

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/trade-offs-of-attending-better-schools/>

This video describes a study exploring the impact of attending better middle schools on children's long-term success, particularly focusing on cognitive and socio-emotional skills. The study emphasizes that while cognitive abilities such as verbal and mathematical skills are important for success, factors like social and emotional development, aspirations, and self-perceptions are also critical.

The research investigates the effects of attending higher-achieving middle schools in Mexico City, where students are assigned to schools based on their placement exam scores and family preferences, creating a clear cutoff between those who attend better schools (morning shift) and those who do not (afternoon shift). The author uses a regression discontinuity design to analyze outcomes for students near this cutoff.

Initial findings indicate that moving to better schools yields modest improvements in standardized test scores but can also negatively affect other academic measures, such as GPAs, leading to a higher likelihood of failing courses or repeating grades. Students in better schools reported lower self-perceptions of academic ability and conscientiousness, which may adversely affect their aspirations and choices for further education.

Overall, the study concludes that peer comparisons and relative rankings in schools may significantly impact students' academic experiences and self-beliefs, potentially overshadowing the benefits of higher academic inputs associated with better schools. The author suggests the need for further research on the long-term implications of such experiences and calls for interventions aimed at providing students with objective information about their abilities to help counter negative self-perceptions.