

IRSA - CONGRESSO MUNDIAL DE SOCIOLOGIA RURAL (01/10/2025 A 20/01/2026) - IRSA 02 - THE RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE: LIVING CONDITIONS, WELL-BEING, WORK AND VITAL TRAJECTORIES IN RURAL AREAS

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF THE PLACE OF ORIGIN AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE SELF-IDENTITY OF RURAL YOUTH

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Rural youth migration to urban areas represents a major challenge to the continuity of family farming and sustainable rural development. Traditionally, this process has been explained mainly by economic and structural factors such as income, employment opportunities, education, and access to public services. More recent approaches, however, highlight that migration decisions are also influenced by subjective, symbolic, and identity-related dimensions associated with the territory of origin. In this view, rural areas are not only spaces of production but also territories of meaning, social ties, memories, and emotional well-being. Despite these theoretical advances, qualitative studies examining the

psychological benefits that sustain young people's attachment to rural territories remain scarce, particularly in agrarian reform settlements in Brazil. This study analyzes the psychological benefits perceived by rural youth and explores how these benefits relate to place attachment, identity construction, and decisions to remain, return, or migrate. The research adopted a qualitative approach based on open-ended interviews with young people aged 16 to 29 living in the Itamarati Settlement, located in Ponta Porã, Mato Grosso do Sul, one of the largest agrarian reform settlements in Latin America. The interviews addressed perceptions of the territory, affective bonds, lived experiences, feelings of belonging, and expectations regarding mobility. The empirical material was analyzed using inductive content analysis. Five key dimensions were identified: affective attachment related to family history; tranquility, safety, and quality of life; community relationships and friendships; childhood memories and affective experiences; and contact with nature and rural life. These elements contribute to emotional well-being, strengthen rural identity, and reduce migration intentions. The study concludes that rural youth migration cannot be explained solely by economic factors, as psychosocial and identity-related dimensions play a central role, underscoring the importance of public policies that incorporate subjective and territorial aspects to support rural permanence.

Palavras-chave: rural youth; place attachment; self-identity; psychological benefits; rural–urban migration.