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**How Many School Psychologists are There in Each Country of the World?
International Estimates of School Psychologists
and School Psychologist-to-Student Ratios**

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Abstract

How many school psychologists are there in each country of the world? Findings from this study indicate over 76,100 school psychologists throughout 51 countries from which estimates were available as of 2007. When considering the total number of school psychologists in a given country, it is essential to also consider the number of school-age children. The school psychologist-to-student ratio provides an omnibus indicator of the development of the profession of school psychology in countries around the world. Calculations revealed a wide range of school psychologist-to-school-age children ratios in countries around the globe. It is notable that many of the countries with the largest populations of school-age children in the world have the fewest school psychologists. Ideas for future scholarship that will further enhance our understanding of school psychology internationally are discussed.

KEYWORDS: international; professional issues; ratios; number of school psychologists

How many school psychologists are there in each country of the world? Although this is a common question among international colleagues, not a single published study has addressed this seemingly simple question. Whereas various professional associations representing school psychologists in countries around the world may document such information, this information has not been systematically reported for each country around the globe. Even the most contemporary source of information regarding school psychology practices around the world, *The Handbook of International School Psychology* (Jimerson, Oakland, & Farrell, 2007), does not provide a complete compilation of this information.

As noted in previous publications, the specialty of school psychology has been characterized as one that collectively provides individual assessment of children who may display cognitive, emotional, social, or behavioral difficulties; develops and implements primary and secondary intervention programs; consults with teachers, parents and other relevant professionals; engages in program development and evaluation; conducts research; and helps prepare and supervise others (Jimerson, Oakland, & Farrell, 2007, p. 1). Those who provide these services use a variety of titles throughout the world, including counselor, educational psychologist, professional of educational psychology, psychopedagog, psychologist, psychologist in education, psychologist in the schools, or school psychologist. The term *school psychologist* is used throughout this article to refer to these professionals.

Recognizing there have been numerous important contributions to understanding school psychology internationally during the past fifty years (e.g., Catterall, 1976, 1977, 1979; Jimerson, Graydon, Farrell, Kikas, Hatzichristou, Boce, Bashi, & The International School Psychology Association Research Committee, 2004; Jimerson, Graydon, Yuen, Lam, Thurm, Klueva, Coyne, Loprete, Phillips, & The International School Psychology Association Research

Committee, 2006; Jimerson, Oakland, & Farrell, 2007; Jimerson, Skokut, Cardenas, Malone, & Stewart, 2008; Oakland & Cunningham, 1992; Saigh & Oakland, 1989; United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization, 1948; Wall, 1956), it is notable that none of these publications report the ratio of school psychologists-to-school-age children for countries around the world. Previous research reported that there were notable differences in ratios among low- and high-GNP countries (Oakland & Cunningham, 1992).

A recent study examining evidence of school psychology in each of the 192 member states of the United Nations (Jimerson, Skokut, Cardenas, Malone, & Stewart, 2008) revealed evidence of the following: a) presence of school psychologists in 83 countries; b) regulations that require school psychologists to be licensed, registered, or credentialed in 29 countries; c) professional associations specifically for school psychologists in 39 countries; d) university preparation programs for school psychologists in 56 countries; and e) doctoral preparation programs in school psychology in 19 countries. The previous study provided valuable information and insights regarding school psychology internationally. However, given that evidence of school psychologists was identified for 83 countries, this begs the question, how many school psychologists are there in each of these countries? A subsequent question to ask is how many school-age children are there in each of these countries? With these two important pieces of information, it is possible to calculate the school psychologist-to-school-age children ratio for a given country.

The present study aims to address the following questions: 1) How many school psychologists are there in each country of the world? 2) What are the ratios of school psychologists to school-age children in countries around the world? To address these questions, information was sought for each of the 83 countries where evidence of school psychology was previously documented. By identifying the number of school psychologists and the number of

school-age children in a given country, it was possible to compute a ratio of school psychologists-to-school-age children.

