

DIFFERENCES IN DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS AND ACTIONS, SCHOOL
CHARACTERISTICS, AND AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE OF PUBLIC
SCHOOLS BY SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to give honor to God for giving me the strength, the will, and the tenacity to finish strong. Lord you are amazing, so I want to thank YOU for shining through and using me. This dissertation is dedicated to my loving and supportive husband of 21 years, Scoey Morris, Sr... MY ROCK! Your love and understanding have helped me through this journey. You never complained when my long days turned into long nights and my Saturday morning writing time turned into all weekend. You continued to tell me, “Don’t worry about me, just keep pushing!” I will forever be indebted to you and our sons, Scoey “Deuce” and Owen, for understanding my long days and nights of studying and writing. I remember bringing you all together the summer of 2020 about my soon-to-be journey and you have all respected my decision and made the ultimate sacrifice of giving me my space and study time. You all have been nothing short of loving, supportive, and amazing - I love you my Morris Boyz!

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose

The overall purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the influence of social emotional learning on public schools. The first specific purpose was to describe the school characteristics associated with the presence of social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. A second purpose was to determine the extent to which student attendance is related to social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A third purpose was to ascertain the degree to which disciplinary problems and actions are related to social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A final purpose was to determine whether consistencies might be present in the relationships of social emotional learning and student academic achievement.

Method

A causal comparative research design was used in this dissertation (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Archival data from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Surveys on Crime and Safety were downloaded and analyzed.

Findings

Results were inconsistent across the two school years, all three school levels, and across all three articles. In the first study, social emotional learning training was related to elementary students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement. The presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public elementary schools' location, student attendance or discipline problems and actions. In the second

study, statistically significant differences were present in respect to urbanicity and middle school students' thoughts on academic achievement. The presence of social emotional learning training was related to urbanicity and middle school students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement. Social emotional learning training was not related to the public middle schools' student attendance or discipline problems and actions. In the third study, statistically significant differences were present regarding urbanicity, discipline problems and actions, and high school students' thoughts on academic achievement. Social emotional learning training was related to urbanicity, discipline problems and actions, and high school students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement. Social emotional learning training was not related to the public high schools' student attendance. Results from the three articles were congruent with existing literature.

Keywords: Average daily attendance, Disciplinary actions, Disciplinary problems, Elementary schools, Middle schools, High schools, School characteristics, School features, Social emotional learning

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public schools in the United States are faced with many challenges such as, high dropout rates, low academic performance, behavior problems, and poor attendance (Virtanen et al., 2021). Many times, these challenges are interlinked. For instance, Hendron and Kearney (2016) established the presence of relationships between poor attendance and school climate variables such as discipline, structure and order, relationships between students and teachers, and relationships between students. Relationships have been established between low academic performance, the lack of school connectedness, and high absenteeism (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Virtanen et al., 2021).

In response to these challenges, social and emotional learning is progressively being recognized as a remedy for school challenges and an essential factor of academic and life success (Weissberg et al., 2015). According to Scholand (2021), social emotional learning is critical for students as they learn, grow, and connect with others. Children's emotions can either support or hinder their overall school success (Durlak et al., 2011). As students transition from elementary to secondary school, they become more disconnected from school because they lack social-emotional competencies, and this disconnection negatively influences their overall performance (Blum et al., 2004). Student ability to perform well depends on more than classroom instruction (Wallender et al., 2020). Relationships and emotional practices are determining factors of how and what children learn. Accordingly, policymakers, legislators, educational leaders, and other

stakeholders must work collaboratively to address elements of the learning process to benefit all students (Elias et al., 1997).

Schools provide the most support for mental health (Reinke et al., 2011). An intentional systematic approach that involves all students in their own social, emotional, and academic success is critical for public schools to show improvement. When students exhibit social emotional learning skills, they have more optimistic thoughts about themselves and others, fewer behavior problems, lessened emotional distress, improved confidence, greater self-efficacy, more positive relationships with adults and peers, and higher test scores, grades, and attendance (Durlak et al., 2011). Students benefit from social emotional learning when it is a part of their daily routine, experiences, and interactions (Schlund, 2021).

Review of the Literature on Social Emotional Learning in Elementary Schools

A substantial indicator of school disengagement and a persistent educational problem is absenteeism (Virtanen et al., 2021). Principals have cited absenteeism as one of the main concerns that hinders learning and overall student success (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2018). Absenteeism negatively influences many school and postschool outcomes, including school dropout, school disengagement, and low academic achievement (Darmody et al., 2008; Maynard et al., 2012; Maynard et al., 2017; Vaughn et al., 2013; Virtanen et al., 2021). Students who regularly miss school are at-risk of antisocial behaviors, such as selling drugs, using drugs, and fighting (Maynard et al., 2012; Virtanen et al., 2021). Students who are absent also tend to have poorer standardized test scores (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Though excessive absences result in poorer student learning, excessive absences have a much more

profound negative effect on the academic achievement of underrepresented students (e.g., English Learners and students with disabilities) (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020).

In recent years, advocates (e.g., Kanopka et al., 2020) have demanded for school leaders to pay greater attention to noncognitive factors, whole-child education, and programs to support social emotional learning. Many advocates (e.g., Duckworth et al., 2010) point to social emotional learning as a strong predictor of academic achievement and career success. To understand better whether high levels of social emotional learning are associated with high levels of student achievement, Kanopka et al. (2020) conducted an investigation to determine whether changes in students' individual reports of their social emotional learning competencies from one school year to the next school year were predictive of changes in their standardized test scores and attendance. Findings from the investigation were: (a) academic achievement and behavioral outcomes improved when social emotional learning improved; and (b) gains in English language Arts, mathematics, and attendance were related to improvements in social emotional learning.

Social emotional learning continues to grow as an area of focus for teachers, educational leaders, and parents (Tussey & Haas, 2021). Many examples of how students struggle socially and emotionally have been reported in the media (Tussey & Haas, 2021). Because of these social and emotional struggles, educators are charged with incorporating social emotional learning into school and classroom environments, and daily lessons. When elementary schools implement social emotional programs, students benefit academically, while improving attitudes, and experiencing positive classroom environments (Tussey & Haas, 2021). Although social emotional learning provided in schools compete with time for academics, learning social emotional competencies in an

educational environment is a necessary cornerstone for academic achievement and career success (Rosanbalm, 2021). According to Jones et al. (2015), kindergarteners with teachers who have a high rating in social competence are more likely to graduate, attend college, and receive a job in less than 25 years after leaving kindergarten than kindergarteners who have teachers with a low rating in social competence.

When schools have an intentional focus on social emotional learning, 27% of students show an improvement in academic performance, 24% of students show an improvement on social behaviors along with lower levels of distress, and 22% of students show an improvement in conduct (Durlak & Mahoney, 2019). Elementary schools are increasing their attention on social emotional learning and catering to the needs of the whole child rather than focusing solely on academics. Of importance is that the social emotional development of children cannot be the responsibility of educators alone (Tussey & Haas, 2021). According to Tate (2019), schools are making an effort to hire health professionals (e.g., social workers and therapists) to support students socially and emotionally.

Teachers play a key role in creating nurturing learning environments, as well as providing their students with social emotional learning tools to develop social emotional competencies (Bisquerra et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Taylor & Larson, 1999; Waajid et al., 2013). Burgin et al. (2021) conducted a study focused on how selected Ecuadorian elementary school teachers understood and defined social emotional learning. Burgin et al. (2021) determined that: (a) providing teachers with foundational knowledge of social emotional learning could increase successful transformation of students and schools; (b) effective professional development should integrate learning with a focus on social

emotional learning and social emotional learning practices; and (c) elementary teachers' perceptions were that a relationship exists between social emotional learning, resolve, and self-esteem. Insight was obtained in this study regarding how elementary teachers may lack preparation, understanding, and knowledge of the importance of social emotional learning in the classroom. Suggestions from Burgin et al. (2021) were the need for social emotional learning professional development to guide teachers in the integration of what social emotional learning is and how to implement the competencies in their own practices. Elementary teachers receiving social emotional learning professional development would: (a) increase their understanding of social emotional learning which will allow them to respond appropriately to the needs of their students, and (b) increase their knowledge which will allow them to implement social emotional learning strategies as means to improve overall student success and academic achievement (Burgin et al., 2021).

In a recent investigation, Graves et al. (2017) assessed the effects of an intervention that was a culturally adapted social emotional learning program designed for African American male students. When comparing the results of the pre-intervention assessments to the post-intervention assessments, a 16% increase was present in student social-emotional knowledge. Though Graves et al. (2017) noted improvements in student self-competence and self-regulation, their social development aspects (e.g., empathy and responsibility) were not affected by the program. Teachers believed the intervention was effective and relevant but needed a focus on issues specifically relating to African American males. Implications were that school leaders should understand the importance

of choosing social emotional learning intervention programs that are relevant and culturally specific to the student population being served.

