



CO-EDUCATION AT SCHOOL LEVEL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON URBAN VS. RURAL PARENTS' ATTITUDE IN SILIGURI

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ABSTRACT

Co-education was at once a myth to the Indian Education System. But after the establishment of Universalization of Elementary Education, through various projects like the Sarva Shiksha Mission and Education For All, the Government has envisioned to make the co-education system popular so that, the boys and the girls both can get the formal education at school level under the same roof without discrimination. It makes girl students bolder and smarter by eradicating self-defeatism, inferior complexity and self created pessimism and broadens their personality with growing self confidence. It should encourage and cultivate a relationship of mutual respect among both the genders which promotes a healthy and competitive environment among the students. Thus it socializes people by giving the preparation of real world. Co-education is also economical for a poor country like India. In case of school level education, parents are the decision maker. It is of prime importance to understand their perception and attitude regarding co-education. Is there any special preference towards single-sex education? How much impact does gender have as a factor influencing parents' school choosing criteria? Does it vary among urban and rural parents if at all. This study attempts to find out importance of co-education as a deciding factor for the parents before making choice for the future of children's education along with other factors like school infrastructure, teacher quality, reputation of the school, distance of the school from the house, school discipline etc. It also highlights a comparison between urban and rural parents' attitude towards coeducation.

KEYWORDS: Co-education, Single-sex Education, Parents' Attitude, Parent-Child Relationship.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The great Greek philosopher, Plato was the pioneer of co-education in the ancient times. He believed that co-education will create a feeling of companionship between boys and girls. In the ancient Hindu system, co-education was not at all in existence. However, at present it is very popular in India. The gradual development of women's education shows that the need for the co-education is highly imperative if we have to promote literacy among women and have to provide them equality of opportunity in the real sense. After the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) it has been the main motto to promote equality of opportunity to all the disadvantaged sections like girls. It makes girl students bolder and smarter by eradicating self-defeatism and self created pessimism and broadens their personality. It minimizes the cost of maintaining separate staff and infrastructure for girls. It encourages and cultivates a relationship of mutual respect among both the genders which promotes a healthy and competitive environment among the students. Thus it socializes pupil by giving the preparation of real world. Dale (1969) found that the mixed schools were more successful than single-sex schools in every way academically, attitudinally and socially. He noted that in mixed schools the presence of girls made boys more amenable in their behaviour. The harsh discipline, obsession with academic work and high degree of concern with trivialities often complained by pupils and teacher of both sexes, was founding in single-sex schools. Further he noted that pupils in mixed schools appeared to be less anxious about the school than pupil in single-sex schools and attainment was better in mixed schools than single-sex schools. However, it is the parents who exert the major influence on the development of the child from the birth to maturity and decides about the schooling of the child – in which school he/she will be admitted. Apparently we have a common idea that the urban parents are more conscious to their children than rural parents. As, most of the rural parents are not properly educated because of their poor socio-economic condition, we think they are quite indifferent to the education system – whether it will be single sex education or co-education. But the scenario may be something different because everyone has some individual difference and also as a result of increasing awareness of values of coeducation through Government endeavours and initiatives. There are certain critics who are still holding the conservative view that by studying in co-educational institutions our girls become immodest and graceless and that their moral character also gets blotted. There is absolutely no truth in these false and baseless charges against co-education. Co-education neither corrupts a girl nor a boy. Educational institutions are holy temples of the Goddess Saraswati. In these sacred temples there can be no room for impurity, unholliness and immorality. When boys and girls can enjoy mixed social gatherings and parties, then where lies the harm if they study together? The National Committee of Womens' Education (1959) opined that at the middle and secondary stages more co-educational institutions should be established subject to the condition of adequate attention being paid to special needs and requirements of girls.

This study has been conducted in Siliguri area. Siliguri is a city which spans across the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts in the Indian state of West Bengal. The city is located on the banks of the Mahananda River and the foothills of the Himalayas. Based on Census data of 2011, the city had a population of 705,579, while the population of Siliguri Metropolitan is 1,057,438. Males constitute 51%

of the population and females 49%. In Siliguri, 10% of the population is under six years of age. In case of education, there are 110 schools in Siliguri. The first school in Siliguri is Siliguri Boys' High School which was established in 1918. After that Siliguri Girls' School was established. From educational point of view, Siliguri subdivision has been divided into six regions. In Bidhannagar and Phansidewa region, there are 12 co-ed schools respectively. In Batasi and Khoribari the number of co-ed schools are 10, in Naxalbari the number is 15, in Siliguri Naxal 24, and in Siliguri West there are 22 co-ed schools. So the total number of co-ed schools is 95 out of 110. Beside this here are 10 MSKs and those are all co-ed.