Methods

Sample

Given the recent study examining evidence of school psychology in each of the member states of the United Nations (Jimerson et al., 2008), the current study focused on the 83 member states where there was discovered to be evidence of school psychology (i.e., Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China and Hong Kong, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom [England & Wales, Scotland], United States, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). As described by Jimerson and colleagues (2008), evidence of school psychology in each country was determined by the following five indicators: a) identifiable professionals employed to fulfill duties characteristic of school psychologists; b) regulations (or laws) that require school psychologists to be licensed, registered or credentialed; c) professional association(s) of school psychology (including a division of school psychology within a national psychological association); d) university program(s) that prepare school psychologists (including specific curriculum designed to prepare these professionals); and e) university program(s) that provide doctoral level preparation for school psychologists. Using the

procedures described below, estimates of the number of school psychologists were obtained for 51 countries.

Procedures

The process of data collection in this study was focused on identifying the number of school psychologists and the number of school-age children in each of the previously listed 83 countries. The systematic search process to identify the number of school psychologists in each country involved three levels: (a) examining existing publications (e.g., Catterall, 1976, 1977, 1979; Jimerson et al., 2004; Jimerson et al., 2006; Oakland & Cunningham, 1992; Saigh & Oakland, 1989; United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization, 1948); (b) examining the internet using respective country names and profession labels and descriptors (e.g., school psychology, school psychologist); and (c) searching to identify any colleagues in each country who may provide additional information (e.g., university faculty, leaders in the profession, members of the International School Psychology Association).

Data regarding the number of school-age children was calculated using the United States Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html). The Factbook provides annual estimates of the number of children (age birth to 14 years) in each country in the world. The number of years of compulsory education for each country is collected annually by UNICEF (the United Nations Children Fund, was shortened from the original United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) and is recorded in the National Education Statistics database (childinfo.org/areas/education/database.php). This information and process is important as it symbolizes an international effort to advance education for all children across the world. This effort is supported by the United Nations as shown in their Millennium Summit of 2000, where it was agreed that universal education, gender equality, and empowering women were central

issues in combating poverty around the world. Moreover, the significance of this issue provides further support for the importance of obtaining a school psychologist-to-school-age children ratio in countries around the world.

Calculating the School Psychologist-to-Student Ratios

The school psychologist-to-school-age children ratios were calculated using two different methods in order to provide both standardized ratio calculations, as well as ratios that are calculated according to the unique number of years of compulsory education required in the various countries. The first ratio calculation provides an opportunity for a comparison across all countries using 12 as the standard number of years of compulsory education. This calculation involved taking the total number of school-age children within a particular country (obtained from the Factbook) and dividing that number by 15 (given that ages birth through 14 years 11 months are represented in the Factbook), and that number was subsequently multiplied by 12. The resulting number revealed the number of school-age children (considering a standard of 12 years of education) for each country. Next, the standard number of school-age children was divided by the number of school psychologists to calculate the standardized school psychologist-to-school-age children ratio.

The second ratio calculation provides a context-specific estimate, considering the present number of years of compulsory education required within each particular country. To calculate this second ratio, the total number of school-age children within a particular country (obtained from the Factbook) was divided by 15 and then multiplied by the country-specific number of years of compulsory education—thus yielding the number of school-age children in a manner that recognizes the differing number of years of compulsory education that are required in the various countries. Next, this number of school-age children was divided by the number of school

psychologists in that country to obtain the country-specific school psychologist-to-school-age children ratio.

Results

How many school psychologists are there in each country of the world?

Of the 83 countries in which evidence of school psychology was previously revealed (Jimerson et al., 2008), estimates of the number of school psychologists were obtained for 51 countries. Table 1 delineates the estimate of school psychologists in each country. The total number of school psychologists throughout the 51 countries is estimated at 76,100. With an estimated 32,300 school psychologists, the United States accounts for approximately 42 percent of the school psychologists in the world. The next largest population of school psychologists among the countries was 11,327 in Turkey. In contrast, there were numerous countries where estimates were fewer than 20 psychologists. Again, when considering the number of school psychologists in a given country, it is imperative that one is also aware of the number of school-age children in the country of interest.

What is the school psychologist-to-student ratio in countries around the world?

Of the 83 countries that demonstrated evidence of school psychology (Jimerson et al., 2008), data on the number of school psychologists was obtained for 51 countries—thus, school psychologist-to-school-age children ratios were calculated for 51 countries. Table 1 reports the findings of both the standardized and country-specific methods of ratio calculations for each of these 51 countries. The countries marked with an asterisk are countries previously found to have university programs for school psychology at the doctoral level (Jimerson et al., 2008). Thirteen countries were found to have ratios of approximately 1:2,000 or fewer (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Israel, Lithuania, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States, Australia, and the Netherlands).