Overall, early childhood and elementary teachers support teaching social emotional learning competencies and the promotion of teaching the competencies in elementary classrooms has increased (Steed et al., 2021). According to Bridgeland et al. (2013), early elementary teachers believe that social emotional learning skills are necessary, teachable, and lead to positive outcomes that positively influence attendance and student academic performance. In addition to families being supportive and teaching social emotional learning competencies at home, elementary teachers believe supporting students and their social emotional development is an essential component of their teaching role (Humphries et al., 2018).

Review of the Literature on Social Emotional Learning in Middle Schools

Educational leaders are concerned about chronic absenteeism and improving student attendance (Young et al., 2020). kindergarten through Grade 12 students are absent from school an average of seven days during a regular school year (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), during a typical school year, approximately 14% of students have perfect attendance, 65% are absent 10 days or less, 13% are absent 11 to 18 days, 8% are absent 18 days or more, which is considered chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism is associated with low academic achievement, substance abuse, employment problems, convictions, aggression, other adulthood adjustment problems (Gottfried, 2011; Rocque et al., 2016). Chronic absenteeism also negatively influences school success, behavior choices, and future income and employment (Skinner, 2014). Educational leaders need to develop prevention practices to

improve chronic absenteeism and school climate issues, and to address school connections among students and school staff.

Such prevention practices include the use of social emotional learning. Social emotional learning has been embraced as early as preschool and extended through middle and high schools (Sutton, 2021). Middle school is a challenging time for adolescents due to their developmental needs and unique characteristics as they prepare to transition to high school (Durlak et al., 2011; Roeser et al., 2000; Sutton, 2021). According to Armstrong (2006), middle schools need to provide students with an environment that helps them “negotiate the impact of puberty on their intellectual, social, and emotional lives” (p. 113). Learning how to apply social emotional competencies is the biggest need for young adolescents, not simply earning high standardized exam scores (Armstrong, 2006). Social emotional learning is also essential to educating middle school students as they learn best in environments where positive human relationships are developed and where they feel safe, supported, and included (National Middle School Association, 2010).

Recently in a California statewide analysis of data, student absenteeism patterns and the influence of students being away from school on their social emotional learning were examined (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Results were that absences hurt social emotional development and negatively affected social awareness and self-efficacy (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), the larger number of negative effects occurred in middle schools.

In a recent investigation, MacDonnell et al. (2021) examined the relationship between students’ recollection and reflection of their experiences in a social emotional

character development program and their academic achievement. Also explored was the influence of the social emotional character development program on student-teacher relationships. An increase in student academic achievement occurred from the reflections of the social emotional character development program. MacDonnell et al. (2021) contended that positive social emotional character development program reflections and positive student-teacher relationships positively influence student academic achievement. The findings of social emotional character development reflections being reflective of academic achievement aligns with existing literature where researchers (Durlak et al., 2011; Elias & Haynes, 2008; Zins et al., 2004) have demonstrated positive relationships between social emotional character development programs and academic achievement in low-income areas.

Recently, Merrill et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between social emotional learning growth and academic achievement for approximately 6,000 middle and high school students from the New York City Department of Education. Findings were mixed from the investigation. Middle school students who demonstrated growth in social emotional learning, particularly in academic self-efficacy, self-regulation, and growth mindset, showed improvements in their academic outcomes. Not improved were their interpersonal skills, problem-solving, sense of belonging, or self-advocacy (Merrill et al., 2021). In this particular study, students were surveyed and reported their social emotional learning levels in their supportive after-school programs (e.g., sports and tutoring programs), which may be a different social emotional learning level from their social emotional learning level in school. As a result, Merrill et al. (2021) encouraged researchers to conduct longitudinal studies during the school day to determine whether

social emotional learning levels in the traditional school day influenced student academic growth cumulatively.

In a recent study, Kanopka et al. (2020) examined the relationship between changes in students after self-reporting their social emotional learning skills (e.g., growth mindset, social awareness, self-efficacy, and self-management) and changes in their attendance and academic achievement. Administrative data and self-reported social emotional skills were collected and analyzed from middle school students enrolled in five California school districts between 2015 and 2017. Changes in students' social emotional learning skills were predictive of changes in their English language Arts and mathematics achievement. Relationships between social emotional learning and attendance and achievement outcomes were stable across all ethnic/racial groups of students. The results were congruent with previous research findings about the relationship between student changes in social emotional learning and academic measures (Duckworth et al., 2010; Soland, 2019) by adding an analysis on attendance and state standardized exam outcomes as well as outcomes for growth mindset and social awareness (Kanopka et al., 2020).

According to Kanopka et al. (2020), the importance of social emotional learning has been established; however, the understanding of survey-based, self-reporting of social emotional learning skills is still emerging. Self-reported social emotional learning skills are predictive of students' achievement levels; however, no research studies could be located in which self-reported social emotional learning skills were examined in relationship to changes in other factors such as attendance and state standardized exam performance (Kanopka et al., 2020). Such analyses could be helpful in aiding school

districts in measuring data to assess how the social emotional learning skills of students develop and change over time.

Social emotional skills are strong predictors of educational and career success and social emotional skills control the differences in cognitive ability and academic achievement (Deming, 2017; Duckworth et al., 2010; Farrington et al., 2012; Kautz et al., 2014; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Because social emotional skills are predictive of achievement gains, educational leaders need to generate ways to incorporate social emotional learning for the development of student social emotional competencies. According to Mahoney et al. (2021), a systemic approach to social emotional learning creates equitable learning environments that involve all students in developing competencies socially, emotionally, and academically. An organized learning system is necessary through partnerships that include schools, families, and communities to enhance student development (Mahoney et al., 2021). Establishing conditions that incorporate social emotional learning requires policies, resources, and actions that are aligned at the local, state, and district levels.

Review of the Literature on Social Emotional Learning in High Schools

Improving student attendance is a concern for educational leaders nationwide (Young et al., 2020). In a regular school year, kindergarten through Grade 12 students are absent from school an average of seven days (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Chronic absenteeism occurs more often at the high school level than in early schools and in middle schools (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), students in Grades 10 through 12 experience the most absences, with Grade 12 students being absent an average of 10.8 days during a regular school year. In a typical

school year, approximately 14% of students have perfect attendance, 65% are absent 10 days or less, 13% are absent 11 to 18 days, 8% are absent 18 days or more, which is considered chronic absenteeism (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020).

Skinner (2014) discussed the effects of absenteeism on school success, poor behavior choices, and future income and employment. Chronic absenteeism is associated with low academic achievement, substance abuse, employment problems, convictions, aggression, other adulthood adjustment problems (Gottfried, 2011; Rocque et al., 2016). According to McKee and Caldarella (2016), one of the biggest predictors of student success for middle school students progressing to Grade 9 is regular school attendance.

School climate is likely to create conditions that are favorable to reducing chronic absenteeism (Young et al., 2020). Hendron and Kearney (2016) conducted a study about adolescents with chronic absenteeism. A relationship was established between attendance problems and school climate variables, such as discipline, relationships between teachers and students, and family engagement. These school climate variables are typical challenges for schools in under-resourced neighborhoods (Young et al., 2020). Considering challenges for schools located in under-resourced neighborhoods, Spencer (2009) suggested social emotional support and early referral for students experiencing chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism prevention practices need to be implemented to improve school climate issues and to address school connections among students and school staff. These programs are essential, given the documented relationships between academic achievement, low absenteeism, and school connectedness (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

Such prevention to improve chronic absenteeism and school climate issues, and to address school connections among students and school staff include the practice of social emotional learning. Social emotional learning has been embraced as early as preschool and extended through high schools (Sutton, 2021). Applying social emotional competencies is the biggest need for youth, not simply performing well on high-stakes testing (Armstrong, 2006). To succeed in school and to become employable, healthy, and civically-engaged, young people need a blend of academic skills and other key behaviors and mindsets (Merrill et al., 2021). According to Merrill et al. (2021), growing interest is present in the relationship between social emotional learning and academic success. Students who are taught social emotional learning competencies exhibit higher academic outcomes, higher levels of happiness, higher levels of health, more positive relationships with peers, and less feelings of not belonging (Durlak et al, 2011; Nagaoka et al., 2015; Walton & Cohen, 2011).

In a recent investigation, Merrill et al. (2021) analyzed data on approximately 6,000 middle and high school students from the New York City Department of Education to determine relationships between their social emotional learning growth and academic achievement. Findings from the investigation were mixed. High school students who showed growth in social emotional learning, particularly in academic self-efficacy, self-regulation, and growth mindset, had improvements in their academic outcomes. No improvements, however, were demonstrated in their interpersonal skills, problem-solving, sense of belonging, or self-advocacy (Merrill et al., 2021). Because this investigation was conducted in a supportive after-school environment and in a short time frame, Merrill et al. (2021) suggested future studies be longitudinal in nature and

conducted during the school day. A longitudinal study conducted during a school day would provide researchers and educational leaders the opportunity to understand how social emotional learning capacity changes over time and how the changes influence student academic growth cumulatively (Merrill et al., 2021).