2. OBJECTIVES:

The following objectives are formulated for the study:

- I. To compare between urban and rural parents' attitude towards co-education.
- II. To understand the impact of gender as a factor compared to other factors influencing parents' decision making process regarding school choosing.
- III. To explore how psychological development of a student is affected by single-sex/co-education system.

3. METHODOLOGY:

- a) **Research Design:** The research design which has been adopted here is exploratory, qualitative and descriptive research design. Normative Survey Method has been applied here.
- b) **Population:** All the urban and rural parents in Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling District of West Bengal, India is comprising the population of the study.
- c) **Sample:** Here the sample size is 100. A representative sample of 50 parents has been selected from urban and the same has been selected from rural area. Further it has been taken care so that in both urban and rural sets, there are 25 parents whose children study in co-ed school and 25 parents whose children study in single sex or non co-ed school. At first stratified then simple random sampling technique has been used.
- d) **Tool and Techniques for Data Collection:** A self-made closed-ended questionnaire to the parents has been developed. Five point likert type attitude scale has been used as the rating scale in which the 5 points (very good, good, average, not good, worst) is the measurement of 5,4,3,2,1 respectively.
- e) **Procedure of Data collection:** Primary data pertaining to parents' feedback on co-education has been collected through questionnaires by personal interview, phone, and online medium like e-mail, Google form etc. Secondary data was collected from journals, articles, books and websites.
- f) **Procedure of Data analysis:** For the purpose of data analysis, pie chart has

been used to showcase the percentage of a particular type of response. Apart from this, bar chart has been used to showcase different parameters with respect to demography. Mean and Standard Deviation have been used for statistical analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

a) Description of sample population:

Age of the respondents:

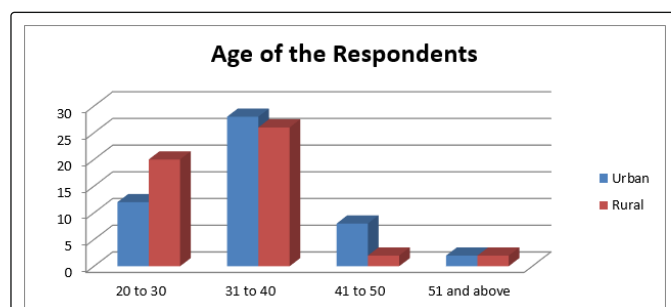


Figure1: Age of the respondents

Gender of the respondents:

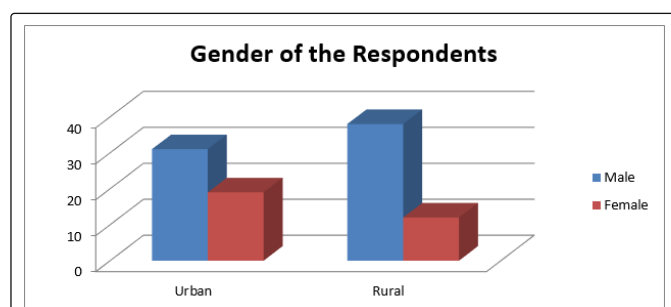


Figure2: Gender of the respondents

b) Importance of factors influencing school choosing:

In Urban area:

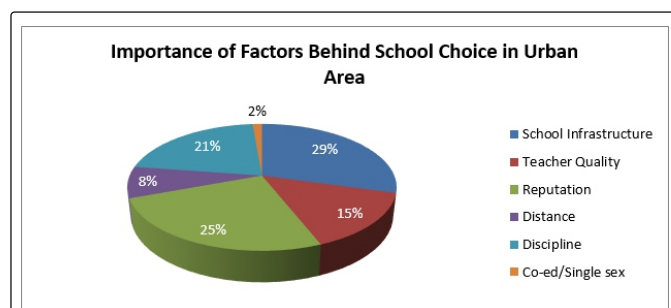


Figure 3: Importance of factors behind school choice in urban area

In urban area, School Infrastructure came out as most important factor followed closely by Reputation and Discipline and then Quality of Teachers. Distance and Co-ed or Single sex were not marked as a very important factor.