Many countries that have the largest populations of school-age children do not have calculated ratios. Table 2 provides information regarding the 25 member states of the United Nations with the largest numbers of school-age children, including: number of school-age children, number of school psychologists, and the ratio of school-age children per school psychologist for each country. Countries that have a zero (0) for number of school psychologists have no evidence of school psychology (Jimerson et al., 2008). Countries listed with a (.) have evidence of school psychology, but no number of school psychologists was obtained through the systematic search process in the current study. The three countries containing the largest numbers of children—India, China, and Indonesia—have an unknown number of school psychologists (China and India) or there is no known evidence of school psychology (Indonesia). Of these 25 countries with the largest populations of children, only three countries (Japan, Turkey, and the United States; highlighted in Table 2) have ratios smaller than 1:5,000.

Of the 1.89 billion school-age children in the world (considering 12 years of education as the basis for school-age), 379 million children live in countries that do not have access to a school psychologist. Table 3 reveals that approximately 939 million children in the world live in countries that have ratios greater than 1:10,000 as compared to 572 million children living in countries with a ratio less than 1:10,000.

Discussion

It was estimated that 76,100 school psychologists were working in the 51 countries examined in the present study. In 1992, based on information from 54 countries, a similar estimate of 87,000 school psychologists was reported (Oakland & Cunningham, 1992). The present study also provides estimates of school psychologist-to-school-age children ratios for 51 countries in the world. Furthermore, this study offers insights regarding how many children

around the world are currently likely to have access to support services offered by school psychologists.

It is particularly salient that only 13 countries had ratios of approximately 1:2,000 (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Israel, Lithuania, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States, Australia, and the Netherlands). Another important finding is that the ratios increase fairly steadily up to 1:10,000 (with Germany at 1:9,482), but subsequently there is a large increase up to 1:34,712 in Namibia. The very large ratios illustrate that there are many countries wherein few children have access to support services characteristic of those provided by school psychologists in the United States or the United Kingdom. For example, with only three reported school psychologists in the country, Tanzania is ranked the twentieth highest regarding having the most school-age children, and has the highest ratio of 1:4,368,289. Thus, it is clear that few Tanzanian children are receiving support services from school psychologists. The current study provides a foundation of information regarding the likelihood that children have access to school psychology services in the various countries around the world, and more research is needed to further understand school psychology internationally and to further establish the types of support services available to school-age children around the globe.

Limitations and Future Directions in Studying School Psychology Internationally

The current study is a pioneering research effort and certainly has limitations. The process of data collection was thorough and systematic, but also had restrictions. Collectively, these limitations emphasize the importance of future scholarship to further understand school psychology internationally.

Challenges encountered during data collection included; locating websites in languages other than English, sifting through the differing job titles for professionals who perform services related to school psychology, as well as obtaining outdated information in the search process.

Having multiple researchers searching for information and communication with international colleagues assisted in the process of obtaining current and accurate information; however, a knowledgeable representative from each country could not always be contacted for input. In future studies, having a representative in each country would be optimal. Presently scholars at the University of California, Santa Barbara are developing an infrastructure to maintain contact with persons knowledgeable of school psychology in each country around the world.

This study provides a foundation that promotes further research in the field of international school psychology. In the future, additional studies can help fill in the information that could not be obtained in the current study, such as updated numbers of school psychologists and school-age children in the 51 countries studied and in other countries for which numbers were not obtained. This study includes results acquired while examining information for the 192 member states of the United Nations. However, Patton (2007) identified countries and territories using data from the United Nations, the International Organization for Standardization, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, the United States State Department List of Independent States in the World, and the List of Dependencies & Areas of Special Sovereignty, thus revealing 272 total countries and territories around the world [193 Independent States, 7 Proto Independent States, 49 Dependencies, 14 Proto Dependencies, 4 Disputed Territories and 5 Antarctic Territories]. Future studies can expand upon the current information on international ratios by including additional countries and/or territories to be examined. It is important to note that the field of school psychology continues to develop around the world, and the current study reflects information that was available as of December 2007. It is the hope of this research team that future studies will build upon the information that has been gathered up to this point in time.