In another recent investigation, Moceris (2015) conducted a systematic and empirical study about how behavioral ratings and teacher comments from student report cards were related to social emotional learning, academic grades, and standardized exams. Approximately 1,000 report cards from a large ethnically/racially diverse New Jersey high school were examined. According to Moceris (2015), report card comments have a large effect size on student letter grades and a small effect size on student attendance. Students who earned grades in the B- to C+ range missed approximately three weeks of class, scored in the proficient range on standardized exams, and received one report card comment each quarter. Negative comments were more associated with lower student letter grades than were positive comments. The presence of social emotional learning was associated with higher academic grades and the absence of social emotional learning was associated with lower academic grades. Moceris (2015) suggested future school practices include a transformation of school report cards which include teachers' ratings of students' social emotional learning skills which may increase the teachers' focus on social emotional learning instruction. As the teachers' focus on social emotional learning increases, the overall school climate will show improvements (Moceris, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The demand for social emotional learning has become more evident over the last few decades (Durlak et al., 2011). According to Schlund (2021), school principals across the United States have made it clear that schools need social emotional learning to deepen learning and to support students emotionally. Although school leaders have expressed the need for social emotional learning, they also have face obstacles to its implementation. Such obstacles include lack of funding, inadequate professional development, challenging district priorities, and integration of social emotional learning while addressing mental health and trauma (Schlund, 2021). In March 2020, many schools were forced to shut down physical campuses and shift to remote learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), when schools closed in March 2020, student absenteeism increased which negatively influenced academic and social emotional learning outcomes of students.

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the influence of social emotional learning on public schools. The first specific purpose was to describe the school characteristics associated with the presence of social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. A second purpose was to determine the extent to which student attendance is related to social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A third purpose was to ascertain the degree to which disciplinary problems and actions are related to social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A final purpose was to determine

whether consistencies might be present in the relationships of social emotional learning and student academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

A systemic approach to social and emotional learning creates equitable learning environments that involve all students in developing competencies socially, emotionally, and academically (Mahoney et al., 2021). Social emotional competencies lead to positive outcomes at school and in real life. Establishing conditions that incorporate social emotional learning requires policies, resources, and actions that are aligned at the local, state, and district levels. According to Mahoney et al. (2021), an organized learning system is necessary through partnerships that include schools, families, and communities to enhance student development. Results obtained from the three articles that were conducted in this journal-ready dissertation will offer school district leaders and policymakers information about the presence of disparities in students' outcomes regarding social emotional learning.

In this journal-ready dissertation, public school characteristics, discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance were measured according to social emotional learning practices by using the data from the results presented in the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). The SSOCS is mandated by the federal government and gathers data from public school principals in efforts to promote school safety (Diliberti et al., 2019). The survey is produced by the National Center of Education Statistics to collect information from the perspective of school staff, on topics related to crime, the presence and activities of security staff, disciplinary actions, and practices to prevent and reduce crime. Present was a focus on

whether public schools that incorporate social emotional learning practices differ from schools that do not teach social emotional learning practices in their characteristics (e.g., regular public school, charter school, magnet school), discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance.

Theoretical Framework

The social emotional learning framework was one of several frameworks developed to understand and track the positive benchmarks of the development of adolescents (Ross & Tolan, 2018). Emphasized in the social emotional learning theory is positive development which emerged from the emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995). Suggested in this emotional intelligence theory is that non-cognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills for life success (Zins et al., 2007). According to Elias et al. (1997), the emotional intelligence theory also provides evidence for social emotional intelligence as the ability to be effective in all essential areas of life, including school.

Educational leaders have implemented social emotional learning curricula that mirror the framework established by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning model (Ross & Tolan, 2018). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning model includes competencies that can be beneficial to students and school staff and focus on “self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making” (Ross & Tolan, 2018, p. 1172). The fundamentals of social emotional learning described by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning will serve as the theoretical framework of this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms, which were utilized in this journal-ready dissertation, were defined to assist readers in the understanding of the content of this analysis

Average Daily Attendance

The average daily attendance is the percentage of students present in one school year (Diliberti et al., 2019).

Disciplinary Actions

Principals provided counts of a variety of disciplinary actions (e.g., removal with no continuing school services for the remainder of the school year, transfer to specialized schools, out-of-school suspension, and other disciplinary action) taken in response to disciplinary problems (Diliberti et al., 2019).

Disciplinary Problems

Principals reported the total number of students in their school who committed various offenses such as use or possession of firearm/explosive devices, use or possession of a weapon, or physical attacks or fights (Diliberti et al., 2019).

School Characteristics

Principals reported the type of school they service (e.g., regular public school, charter school, magnet school); percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch; the number of students who are considered limited English proficiency; the number of students serviced in special education; the number of students who are male; the number of students who scored below the 15th percentile on standardized exams; the number of students who are likely to attend college after high school

graduation; and the number of students who consider academic achievement to be important (Diliberti et al., 2019).

School Features

In this journal-ready dissertation, the term, school features, were used to refer to the total school enrollment, the number of daily classroom changes, the level of crime in the area of the school, the number of transfer students after the start of the year, and the average daily attendance (Diliberti et al., 2019).

School Survey on Crime and Safety

According to Diliberti et al. (2019), the School Survey on Crime and Safety is mandated by the federal government and gathers data from public school principals in efforts to promote school safety. The survey is produced by the National Center of Education Statistics to collect information, from the perspective of the schools, on topics related to crime, the presence and activities of security staff, disciplinary actions, and practices to prevent and reduce crime.

Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning is the process of developing abilities to understand and control emotions, set and achieve goals, make mature decisions, and build and maintain positive relationships (Elias et al., 1997).

Literature Review Search Procedures

For this journal-ready dissertation, the literature regarding social emotional learning practices as it relates to disciplinary problems and actions, school characteristics, and average daily attendance of public schools was examined. The following phrases were used to narrow the research focus: *social emotional learning*, *attendance*, *truancy*,

poor attendance, public schools, elementary school, middle school, and high school. All searches related to the literature review were identified using the following databases: Educational Resource Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), APA PsycArticles, APA PsycInfo, Education Full Text, and Educational Administration Abstracts.

Key words searches for “social emotional learning” yielded 8,047 results and by narrowing the search to include “attendance”, the search was reduced to 173 results. Adding “truancy” and “SEL” to that search resulted in 117 results. When “public schools” and “poor attendance” or “truancy” were searched, 475 results were displayed. When “social emotional learning” and “elementary” were searched, 1468 results were displayed. When “social emotional learning” and “middle schools” were searched, 461 results were displayed. When “social emotional learning” and “high schools” were searched, 682 results were displayed. During all searches, publication dates were restricted to the past two decades, from 2002 through 2022.

Delimitations

This journal-ready dissertation contains three studies limited to data from principals who responded to the School Survey on Crime and Safety for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. Specifically examined in this journal-ready dissertation was whether consistencies were present in the relationships of social emotional learning and school level (i.e., elementary, middle, high schools). Data were delimited to schools located in the United States. Specifically examined in this journal-ready dissertation was the degree to which differences were present in school characteristics, disciplinary problems and actions, and student attendance, in public schools as influenced by social

emotional learning practices. Lastly, the data analyzed were for two school years: 2015-2016 and 2017-2018.

Limitations

In this journal-ready dissertation, the effects of social emotional learning and urbanicity on public schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of students' academic achievement were addressed. As a result, key limitations are present for the study. Only quantitative data were analyzed. Data included only public schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of students' academic achievement with social emotional learning training compared to public schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of students' academic achievement without social emotional learning training. When reporting about social emotional learning training, participants were asked questions to be answered with either a Yes or a No. Accordingly, other variables cannot be added or eliminated as factors that contribute to determine the type of social emotional learning program present or not present.

Another limitation is the use of a causal-comparative research design which is common when analyzing archival data. Data included the effect of social emotional learning and urbanicity on public schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of students' academic achievement from the School Survey on Crime and Safety for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years only in the United States. Data were analyzed for participants who responded to the School Survey on Crime and Safety for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. Although data were

collected by National Center of Education Statistics through the School Survey on Crime and Safety, possibilities exist of inaccurate reporting.

Assumptions

The major assumption made for this journal-ready dissertation is that the data reported to the School Survey on Crime and Safety were accurately reported. It is assumed that school principals accurately reported data on topics related to their school characteristics and features, average daily attendance, disciplinary actions, disciplinary problems, and the practice of social emotional learning. Any errors in such reporting could result in inaccurate results.