If we consider only the importance assigned by respondents for co-ed or single sex education:

Table1: Importance co-ed/single sex in urban area

	Co-ed/Single sex
Very Important	2
Quite Important	8
Important	6
Less Important	24
Not at all Important	10

Mean of the whole set is:

$$[(2 \times 5) + (8 \times 4) + (6 \times 3) + (24 \times 2) + (10 \times 1)] / 50$$

$$= 118 / 50$$

$$= 2.36$$

From here if we calculate standard deviation, it is coming to 0.0246

This tells us that each data point in the sample sits an average distance of 0.0246 statistical data points from the mean or average. It shows the consistency in the reply given by the respondents i.e. most of the respondents' attitude are in the same direction.

In Rural area:

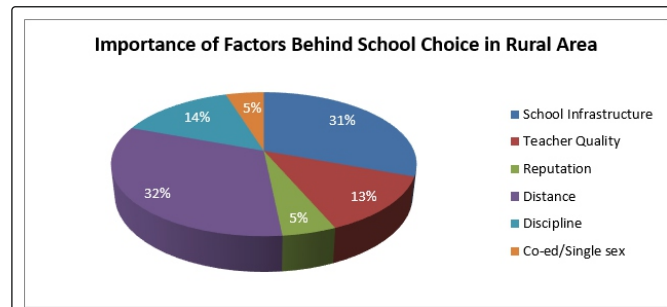


Figure 4: Importance of factors behind school choice in rural area

In rural area also School Infrastructure scored well however the prime factor behind choosing a particular school came out to be Distance. In fact Distance got highest importance among other parameters. Here also Teacher Quality and Discipline scored good but Reputation and Co-ed or Single sex got less importance.

If we consider only the importance assigned by respondents for co-ed or single sex education:

Table 2: Importance co-ed/single sex in rural area

	Co-ed/Single sex
Very Important	6
Quite Important	2
Important	8
Less Important	32
Not at all Important	2

Mean of the whole set is:

$$[(6 \times 5) + (2 \times 4) + (8 \times 3) + (32 \times 2) + (2 \times 1)] / 50$$

$$= 128 / 50$$

$$= 2.56$$

From here if we calculate standard deviation, it is coming to 0.0234

This tells us that each data point in the sample sits an average distance of 0.0234 statistical data points from the mean or average. It shows the consistency in the reply given by the respondents i.e. most of the respondents' attitude are in the same direction.

Irrespective of urban and rural area, parents are having same degree of consistency in their attitude towards co-ed/single sex education.

And it clearly shows that parents are focusing more on quality education rather than co-educational or single sex educational environment.

c) Importance of Co-education or single sex as a factor influencing school choosing:

When the investigator specifically focused on particularly Co-education/Single Sex as a deciding factor, the result came like below:

In Urban area:

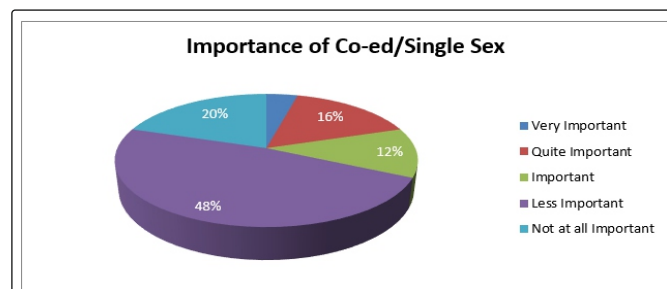


Figure 5: Importance of co-ed/single sex education in urban area

In Rural area:

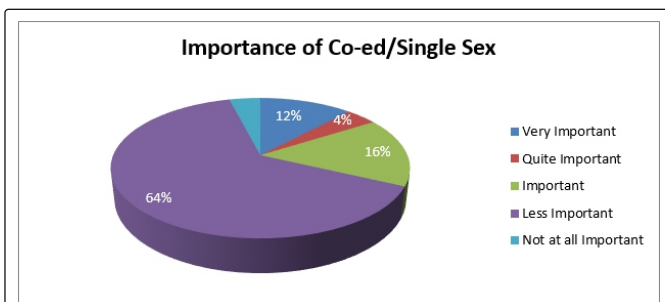


Figure 6: Importance of co-ed/single sex education in rural area

Study revealed that 48% and 64% of the parents from Urban and Rural area rated Co-ed/Single Sex as a Less Important deciding factor behind choosing school. Around 20% parents in both Urban and Rural area rated it as either very or quite important and 15% as just important. Major difference is that 20% of urban parents just neglected it as not all important where as it is only 4% in case of rural area.

