Emotional regulation	.469**	.381**	.313**	.371**	.440**	.027	.503**	1	
9. Emotional facilitation	.209**	.199**	.017	.273**	.032	.099	.265**	.320**	1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

In order to investigate levels of hope and their relationships with psychological characteristics, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was then conducted with hope clusters serving as independent variables. Social distance, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence served as dependent variables. The means and standard deviation are displayed in Table 3. Box's $M = 94.757$ ($F = 1.570$, $p < .01$) showed that the homogeneity of variance was not assumed, and, thus the Dunnett (T3), the multiple comparison was used as controls for Type I errors. A significant main effect was found, Wilks $\Lambda = .007$, $F(7, 197) = 3801.028$, $p < .001$. The results of the Dunnett analysis showed that social distances ranked the highest in the high hope group, and then became lower in middle and low hope group. Self-esteem was higher in the high hope group than in the middle and low hope group, and had no differences between middle and low hope group. Emotional awareness and empathy which were subscales of emotional intelligence, was higher in the middle and high hope group than in the low hope group. Emotional regulation was the highest in the high hope group, but was the lowest in the low hope group. However, emotional expression and emotional facilitation showed no differences between hope groups.

Table 4. Means (and SDS) of the three hope groups on social distance, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence

	Low hope (a)	Middle hope (b)	High hope (c)	F	Dunnett (T3)
	M(SD) (N=47)	M(SD) (N=127)	M(SD) (N=33)		
Social distance	1.9177 (.47296)	2.2915 (.37909)	2.5872 (.37292)	28.069***	a<b<c
Self-esteem	2.7957 (.48363)	2.9690 (.49094)	3.2556 (.46279)	8.570***	a, b<c
Emotional awareness	2.0851 (.45153)	2.3923 (.33269)	2.5039 (.39078)	15.414***	a<b, c
Emotional expression	2.3622 (.44043)	2.3307 (.36960)	2.4487 (.41342)	1.155	N.S.
Empathy	1.8571 (.43677)	2.1269 (.43553)	2.2589 (.43154)	9.586***	a<b, c
Emotional regulation	1.8264 (.36533)	2.1456 (.36456)	2.3484 (.38194)	21.300***	a<b<c
Emotional facilitation	2.6256 (.24163)	2.6326 (.26774)	2.7180 (.20793)	1.612	N.S.

***p<.001

4. Discussion

First, the level of hope for the elementary school students from rural multicultural schools was in the middle, which is slightly lower than that reported for rural middle and high school students. Pathways thinking are slightly higher than agency thinking. This finding is consistent with a previous finding for adolescents [9]. In addition, the social distances of these students showed a low level, which is consistent with the previous findings that rural adolescents had relatively lower social distances than urban adolescents [7, 9]. And the self-esteem and the subscales of emotional intelligence were slightly above the middle, indicating that subjects enjoyed school life. Emotional facilitation was especially the highest among the subscales of emotional intelligence. This finding means that small rural elementary schools provided better environments for school adjustments of children from multicultural families, compared to big and urban elementary schools [8].

Second, agency and pathways thinking were significantly and negatively related to social distances, but significantly and positively related to self-esteem, and also to the subscales of emotional intelligence excluding emotional expression. It implies that hope can decrease social distance for the monocultural students, increase self-esteem and emotional intelligence which play very important roles for growth and development of adolescents.

Third, social distance ranked the highest in the low hope group, and then became lower in middle and high hope groups. Self-esteem was higher in the high hope group than in the middle and low hope groups, and showed no differences between middle and low hope groups. Emotional awareness and empathy which were subscales of emotional intelligence, was higher in the middle and high hope group than in the low hope group. Emotional regulation was the highest in the high hope group, but was the lowest in the low hope group. However, no difference was shown regarding emotional expression and emotional facilitation among the hope groups. The results of present study were similar to studies investigating high hopes among adolescents [22], indicating that adolescents whom possess high levels of hope reported greater positive benefits than adolescents reporting average hope levels. Also, the

results were similar to the findings that adolescents with high hope levels scored low in school adjustments, but scored high in personal adjustments, global satisfactions and grade-point averages, and vice versa [4].

Based on the above results, this study implies that the problems of rural small scale schools and the difficulties of multicultural families can substitute for hopes increasing among rural multicultural elementary school students. Nevertheless, this current study has several limitations. First, the study was cross-sectional, and no casual inferences can thus be made. Second, the results are based on self-report measures. Third, although anonymity and confidentiality of each subject were guaranteed, it is possible that some might not have answered all questions honestly.

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