Organization of the Study

For this journal-ready dissertation, three journal-ready articles were generated. In the first article, the effect of social emotional learning and urbanicity on public elementary schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of students' academic achievement for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were examined. In the second article, the effect of social emotional learning and urbanicity on public middle schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of students' academic achievement for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were investigated. In the last article, the effect of social emotional learning and urbanicity on public high schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of students' academic achievement for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were addressed.

This journal-ready dissertation is composed of five chapters. Chapter I will include the background of the study, literature review, statement of the problem, purpose

of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, definition of terms, literature review search procedures, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and organization of the study. Chapter II is the framework for the first journal-ready article regarding social emotional learning training and urbanicity have on public elementary schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of student academic achievement. Chapter III is the second journal-ready investigation about social emotional learning training and urbanicity have on public middle schools' average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of student' academic achievement. The third journal-ready article is discussed in Chapter IV about social emotional learning training and urbanicity have on public high school average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and the importance of student academic achievement. Finally, Chapter V includes the results of the three articles.

CHAPTER II

DIFFERENCES IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS
AND ACTIONS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BY
URBANICITY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS THAT OFFERED SOCIAL
EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

Ascertained in this investigation was the effect of social emotional learning training on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public elementary schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. Across the two years, social emotional learning training was determined to be unrelated to public elementary schools' location, student attendance or discipline problems and actions. The presence of social emotional learning training, however, was determined to be related to the importance of academic achievement. Implications for policy and for practice, along with recommendations for future research, were made.

Keywords: Average daily attendance, Disciplinary actions, Disciplinary problems, Elementary schools, School characteristics, School features, Social emotional learning

DIFFERENCES IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND ACTIONS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BY URBANICITY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS THAT OFFERED SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

A substantial indicator of school disengagement and a persistent educational problem is absenteeism (Virtanen et al., 2021). Principals have cited absenteeism as one of the main concerns that hinders learning and overall student success (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2018). Absenteeism negatively influences many school and postschool outcomes, including school dropout, school disengagement, and low academic achievement (Darmody et al., 2008; Maynard et al., 2012; Maynard et al., 2017; Vaughn et al., 2013; Virtanen et al., 2021). Students who regularly miss school are at-risk of antisocial behaviors, such as selling drugs, using drugs, and fighting (Maynard et al., 2012; Virtanen et al., 2021). Students who are absent also tend to have poorer standardized test scores (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Though excessive absences result in poorer student learning, excessive absences have a much more profound negative effect on the academic achievement of underrepresented students (e.g., English Learners and students with disabilities) (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020).

In recent years, advocates (e.g., Kanopka et al., 2020) have demanded for school leaders to pay greater attention to noncognitive factors, whole-child education, and programs to support social emotional learning. Many advocates (e.g., Duckworth et al., 2010) point to social emotional learning as a strong predictor of academic achievement and career success. To understand better whether high levels of social emotional learner are associated with high levels of student achievement, Kanopka et al. (2020) conducted

an investigation to determine whether changes in students' individual reports of their social emotional learning competencies from one school year to the next school year were predictive of changes in their standardized test scores and attendance. Findings from the investigation were: (a) academic achievement and behavioral outcomes improved when social emotional learning improved, and (b) gains in English language Arts, mathematics, and attendance were related to improvements in social emotional learning.

Social emotional learning continues to grow as an area of focus for teachers, educational leaders, and parents (Tussey & Haas, 2021). Many examples of how students struggle socially and emotionally have been reported in the media (Tussey & Haas, 2021). Because of these social and emotional struggles, educators are charged with incorporating social emotional learning into school and classroom environments, and daily lessons. When elementary schools implement social emotional programs, students benefit academically, while improving attitudes, and experiencing positive classroom environments (Tussey & Haas, 2021). Although social emotional learning provided in schools compete with time for academics, learning social emotional competencies in an educational environment is a necessary cornerstone for academic achievement and career success (Rosanbalm, 2021). According to Jones et al. (2015), kindergarteners with teachers who have a high rating in social competence are more likely to graduate, attend college, and earn a job in less than 25 years after leaving kindergarten than kindergarteners who have teachers with a low rating in social competence.

When schools have an intentional focus on social emotional learning, 27% of students show an improvement in academic performance, 24% of students show an improvement on social behaviors along with lower levels of distress, and 22% of students

show an improvement in conduct (Durlak & Mahoney, 2019). Elementary schools are increasing their attention on social emotional learning and catering to the needs of the whole child rather than focusing solely on academics. Of importance is that the social emotional development of children cannot be the responsibility of educators alone (Tussey & Haas, 2021). According to Tate (2019), schools are making an effort to hire health professionals (e.g., social workers and therapists) to support students socially and emotionally.

Teachers play a key role in creating nurturing learning environments, as well as providing their students with social emotional learning tools to develop social emotional competencies (Bisquerra et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Taylor & Larson, 1999; Waajid et al., 2013). Burgin et al. (2021) conducted a study into how selected Ecuadorian elementary school teachers understood and defined social emotional learning. Burgin et al. (2021) determined that: (a) providing teachers with foundational knowledge of social emotional learning could increase successful transformation of students and schools; (b) effective professional development should integrate learning with a focus on social emotional learning and social emotional learning practices; and (c) elementary teachers' perceptions were that a relationship exists between social emotional learning, resolve, and self-esteem. Insight was obtained in this study regarding how elementary teachers may lack preparation, understanding, and knowledge of the importance of social emotional learning in the classroom. Suggestions from Burgin et al. (2021) were the need for social emotional learning professional development to guide teachers in the integration of what social emotional learning is and how to implement the competencies in their own practices. Elementary teachers receiving social emotional learning

professional development would: (a) increase their understanding of social emotional learning which will allow them to respond appropriately to the needs of their students, and (b) increase their knowledge which will allow them to implement social emotional learning strategies as means to improve overall student success and academic achievement (Burgin et al., 2021).

In a recent investigation, Graves et al. (2017) assessed the effects of an intervention that was a culturally adapted social emotional learning program designed for African American male students. When comparing the results of the pre-intervention assessments to the post-intervention assessments, a 16% increase was present in student social-emotional knowledge. Graves et al. (2017) indicated an increase in student self-competence and self-regulation; however, other social development aspects (e.g., empathy and responsibility) were not affected by the program. Teachers believed the intervention was effective and relevant but needed a focus on issues specifically relating to African American males. Implications were that school leaders should understand the importance of choosing social emotional learning intervention programs that are relevant and culturally specific to the student population being served.

Overall, early childhood and elementary teachers support teaching social emotional learning competencies and the promotion of teaching the competencies in elementary classrooms has increased (Steed et al., 2021). According to Bridgeland et al. (2013), early elementary teachers believe that social emotional learning skills are necessary, teachable, and lead to positive outcomes that positively influence attendance and student academic performance. In addition to families being supportive and teaching social emotional learning competencies at home, elementary teachers believe supporting

students and their social emotional development is an essential component of their teaching role (Humphries et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The popularity of social emotional learning has increased as evidenced by the number of social emotional learning curricula, initiatives, and programs (Schlund, 2021). After the Covid-19 pandemic, schools have been facing many challenges, resulting in the need for social emotional learning to help students connect with others, learn, and grow (Schlund, 2021). The need for social emotional learning has become more clear and evident over the last few decades. According to Schlund (2021), many school leaders are asking the question, “how do I get started with social emotional learning?” Clarifying the meaning of social emotional learning and its benefits is a good start for educational leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of social emotional learning in public elementary schools in the United States. The first specific purpose was to describe school characteristics associated with the presence of social emotional learning in public elementary schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. A second purpose was to determine the extent to which student attendance is related to social emotional learning in public elementary schools for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A third purpose was to identify the degree to which disciplinary problems and actions are related to social emotional learning in public elementary schools for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A final purpose was to ascertain whether

consistencies might be present in the relationships of social emotional learning and public elementary school students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

Social emotional competencies lead to positive outcomes at school and in real life. Strong relationships exist between student academic success and social emotional learning (Schlund, 2021). A systemic approach to social emotional learning creates equitable learning environments that involve all students in developing competencies socially, emotionally, and academically (Mahoney et al., 2021). Establishing conditions that incorporate social emotional learning requires policies, resources, and actions that are aligned at the local, state, and district levels. According to Mahoney et al. (2021), an organized learning system is necessary through partnerships that include schools, families, and communities to enhance student development. Findings from this article will offer school district leaders and policymakers information about the presence of disparities in public elementary school student outcomes regarding social emotional learning.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What percent of public elementary schools have offered social emotional training for students?; (b) What is the difference in the average daily attendance rate of public elementary schools that offered social emotional training for students compared to public elementary schools that did not offer social emotional training by urbanicity (i.e., city, suburb, town, and rural) ?; (c) What is the difference in discipline problems and actions of public elementary schools that offered social emotional learning training for students compared

to public elementary schools that did not offer social emotional training by urbanicity?; and (d) What is the effect of social emotional training on the importance of public elementary school students' academic achievement compared to public elementary schools that did not offer social emotional training by urbanicity? These research questions were answered separately for two school years.