Study found interestingly that in urban area 37.5% of total parents whose son/daughter studies in a Single Sex school has rated Co-education/Single Sex as a less important factor.

d) Parent-child emotional relationship for co-ed and single-sex based school students:

In Urban area:

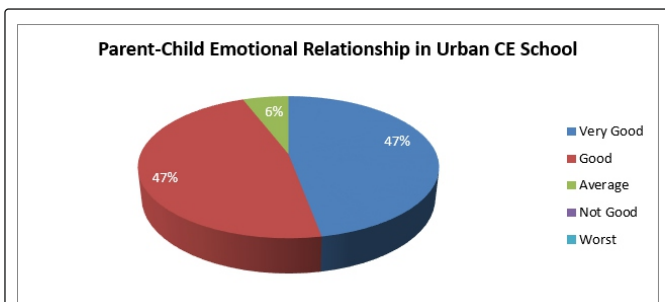


Figure 7: Parent-Child emotional relationship in urban co-ed school

It shows that 94% of the urban parents whose children study in a co-ed school feel that their son/daughter share their world with them. Not a single parent felt that they not at all share their thoughts with them.

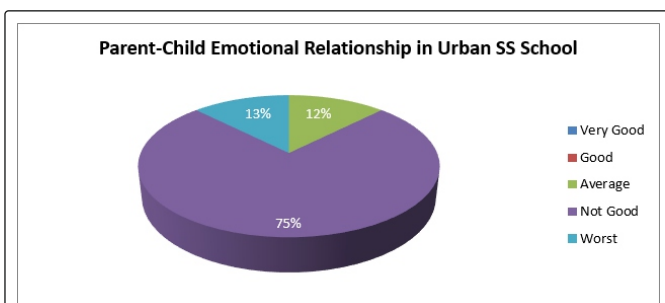


Figure 8: Parent-Child emotional relationship in urban single sex school

However, in case of urban single sex school, it shows that 75% of the urban parents feel that their son/daughter share less about their world with parents.

In Rural area:

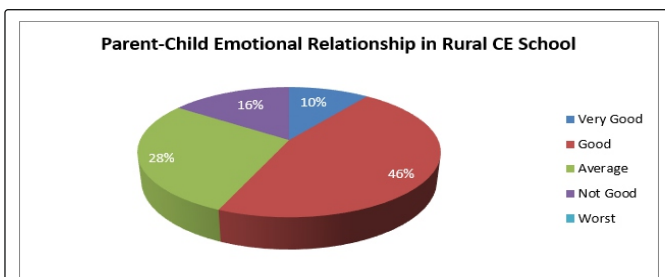


Figure 9: Parent-Child emotional relationship in rural co-ed school

It shows that 46% of the rural parents whose children study in a co-ed school feel that their son/daughter share their world quite good with them.

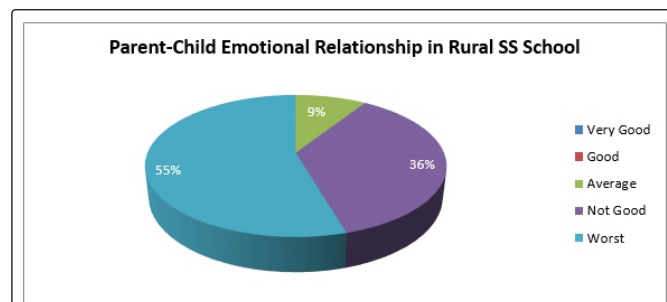


Figure 10: Parent-Child emotional relationship in rural single sex school

However, in case of rural single sex school, it shows that 36% of the rural parents feel that their son/daughter share less about their world with parents where as 55% felt that they don't share at all.

It may be found that, openness in emotional relationship with parents is little bit more in urban area than rural. However the main point is whatever either it is urban or rural, students studying in single sex school are more rigid in sharing their thoughts and personal world with parents compared to their co-ed school counterpart.

e) Parents' perception on children's adjustment capability with Outside World:

After completing school, many students will move to distant place for higher education. Others also have to adjust themselves in various different situation of outside world. They will not get a controlled environment like school at that point of time. Are the parents confident about their children to be successful enough to adjust in outside world?