Many countries have a large ratio of school psychologists to school-age children. It would be of interest to document the distribution of school psychologists to children in different countries. For instance, it is anticipated that in those countries where the ratios are largest, that there are likely specific populations of children who have access to such professionals. For instance, one may anticipate that urban areas and affluent areas would be most likely to have such professionals. Moreover, within some countries, only children with special needs have access to services of school psychologists, whereas, in others, school psychologists engage in professional activities to serve all children. In addition to clarifying the subtleties regarding the ratios of school psychologists to students in countries around the world, further research is needed to understand the contextual considerations related to the diversity in the responsibilities of school psychologists in various countries. Such scholarship would provide further information regarding which children have access to services. The current study also raises questions regarding the educational and mental health services offered and available to school-age children around the world. Questions include: What type of special education services are available in each of the countries around the world? What specific mental health services are available to children? What is the educational experience of children with special needs in countries that do not have evidence of school psychology? How does the practice of school psychology differ in countries that have evidence of school psychology?

A related question that warrants further study is; which countries have stated school-psychologist-to-student ratios within guidelines or legislation? And what are those ratios? For instance, since 2006, the maximum school psychologist-to-student ratio advocated by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2006) in the United States, has been 1 school psychologist to 1,000 students. As illustrated in the results of the present study, this ratio is aspirational, as the overall school psychologist-to-student ratio was 1 to 1,506 in 2007.

Moreover, NASP also advocates that school psychologists be prepared and available to provide services to children in preschool, thus, the contemporary school psychologist-to-student ratio would be even greater (1 to 1,631) if the preschool age cohort was included in the calculation. It would be valuable for future scholarship to chronicle the required or aspirational school psychologist-to-student ratios for countries around the globe.

It is hoped that this study will serve as a catalyst for related scholarship and also encourage further communication between international colleagues, aiming to continue to keep this information current. Updates and expansions of this study will be made possible through the website of The International Institute of School Psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara (<http://www.education.ucsb.edu/jimerson/IISP/>).

Conclusions

The current study advances our knowledge of school psychology internationally. Specifically this study provides valuable information regarding two important questions: 1) How many school psychologists are there in each country of the world? and 2) What are the ratios of school psychologists to school-age children in countries around the world? Whereas a complete discussion of the profession of school psychology is beyond the scope of this manuscript, for those interested in further details regarding school psychology services, *The Handbook of International School Psychology* offers extensive information on 43 countries and self-governing territories (Jimerson et al., 2007). Each of the 43 chapters in *The Handbook of International School Psychology* describes: (1) the context of school psychology; (2) the origin, history and current status of school psychology; (3) the infrastructure of school psychology; (4) the preparation of school psychologists; (5) the roles, functions and responsibilities of school psychologists; (6) current issues impacting school psychology and includes; and (7) references.

Considering the ongoing development of school psychology around the world, future research will yield further insights that inform our understanding of school psychology around the world.

Table 1. Ratios of school psychologists to school-age children.

Country	Number of School Psychologists	Number of School-age children (using a standard 12 years of compulsory education)	Number of School-age Children (using country-specific years of compulsory education)	Estimated ratio of school-age children per SP (using a standard 12 years of compulsory education)	Estimated ratio of school-age children per SP^a (using country-specific years of compulsory education)
Israel	2,100	1,336,538	1,225,160	636	583
Denmark	880	815,963	679,969	927	773
Estonia	150	160,763	120,572	1,072	804
Lithuania	400	444,277	333,208	1,111	833
Switzerland	800	983,106	737,329	1,229	922
Turkey	11,327	14,346,637	10,759,978	1,267	950
Spain	3,600	4,657,609	4,269,475	1,294	1,186
Canada*	3,500	4,672,959	4,283,546	1,335	1,224
Scotland*	427	588,347	588,347	1,378	1,378
United States*	32,300	48,649,375	48,649,375	1,506	1,506
Australia*	2,000	3,174,492	2,909,951	1,587	1,455