Method

Research Design

For this study, a causal comparative, ex facto research design was used (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Archival data from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Surveys on Crime and Safety were downloaded and analyzed. Because data were archival survey data, neither the independent variable of social emotional learning training nor the dependent variables of average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and academic achievement could be altered (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

Participants and Instrumentation

Participants in this study were public elementary school principals who participated in a school safety survey in which they were queried about safety and security. The School Survey on Crime and Safety is mandated by the federal government and gathers data from public school principals in efforts to promote school safety (Diliberti et al., 2019). According to Diliberti et al. (2019), the survey is produced by the National Center of Education Statistics to collect information, from the perspective of the schools, on topics related to crime, the presence and activities of security staff, disciplinary actions, and practices to prevent and reduce crime. Participants were asked questions in a Yes or a No format.

For the purpose of this study, the school level was elementary schools. Public school characteristics, discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance were measured according to social emotional learning practices by using the data from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety. Present was a focus on whether public elementary schools that incorporate social emotional learning practices differ from elementary schools that do not teach social emotional learning practices in their characteristics (i.e., regular public school, charter school, magnet school), discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance.

Archival data were collected from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety Datasets and converted to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data. A codebook was used to recode the data from the following survey questions: (a) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school have any activities that included social emotional learning for students (e.g., social skills, anger management, mindfulness)?; (b) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, removal of a student with no services available?; (c) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, transfer of a student to a specialized school?; (d) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, out-of-school suspension?; and (e) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, in-school suspension? Respondents completed the above survey questions by answering the aforementioned questions with either a Yes or a No. The following survey questions were open-ended questions that required respondents to report a percentage: (a)

During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, what was your school's average daily attendance?; and (b) What is your best estimate of the percentage of your current students who consider academic achievement to be very important?

Results

Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether statistically significant differences were present between the average daily attendance rate of public elementary schools that offered social emotional training for students compared to public elementary schools that did not offer social emotional training by urbanicity, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which these data were normally distributed. Although not all assumptions were met, Field (2018) contends that the parametric independent samples *t*-test procedure is sufficiently robust to withstand violations of its underlying assumptions. Accordingly, parametric independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to answer the first two research questions.

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Average Daily Attendance

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in the average daily attendance rate by the social emotional training status of public elementary schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $t(514) = -0.89, p = .37$. Regardless of whether social emotional training was offered, public elementary schools had similar average daily attendance rates, within 0.67% of each other. Table 2.1 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 2.1 about here

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in the average daily attendance rate by the social emotional training status of public elementary schools, $t(669) = -0.46, p = .64$. Regardless of whether social emotional training was provided, public elementary schools had similar average daily attendance rates, within 0.57% of each other. Revealed in Table 2.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2017-2018 school year.

 Insert Table 2.2 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Academic Achievement

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in the importance of academic achievement in schools by social emotional training status, a statistically significant difference was present, $t(514) = 2.30, p = .02$, Cohen's $d = 0.23$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Public elementary schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, approximately 5%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public elementary schools that did not offer such training. Table 2.3 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

 Insert Table 2.3 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, the difference approached, but did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance, regarding the importance of

academic achievement by social emotional training status, $t(669) = 1.85, p = .065$. Public elementary schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, approximately 6%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public elementary schools that did not offer such training. Delineated in Table 2.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Insert Table 2.4 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Discipline Problems and Actions

In this section, results will be presented by discipline problems and actions. Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in out of school suspension without services by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.004, p = .95$. Public elementary schools had similar discipline problems and actions percentages, within 0.3% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Table 2.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 2.5 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year for out of school suspension without services by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, the difference approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(1) =$

3.24, $p = .07$. Public elementary schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage of students, 12.6% higher, who were issued out of school suspension without services compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Presented in Table 2.6 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

 Insert Table 2.6 about here

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year for in-school suspension with services by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.63$, $p = .43$. Public elementary schools had similar in-school suspension with services percentages, within 3.4% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Table 2.7 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

 Insert Table 2.7 about here

Concerning the 2017-2018 school year for in-school suspension with services by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, the difference approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(1) = 3.26$, $p = .07$. Public elementary schools that did not offer social emotional learning training had a lower percentage of students, 13.4% lower, who were issued in-school suspension with services compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training. Revealed in Table 2.8 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Insert Table 2.8 about here

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year for loss of bus privileges by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, the difference was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 1.19, p = .28$. Public elementary schools had similar loss of bus privileges percentages, within 4.4% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Delineated in Table 2.9 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 2.9 about here

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year for loss of bus privileges by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.08, p = .78$. Public elementary schools had similar loss of bus privileges, within 1.6% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Table 2.10 contains the descriptive statistics for loss of bus privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 2.10 about here

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in loss of student privileges by the social emotional status of public elementary

schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.01, p = .91$. Public elementary schools had similar loss of student privileges, within 0.3% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Revealed in Table 2.11 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 2.11 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year for loss of student privileges by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.06, p = .80$. Public elementary schools had similar loss of student privileges percentages, within 1% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional learning training was provided. Presented in Table 2.12 are the descriptive statistics for loss of student privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 2.12 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Urbanicity

In this section, results will be presented by urbanicity (i.e., city, suburb, town, and rural). Regarding the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present by urbanicity by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, the difference approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(3) = 6.78, p = .08$. As revealed in Table 2.13, of public elementary schools located in the city, 49% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to

schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public elementary schools located in the suburb, more than half, 54.2%, offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public elementary schools located in a town, 39.2% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural elementary schools, 28% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training.

Insert Table 2.13 about here

Concerning the 2017-2018 school year for the extent to which differences were present by urbanicity by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(3) = 3.09, p = .38$. Regardless of their location, more than 80% of schools offered social emotional learning training. Table 2.14 contains the descriptive statistics for urbanicity for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 2.14 about here

Discussion

In this investigation, the degree to which student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity were affected by social emotional learning training in public elementary

schools was addressed. To answer the previously discussed research questions, inferential statistical procedures were used. Results will now be summarized.

Specifically examined were the extent to which differences were present in public elementary schools that offered social emotional learning training compared to public elementary schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Analyses were conducted separately for average daily attendance, academic achievement, discipline problems and actions, and urbanicity, as well as separately for each of two school years (i.e., 2015-2016 and 2017-2018). Across the two years, the presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public elementary schools' location, student attendance or discipline problems and actions; however, the presence of social emotional learning training did have an effect on students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Connections with Existing Literature

In this national investigation, the effect social emotional learning has on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public elementary schools was established. The effect of social emotional learning has not been well documented in the extant literature. Durlak and Mahoney (2019) established that when schools have an intentional focus on social emotional learning, students show an improvement in conduct and lower levels of stress. Kanopka et al. (2020) demonstrated that student academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, and attendance improved and the outcomes were related to social emotional learning.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

In this multiyear analysis, an emphasis was placed on the social emotional learning theory, which is the positive development that emerged from the emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995). Suggested in this emotional intelligence theory is that noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills for life success. Because the emotional intelligence theory suggests that noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills, this investigation was focused on noncognitive factors that contribute to student academic outcomes (i.e., attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement).

Implications for Policy and Practice

In this investigation, essential findings were provided regarding social emotional learning training and overall student success. First, school district administrators are encouraged to pay greater attention to noncognitive factors to focus on whole-child education and implement required social emotional learning training for all district employees. Second, all teachers should receive social emotional learning professional development to increase their understanding to respond appropriately to students' needs and to implement social emotional learning strategies as a means to improve overall student success and academic achievement.

Third, school administrators should incorporate social emotional learning into school and classroom environments, and daily lessons. Finally, all educators should focus their attention on social emotional learning to provide their students with social emotional learning tools to develop social emotional competencies. Social emotional learning not

only increases students' thoughts about academic achievement, but social emotional learning also has lasting effects for students beyond the walls of the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

As established in this empirical investigation, the importance of academic achievement by students was present in schools that offered social emotional learning training and must be addressed by researchers in future studies. First, researchers are encouraged to study potential effects social emotional learning has on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public middle schools. Secondly, researchers are encouraged to examine the potential effects of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public high schools. Finally, social emotional learning training looks different from school to school. Researchers are encouraged to evaluate the different types of social emotional learning programs to determine which programs are the most impactful and have effects on student attendance, disciplinary problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Conclusion

In this multiyear analysis, the degree to which student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity were influenced by the presence of social emotional learning training in public elementary schools for the 2015-2015 and 2017-2018 school years was addressed. The presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public elementary schools' location, student attendance or discipline problems and actions;

however, the presence of social emotional learning training did have an effect on students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement. An argument could be made that as school district and campus administrators understand the effect social emotional training has on student outcomes, more schools will offer social emotional learning training in years to come.