In Urban area:

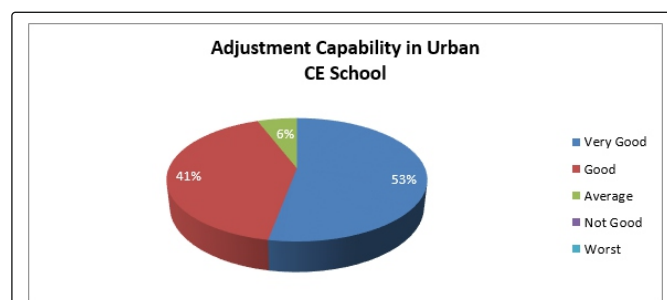


Figure 11: Adjustment capability of students in urban co-ed school

Study found that, 53% of the urban parents whose children study in a co-ed school feel that their son/daughter will adjust very well in outside world whereas, 41% believe they will adjust well.

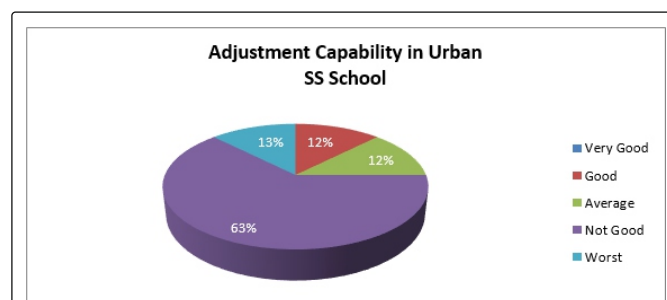


Figure 12: Adjustment capability of students in urban single sex school

However, 63% of the urban parents whose children study in a co-ed school feel that their son/daughter will face little problem in adjusting with outside world.

In Rural area:

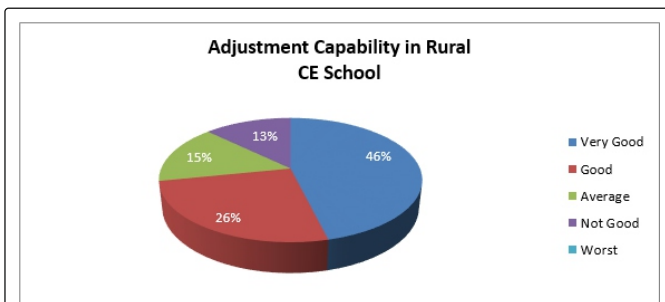


Figure 13: Adjustment capability of students in rural co-ed school

Study found that, 46% of the rural parents whose children study in a co-ed school feel that their son/daughter will adjust very well in outside world whereas, 26% believe they will adjust well.

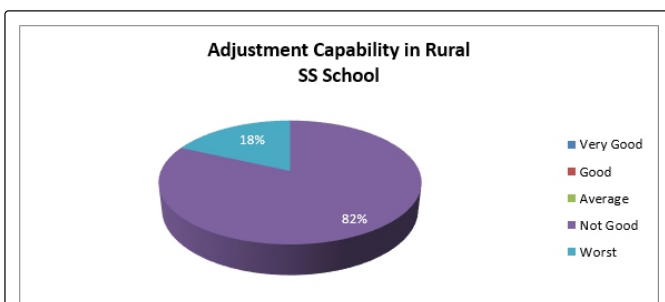


Figure 14: Adjustment capability of students in rural single sex school

However, it shows that, 82% of the rural parents whose children study in a single sex school feel that their son/daughter will face little trouble in adjustment with outside world.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The main motto behind the study was to find out attitudinal difference between urban and rural parents towards co-education and importance of co-education as a school choosing factor. However the investigation was not only limited to this sole objective. It has evoked some other important findings and as a whole the study has put light on the entire education system. Few findings are totally data driven whereas few are the findings which has been observed during interaction with the parents.