Netherlands	1,400	2,368,410	2,565,778	1,692	1,833
Finland	300	715,311	596,093	2,384	1,987
Norway	287	711,305	652,029	2,478	2,272
France	3,200	8,905,092	8,163,001	2,783	2,551
Syria	2,000	5,582,110	4,186,582	2,791	2,093
Greece*	400	1,226,554	919,916	3,066	2,300
United Kingdom (England & Wales)*	2,647	8,463,502	8,463,502	3,197	3,197
New Zealand*	200	687,141	687,141	3,436	3,436
Slovakia*	200	727,417	606,181	3,637	3,031
Cyprus*	35	128,038	96,029	3,658	2,744
Japan	3,500	14,527,200	12,106,000	4,151	3,459
Romania*	650	2,805,682	1,870,454	4,316	2,878
Georgia	130	646,599	484,949	4,974	3,730
Malta	11	54,906	50,330	4,991	4,575
Ireland	128	678,142	565,118	5,298	4,415
Hungary	200	1,243,642	1,036,368	6,218	5,182
Puerto Rico	100	670,475	670,475	6,705	6,705
China - Hong Kong*	96	747,360	560,520	7,785	5,839
United Arab	64	518,924	389,193	8,108	6,081

Emirates					
South Africa*	1,178	10,503,224	7,877,418	8,916	6,687
Albania	79	710,366	473,578	8,992	5,995
Germany	982	9,311,526	10,087,487	9,482	10,272
Namibia	18	624,820	520,683	34,712	28,927
Venezuela	150	5,984,445	4,987,037	39,896	33,247
Botswana	12	502,884	419,070	41,907	34,923
Trinidad and Tobago	4	171,210	99,872	42,802	24,968
Nigeria*	500	44,595,383	33,446,537	89,191	66,893
Zimbabwe	32	3,657,974	2,133,818	114,312	66,682
South Korea*	40	7,369,778	5,527,333	184,244	138,183
Eritrea	8	1,685,130	982,993	210,641	122,874
Zambia	10	4,264,127	2,487,408	426,413	248,741
Uganda	18	11,270,518	6,574,469	626,140	365,248
Jamaica	1	730,782	365,391	730,782	365,391
Kenya	15	11,821,516	7,881,011	788,101	525,401
Pakistan	40	48,617,400	20,257,250	1,215,435	506,431
Tanzania	3	13,104,866	7,644,505	4,368,289	2,548,168
<i>Total</i>	<i>76,122</i>				

^aSP is used to represent school psychologist

*found in previous Jimerson, et al., 2008 study to have university programs for school psychology at the doctoral level

Table 2. Top 25 countries regarding the number of school-age children (using 12 years of required education)

Country	School-age Children	Number of School Psychologists	Estimated Ratio of School-age Children per School Psychologist
India	269,865,270	.	.
China	219,126,058	.	.
Indonesia	56,596,401	0	.
United States	48,649,375	32,300	1,506
Pakistan	48,617,400	40	1,215,435
Nigeria	44,595,383	.	.
Bangladesh	38,793,513	0	.
Brazil	38,744,523	.	.
Mexico	26,285,703	.	.
Ethiopia	26,123,587	7	.
Philippines	25,041,144	.	.
Congo, Democratic Republic of	23,763,758	0	.
Egypt	20,576,790	.	.
Vietnam	18,247,621	.	.
Russia	16,289,802	.	.
Japan	14,527,200	3,500	4,151
Iran	14,348,971	.	.

Turkey	14,346,637	11,327	1,267
Sudan	14,086,004	0	.
Tanzania	13,104,866	3	4,368,289
Kenya	11,821,516	15	788,101
Thailand	11,394,160	.	.
Uganda	11,270,518	18	626,140
Afghanistan	11,087,101	0	.
Colombia	10,569,314	0	.
Total:	1,517,037,409		

0 = no evidence of school psychologists in the country

. = estimate not available

Table 3. The following table provides a summary of the total number of school age children (using 12 years of compulsory education) in the world and identifies those with no evidence of school psychology services, those with school psychologist-to-student ratios of greater than 1:10,000 and those with school psychologist-to-student ratios less than 1:10,000.

Total school aged children in the world (using 12 years of education)	1,891,941,962
Total children w/o school psychology (SP)	379,735,114
Total children/ SP ratio less than 1:10,000	939,628,063
Total children/ SP ratio greater than 1:10,000	572,578,785

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