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Table 2.1

Descriptive Statistics for the Average Daily Attendance Rate of Public Elementary Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	375	94.15	8.79
Did Not Offer Training	141	94.82	2.90

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.2

Descriptive Statistics for the Average Daily Attendance Rate of Public Elementary Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	622	93.67	8.64
Did Not Offer Training	49	94.24	3.98

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.3

Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Students Who Believe Academic Achievement is Important in Public Elementary Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	375	75.51	20.08
Did Not Offer Training	141	70.71	23.93

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.4

Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Students Who Believe Academic Achievement is Important in Public Elementary Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	622	73.38	22.47
Did Not Offer Training	49	67.14	25.50

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.5

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	190	50.7
Did Not Offer Training	71	50.4

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.6

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	421	67.7
Did Not Offer Training	27	55.1

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.7

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	284	75.7
Did Not Offer Training	102	72.3

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.8

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	299	48.1
Did Not Offer Training	17	34.7

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.9

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	301	80.3
Did Not Offer Training	107	75.9

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.10

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	505	81.2
Did Not Offer Training	39	79.6

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.11

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	350	93.3
Did Not Offer Training	132	93.6

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.12

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools
by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	578	92.9
Did Not Offer Training	46	93.9

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.13

Descriptive Statistics for Public Elementary Schools by Urbanicity and Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Urbanicity and Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
City		
Offered Training	108	74.5
Did Not Offer Training	37	25.5
Suburb		
Offered Training	155	77.1
Did Not Offer Training	46	22.9
Town		
Offered Training	39	69.6
Did Not Offer Training	17	30.4
Rural		
Offered Training	73	64.0
Did Not Offer Training	41	36.0

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 2.14

Descriptive Statistics for Public Elementary Schools by Urbanicity and Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Urbanicity and Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
City		
Offered Training	206	94.5
Did Not Offer Training	12	5.5
Suburb		
Offered Training	233	93.2
Did Not Offer Training	17	6.8
Town		
Offered Training	72	90.0
Did Not Offer Training	8	10.0
Rural		
Offered Training	111	90.2
Did Not Offer Training	12	9.8

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

CHAPTER III

DIFFERENCES IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS
AND ACTIONS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BY
URBANICITY OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS THAT OFFERED SOCIAL EMOTIONAL
LEARNING PROGRAMS: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

Ascertained in this investigation was the effect of social emotional learning training on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public middle schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. Across the two years, social emotional learning training was determined to be unrelated to public middle schools' location, student attendance, discipline problems, or actions. The presence of social emotional learning training, however, was related to urbanicity as well as the importance of academic achievement. Implications for policy and for practice, along with recommendations for future research, were made.

Keywords: Average daily attendance, Disciplinary actions, Disciplinary problems, Middle schools, School characteristics, School features, Social emotional learning

DIFFERENCES IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND ACTIONS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BY URBANICITY OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS THAT OFFERED SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

Educational leaders are concerned about chronic absenteeism and improving student attendance (Young et al., 2020). Kindergarten through Grade 12 students are absent from school an average of seven days during a regular school year (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), during a typical school year, approximately 14% of students have perfect attendance, 65% are absent 10 days or less, 13% are absent 11 to 18 days, 8% are absent 18 days or more, which is considered chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism is associated with low academic achievement, substance abuse, employment problems, convictions, aggression, other adulthood adjustment problems (Gottfried, 2011; Rocque et al., 2016). Chronic absenteeism also negatively influences school success, behavior choices, and future income and employment (Skinner, 2014). Educational leaders need to develop prevention practices to improve chronic absenteeism and school climate issues, and to address school connections among students and school staff.

Such prevention practices include the use of social emotional learning. Social emotional learning has been embraced as early as preschool and extended through middle and high schools (Sutton, 2021). Middle school is a challenging time for adolescents due to their developmental needs and unique characteristics as they prepare to transition to high school (Durlak et al., 2011; Roeser et al., 2000; Sutton, 2021). According to Armstrong (2006), middle schools need to provide students with an environment that

helps them “negotiate the impact of puberty on their intellectual, social, and emotional lives” (p. 113). Learning how to apply social emotional competencies is the biggest need for young adolescents, not simply earning high standardized exam scores (Armstrong, 2006). Social emotional learning is also essential to educating middle school students as they learn best in environments where positive human relationships are developed and where they feel safe, supported, and included (National Middle School Association, 2010).

Recently in a California statewide analysis of data, student absenteeism patterns and the influence of students being away from school on their social emotional learning were examined (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Results were that absences hurt social emotional development and negatively affected social awareness and self-efficacy (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), the larger number of negative effects occurred in middle schools.

In a recent investigation, MacDonnell et al. (2021) examined the relationship between students’ recollection and reflection of their experiences in a social emotional character development program and their academic achievement. Also explored was the influence of the social emotional character development program on student-teacher relationships. An increase in student academic achievement occurred from the reflections of the social emotional character development program. MacDonnell et al. (2021) contended that positive social emotional character development program reflections and positive student-teacher relationships positively influence student academic achievement. The findings of social emotional character development reflections being reflective of academic achievement aligns with existing literature where researchers (Durlak et al.,

2011; Elias & Haynes, 2008; Zins et al., 2004) have demonstrated positive relationships between social emotional character development programs and academic achievement in low-income areas.

Recently, Merrill et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between social emotional learning growth and academic achievement for approximately 6,000 middle and high school students from the New York City Department of Education. Findings were mixed from the investigation. Middle school students who demonstrated growth in social emotional learning, particularly in academic self-efficacy, self-regulation, and growth mindset, showed improvements in their academic outcomes. Not improved were their interpersonal skills, problem-solving, sense of belonging, or self-advocacy (Merrill et al., 2021). In this particular study, students were surveyed and reported their social emotional learning levels in their supportive after-school programs (e.g., sports and tutoring programs), which may be a different social emotional learning level from their social emotional learning level in school. As a result, Merrill et al. (2021) encouraged researchers to conduct longitudinal studies during the school day to determine whether social emotional learning levels in the traditional school day influenced student academic growth cumulatively.

In a recent study, Kanopka et al. (2020) examined the relationship between changes in students after self-reporting their social emotional learning skills (e.g., growth mindset, social awareness, self-efficacy, and self-management) and changes in their attendance and academic achievement. Administrative data and self-reported social emotional skills were collected and analyzed from middle school students enrolled in five California school districts between 2015 and 2017. Changes in students' social emotional

learning skills were predictive of changes in their English language Arts and mathematics achievement. Relationships between social emotional learning and attendance and achievement outcomes were stable across all ethnic/racial groups of students. The results were congruent with previous research findings about the relationship between student changes in social emotional learning and academic measures (Duckworth et al., 2010; Soland, 2019) by adding an analysis on attendance and state standardized exam outcomes as well as outcomes for growth mindset and social awareness (Kanopka et al., 2020).

According to Kanopka et al. (2020), the importance of social emotional learning has been established; however, the understanding of survey-based, self-reporting of social emotional learning skills is still emerging. Self-reported social emotional learning skills are predictive of students' achievement levels; however, no research studies could be located in which self-reported social emotional learning skills were examined in relationship to changes in other factors such as attendance and state standardized exam performance (Kanopka et al., 2020). Such analyses could be helpful in aiding school districts in measuring data to assess how the social emotional learning skills of students develop and change over time.

Social emotional skills are strong predictors of educational and career success and social emotional skills control the differences in cognitive ability and academic achievement (Deming, 2017; Duckworth et al., 2010; Farrington et al., 2012; Kautz et al., 2014; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Because social emotional skills are predictive of achievement gains, educational leaders need to generate ways to incorporate social emotional learning for the development of student social emotional competencies. According to Mahoney et al. (2021), a systemic approach to social emotional learning

creates equitable learning environments that involve all students in developing competencies socially, emotionally, and academically. An organized learning system is necessary through partnerships that include schools, families, and communities to enhance student development (Mahoney et al., 2021). Establishing conditions that incorporate social emotional learning requires policies, resources, and actions that are aligned at the local, state, and district levels.