Data shows that, co-ed/single sex factor is neither important in urban nor in rural as a deciding criteria before making choice for the future of children's education. The preference is as follows:

On absolute score basis:

Table 3: Importance of each school choice parameter in urban area on absolute score basis

URBAN	School Infrastructure	Teacher Quality	Reputation	Distance	Discipline	Co-ed/Single Sex
Very Important	44	22	38	12	32	2
Quite Important	6	28	12	24	16	8
Important	0	0	0	14	2	6
Less Important	0	0	0	0	0	24
Not at all Important	0	0	0	0	0	10
Total Respondents	50	50	50	50	50	50

If score is assigned to the likert scale like 5 to 1 for 'Very Important' to 'Not at all Important', the weighted table will be like:

Table 4: Importance of each school choice parameter in urban area on weighted score basis

URBAN	School Infrastructure	Teacher Quality	Reputation	Distance	Discipline	Co-ed/Single Sex
Very Important	220	110	190	60	160	10
Quite Important	24	112	48	96	64	32
Important	0	0	0	42	6	18
Less Important	0	0	0	0	0	48
Not at all Important	0	0	0	0	0	10
Total Respondents	244	222	238	198	230	118

As likert scale is ordinal, so, it cannot be decided that, how important one factor is from the other but factors according to the priority can be obviously classified. Before the urban criteria are classified the same exercise can be done for rural area too.

On absolute score basis:

Table 5: Importance of each school choice parameter in rural area on absolute score basis

RURAL	School Infrastructure	Teacher Quality	Reputation	Distance	Discipline	Co-ed/Single Sex
Very Important	38	16	6	40	18	6
Quite Important	12	34	14	8	18	2
Important	0	0	30	2	14	8
Less Important	0	0	0	0	0	32
Not at all Important	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total Respondents	50	50	50	50	50	50

The weighted table:

Table 6: Importance of each school choice parameter in rural area on weighted score basis

RURAL	School Infrastructure	Teacher Quality	Reputation	Distance	Discipline	Co-ed/Single Sex
Very Important	190	80	30	200	90	30
Quite Important	48	136	56	32	72	8
Important	0	0	90	6	42	24
Less Important	0	0	0	0	0	64
Not at all Important	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total Respondents	238	216	176	238	204	128

So, finally for urban and rural area priorities are like below:

Table 7: Importance of each school choice parameter in urban and rural area on preference basis

	Urban	Rural
1 st Criteria	School Infrastructure	Distance, School Infrastructure,
2 nd Criteria	Reputation	Teacher Quality
3 rd Criteria	Discipline	Discipline
4 th Criteria	Teacher Quality	Reputation
5 th Criteria	Distance	Co-ed/Single Sex
6 th Criteria	Co-ed/Single Sex	

It is evident that, in both the cases, Co-ed or Single Sex is considered as the least important factor behind school choice. And it clearly shows that parents are focusing more on quality education rather than co-educational or single sex educational environment.

The emotional relationship between parent and child has been investigated through the degree of openness in the relationship or how often and how well children share their thought and personal life with their parents. The result came like below:

Emotional Relationship in urban and rural CE and SS schools:

Table 8: Comparison of emotional relationship in co-ed and single sex school in urban and rural area

	URBAN		RURAL	
	CE	SS	CE	SS
Very Good	47%	0	10%	0
Good	47%	0	46%	0
Average	6%	12%	28%	9%
Not Good	0	75%	16%	36%
Worst	0	13%	0	55%

It shows that, overall in urban area openness is more than rural area. However, irrespective of urban or rural, co-ed school students are more open to their parents compared to their counterpart studying at single sex schools.

Today's educational environment build the base which decides how well the students will be able to adjust in varied situations in future. The adjustment capability is very important in today's world as many times the students have to move to other cities from their native place for higher studies. The findings of the study is as follows:

Adjustment capability of students of CE and SS school of urban and rural area:

Table 9: Comparison of adjustment capability in co-ed and single sex school in urban and rural area

	URBAN		RURAL	
	CE	SS	CE	SS
Very Good	53%	0	46%	0
Good	41%	12%	26%	0
Average	6%	12%	15%	0
Not Good	0	63%	13%	82%
Worst	0	13%	0	18%

It shows that, irrespective of urban or rural, adjustment capability of co-ed school students are more than their counterpart studying at single sex schools.

5. CONCLUSION:

Study concludes that, there is no such difference between urban and rural parents' attitude towards co-education. Parents assign more importance to factors like School Infrastructure, Teachers' Quality, Distance from residence, Discipline over Co-education as a factor. It is evident that irrespective of urban or rural context, parents are more concerned about quality of education rather auxiliary factors which has indirect influence in the development of children. It also draws conclusion that, co-education helps children to be more open towards their parents and it increases their adjustment capability.

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