Statement of the Problem

Demonstrated by the recent number of social emotional learning programs, curricula, and initiatives, the popularity of social emotional learning has increased over the last few decades and the need has become more clear (Schlund, 2021). After the Covid-19 pandemic, schools have faced many challenges, resulting in the need for social emotional learning to help students connect with others, learn, and grow (Schlund, 2021). According to Schlund (2021), many educational leaders are asking the question, “how do I get started with social emotional learning?” Clarifying the meaning of social emotional learning and its benefits is a good start for educational leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of social emotional learning on public middle school students. Initially described were school characteristics associated with the presence of social emotional learning in public middle schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. The second purpose was to ascertain the extent to which student attendance was related to social emotional learning in public middle schools for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A third purpose was to identify the degree to which disciplinary problems and actions were related to social

emotional learning in public middle schools for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. The final purpose was to determine whether consistencies were present in the relationships of social emotional learning and public middle school students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

In March 2020, COVID-19 forced many schools to shut down physical campuses and to shift to remote learning (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). During the transition to remote learning, many students did not engage fully in learning opportunities. According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), due to the intensive disruption of COVID-19, schools across the United States were forced to answer the urgent question, "How much social emotional development loss and learning loss have students endured due to COVID-19?" (p. 3). Findings from this article will offer school district leaders and policymakers information about the presence of disparities in public middle school student outcomes regarding social emotional learning.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What percent of public middle schools have offered social emotional training for students?; (b) What is the difference in the average daily attendance rate of public middle schools that offered social emotional training for students by urbanicity (i.e., city, suburb, town, and rural)?; (c) What is the difference in discipline problems and actions of public middle schools that offered social emotional learning training for students by urbanicity?; and (d) What is the effect of social emotional training on the importance of public middle school students'

academic achievement by urbanicity? These research questions were answered separately for two school years.

Method

Research Design

A causal comparative, ex facto research design was used for this study (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Archival data from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety were downloaded and analyzed. Neither the independent variable of social emotional learning training nor the dependent variables of average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and academic achievement can be altered because data are archival survey data (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

Participants and Instrumentation

Participants in this study were public middle school principals who participated in a school safety survey that solicited input about safety and security. The School Survey on Crime and Safety is mandated by the federal government and gathers data from public school principals in efforts to promote school safety (Diliberti et al., 2019). According to Diliberti et al. (2019), the survey is produced by the National Center of Education Statistics to collect information, from the perspective of the schools, on topics related to crime, the presence and activities of security staff, disciplinary actions, and practices to prevent and reduce crime. Participants were asked questions to be answered with either a Yes or a No.

For the purpose of this study, school level was based on the middle school level. Public school characteristics, discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance were measured according to social emotional learning practices by using the

data from the results presented in the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety. Present was a focus on whether public middle schools that incorporate social emotional learning practices differ from middle schools that do not teach social emotional learning practices in their characteristics (e.g., regular public school, charter school, magnet school), discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance.

Archival data were collected from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety Datasets and converted to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data. A codebook was used to recode the data from the following survey questions: (a) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school have any activities that included social emotional learning for students (e.g., social skills, anger management, mindfulness)?; (b) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, removal of a student with no services available?; (c) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, transfer of a student to a specialized school?; (d) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, out-of-school suspension?; and (e) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, in-school suspension? Respondents completed the above survey questions by answering the aforementioned questions with either a Yes or a No. The following survey questions were open-ended questions that required respondents to report a percentage: (a) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, what was your school's average daily attendance?; and (b) What is your best estimate of the percentage of your current students who consider academic achievement to be very important?

Results

Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether statistically significant differences were present between the average daily attendance rate of public middle schools that offered social emotional training for students compared to public middle schools that did not offer social emotional training by urbanicity, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which these data were normally distributed. Although not all assumptions were met, Field (2018) contends that the parametric independent samples *t*-test procedure is sufficiently robust to withstand violations of its underlying assumptions. Accordingly, parametric independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to answer the first two research questions.

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Average Daily Attendance

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in the average daily attendance rate by the social emotional training status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $t(717) = -0.77, p = .44$. Regardless of whether social emotional training was offered, public middle schools had similar average daily attendance rates, within 0.58% of each other. Table 3.1 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 3.1 about here

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in the average daily attendance rate by the social emotional training status of public middle schools, $t(973) = -1.32, p = .19$. Regardless of whether social emotional

training was provided, public middle schools had similar average daily attendance rates, within 0.89% of each other. Revealed in Table 3.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 3.2 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Academic Achievement

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in the importance of academic achievement in schools by social emotional training status, a statistically significant difference was present, $t(717) = 2.60$, $p = .01$, Cohen's $d = 0.21$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Public middle schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, approximately 5%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public middle schools that did not offer such training. Table 3.3 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 3.3 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in the importance of academic achievement by social emotional training status, $t(973) = 1.22$, $p = .22$. Public middle schools that offered social emotional learning training had a similar percentage, within 2.5% of each other, of students who believed

that academic achievement was important to public middle schools that did not offer such training. Delineated in Table 3.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Insert Table 3.4 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Discipline Problems and Actions

In this section, results will be presented by discipline problems and actions. Because the independent variables and dependent variables were categorical in nature, Pearson chi-square procedures were used. Its underlying procedures were checked and were met (Field, Year, 2018). Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in out of school suspension without services by social emotional training status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 1.06, p = .30$. Public middle schools had similar discipline problems and actions percentages, within 4.2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Table 3.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 3.5 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year for out of school suspension without services by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 2.62, p = .11$. Public middle schools that offered social emotional learning training had a similar percentage of their students, within 5.6% of

each other, who were issued out of school suspension without services to middle schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Presented in Table 3.6 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

 Insert Table 3.6 about here

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year for in-school suspension with services by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 1.26, p = .26$. Public middle schools had similar in-school suspension with services percentages, within 3.1% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Table 3.7 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

 Insert Table 3.7 about here

Concerning the 2017-2018 school year for in-school suspension with services by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.71, p = .40$. Public middle schools had similar percentages, within 3.9% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Revealed in Table 3.8 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

 Insert Table 3.8 about here

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year for loss of bus privileges by the social emotional status of public middle schools, the difference was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 0.23, p = .63$. Public middle schools had similar loss of bus privileges percentages, within 1.2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Delineated in Table 3.9 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 3.9 about here

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year for loss of bus privileges by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.42, p = .52$. Public middle schools had similar loss of bus privileges, within 1.8% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Table 3.10 contains the descriptive statistics for loss of bus privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 3.10 about here

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in loss of student privileges by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.00, p = .98$. Public middle schools had equal percentages of loss of student privileges, regardless of whether

social emotional training was provided. Revealed in Table 3.11 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

 Insert Table 3.11 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year for loss of student privileges by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.02, p = .88$. Public middle schools had similar loss of student privileges percentages, within 0.3% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional learning training was provided. Presented in Table 3.12 are the descriptive statistics for loss of student privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

 Insert Table 3.12 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Urbanicity

In this section, results will be presented by urbanicity (i.e., city, suburb, town, and rural). Regarding the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present by urbanicity by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(3) = 22.43, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .18$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). As revealed in Table 3.13, of public middle schools located in the city, 52.6% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public middle schools located in the suburb, more than half, 53.6%, offered social emotional

learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public middle schools located in a town, 25.4% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural middle schools, 15.6% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training.

Insert Table 3.13 about here

Concerning the 2017-2018 school year for the extent to which differences were present by urbanicity by the social emotional status of public middle schools, a statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(3) = 8.99, p = .03$, Cramer's $V = .10$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Regardless of their location, more than 65% of schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Regarding public middle schools located in the city, 68.2% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public middle schools located in the suburb, 80.4%, offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public middle schools located in a town, 74.6.4% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural middle schools, 64.8% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to

schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Table 3.14 contains the descriptive statistics for urbanicity for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 3.14 about here

Discussion

In this investigation, the degree to which student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity were influenced by the presence or absence of social emotional learning training in public middle schools was addressed. To answer the previously discussed research questions, inferential statistical procedures were used. Results will now be summarized.

Specifically examined was the extent to which differences were present in public middle schools that offered social emotional learning training compared to public middle schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Analyses were conducted separately for average daily attendance, academic achievement, discipline problems and actions, and urbanicity, as well as separately for each of two school years (i.e., 2015-2016 and 2017-2018). Across the two years, the presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public middle schools' student attendance or discipline problems and actions. Readers should note, however, that social emotional learning training was related to school location and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Connections with Existing Literature

In this national investigation, the relationship of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public middle schools was addressed. The effect of social emotional learning has not been well documented in the extant literature. Durlak and Mahoney (2019) established that when schools have an intentional focus on social emotional learning, students show an improvement in academic performance along with lower levels of distress, and conduct. Kanopka et al. (2020) demonstrated that student academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, and attendance improved and the outcomes were related to social emotional learning.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

In this multiyear analysis, an emphasis was placed on the social emotional learning theory, which is the positive development that emerged from the emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995). Suggested in this emotional intelligence theory is that noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills for life success. Because noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills, this investigation was focused on noncognitive factors that contribute to student academic outcomes (i.e., attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement).

Implications for Policy and Practice

In this investigation, implications may be derived for policy and for practice. With respect to policy, first, school district administrators are encouraged to pay greater attention to noncognitive factors to focus on whole-child education and implement

required social emotional learning training for all district employees. Second, all teachers should receive social emotional learning professional development to increase their understanding to respond appropriately to students' needs and to implement social emotional learning strategies as means to improve overall student success and academic achievement.

Concerning practice, school administrators should incorporate social emotional learning into school and classroom environments, and daily lessons. Finally, all educators should focus their attention on social emotional learning to provide their students with social emotional learning tools to develop social emotional competencies. Social emotional learning not only increases students' thoughts about academic achievement, but social emotional learning can have lasting effects for students beyond the walls of the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

As established in this empirical investigation, several recommendations for future research can be generated. First, researchers are encouraged to examine the potential effects social emotional learning might have on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement at the elementary school level. Second, researchers are encouraged to extend this investigation to the high school level. Third, because social emotional learning training might differ one school setting to another school setting, researchers are encouraged to evaluate the different types of social emotional learning programs to determine which programs are the most effective in terms of student attendance, disciplinary problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Conclusion

In this multiyear analysis, the degree to which student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity were influenced by social emotional learning training in public middle schools for the 2015-2015 and 2017-2018 school years was addressed. The presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public middle schools' student attendance or discipline problems and actions; however, the presence of social emotional learning training was related to school location and to students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

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Table 3.1

Descriptive Statistics for the Average Daily Attendance Rate of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	509	93.82	9.96
Did Not Offer Training	210	94.40	6.41

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.2

Descriptive Statistics for the Average Daily Attendance Rate of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	845	93.76	7.65
Did Not Offer Training	130	94.65	3.05

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.3

Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Students Who Believe Academic Achievement is Important in Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	509	70.18	22.29
Did Not Offer Training	210	65.41	22.65

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.4

Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Students Who Believe Academic Achievement is Important in Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	845	69.26	22.22
Did Not Offer Training	130	66.67	25.03

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.5

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	259	50.9
Did Not Offer Training	98	46.7

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.6

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	711	84.1
Did Not Offer Training	102	78.5

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.7

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	445	87.4
Did Not Offer Training	177	84.3

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.8

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	533	63.1
Did Not Offer Training	77	59.2

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.9

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	457	89.8
Did Not Offer Training	186	88.6

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.10

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	763	90.3
Did Not Offer Training	115	88.5

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.11

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	487	95.7
Did Not Offer Training	201	95.7

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.12

Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	821	97.2
Did Not Offer Training	126	96.9

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.13*Descriptive Statistics for Public Middle Schools by Urbanicity and Social Emotional**Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Urbanicity and Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
City		
Offered Training	145	76.3
Did Not Offer Training	45	23.7
Suburb		
Offered Training	212	76.8
Did Not Offer Training	64	23.2
Town		
Offered Training	74	62.7
Did Not Offer Training	44	37.3
Rural		
Offered Training	78	57.8
Did Not Offer Training	57	42.2

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.14*Descriptive Statistics for Public Middle Schools by Urbanicity and Social Emotional**Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Urbanicity and Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
City		
Offered Training	195	84.1
Did Not Offer Training	37	15.9
Suburb		
Offered Training	351	90.2
Did Not Offer Training	38	9.8
Town		
Offered Training	131	87.3
Did Not Offer Training	19	12.7
Rural		
Offered Training	168	82.4
Did Not Offer Training	36	17.6

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

CHAPTER IV

DIFFERENCES IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND ACTIONS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BY URBANICITY OF HIGH SCHOOLS THAT OFFERED SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

Ascertained in this investigation was the effect of social emotional learning training on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public high schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. Across the two years, social emotional learning training was determined to be unrelated to public high schools' student attendance. The presence of social emotional learning training, however, was related to urbanicity, discipline problems and actions, as well as the importance of academic achievement. Implications for policy and for practice, along with recommendations for future research, were made.

Keywords: Average daily attendance, Disciplinary actions, Disciplinary problems, High schools, School characteristics, School features, Social emotional learning

DIFFERENCES IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND ACTIONS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BY URBANICITY OF HIGH SCHOOLS THAT OFFERED SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS: A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

Improving student attendance is a concern for educational leaders nationwide (Young et al., 2020). In a regular school year, kindergarten through Grade 12 students are absent from school an average of seven days (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Chronic absenteeism occurs more often at the high school level than in early schools and in middle schools (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). According to Santibanez and Guarino (2020), students in Grades 10 through 12 experience the most absences, with Grade 12 students being absent an average of 10.8 days during a regular school year. In a typical school year, approximately 14% of students have perfect attendance, 65% are absent 10 days or less, 13% are absent 11 to 18 days, 8% are absent 18 days or more, which is considered chronic absenteeism (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020).

Skinner (2014) discussed the effects of absenteeism on school success, poor behavior choices, and future income and employment. Chronic absenteeism is associated with low academic achievement, substance abuse, employment problems, convictions, aggression, other adulthood adjustment problems (Gottfried, 2011; Rocque et al., 2016). According to McKee and Caldarella (2016), one of the biggest predictors of student success for middle school students progressing to Grade 9 is regular school attendance.

School climate is likely to create conditions that are favorable to reducing chronic absenteeism (Young et al., 2020). Hendron and Kearney (2016) conducted a study about adolescents with chronic absenteeism. A relationship was established between attendance

problems and school climate variables, such as discipline, relationships between teachers and students, and family engagement. These school climate variables are typical challenges for schools in under-resourced neighborhoods (Young et al., 2020).

Considering challenges for schools located in under-resourced neighborhoods, Spencer (2009) suggested social emotional support and early referral for students experiencing chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism prevention practices need to be implemented to improve school climate issues and to address school connections among students and school staff. These programs are essential, given the documented relationships between academic achievement, low absenteeism, and school connectedness (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

Such prevention to improve chronic absenteeism and school climate issues, and to address school connections among students and school staff include the practice of social emotional learning. Social emotional learning has been embraced as early as preschool and extended through high schools (Sutton, 2021). Applying social emotional competencies is the biggest need for youth, not simply performing well on high-stakes testing (Armstrong, 2006). To succeed in school and to become employable, healthy, and civically-engaged, young people need a blend of academic skills and other key behaviors and mindsets (Merrill et al., 2021). According to Merrill et al. (2021), growing interest is present in the relationship between social emotional learning and academic success. Students who are taught social emotional learning competencies exhibit higher academic outcomes, higher levels of happiness, higher levels of health, more positive relationships with peers, and less feelings of not belonging (Durlak et al, 2011; Nagaoka et al., 2015; Walton & Cohen, 2011).

In a recent investigation, Merrill et al. (2021) analyzed data on approximately 6,000 middle and high school students from the New York City Department of Education to determine relationships between their social emotional learning growth and academic achievement. Findings from the investigation were mixed. High school students who showed growth in social emotional learning, particularly in academic self-efficacy, self-regulation, and growth mindset, had improvements in their academic outcomes. No improvements, however, were demonstrated in their interpersonal skills, problem-solving, sense of belonging, or self-advocacy (Merrill et al., 2021). Because this investigation was conducted in a supportive after-school environment and in a short time frame, Merrill et al. (2021) suggested future studies be longitudinal in nature and conducted during the school day. A longitudinal study conducted during a school day would provide researchers and educational leaders the opportunity to understand how social emotional learning capacity changes over time and how the changes influence student academic growth cumulatively (Merrill et al., 2021).

In another recent investigation, Moceris (2015) conducted a systematic and empirical study about how behavioral ratings and teacher comments from student report cards were related to social emotional learning, academic grades, and standardized exams. Approximately 1,000 report cards from a large ethnically/racially diverse New Jersey high school were examined. According to Moceris (2015), report card comments have a large effect size on student letter grades and a small effect size on student attendance. Students who earned grades in the B- to C+ range missed approximately three weeks of class, scored in the proficient range on standardized exams, and received one report card comment each quarter. Negative comments were more associated with lower

student letter grades than were positive comments. The presence of social emotional learning was associated with higher academic grades and the absence of social emotional learning was associated with lower academic grades. Moceris (2015) suggested future school practices include a transformation of school report cards which include teachers' ratings of students' social emotional learning skills which may increase the teachers' focus on social emotional learning instruction. As the teachers' focus on social emotional learning increase, the overall school climate will show improvements (Moceris, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Over the last few decades, the popularity of social emotional learning programs, curricula, and initiatives has increased and the need to incorporate social emotional learning in schools has become more clear (Schlund, 2021). According to Schlund (2021), the need for social emotional learning to help students connect with others, learn, and grow has been identified as a way for schools to face the many challenges initiated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of the need for social emotional learning in schools, the question "how do I get started with social emotional learning?" is being asked by many educational leaders. A good start for educational leaders is to clarify the meaning of social emotional learning and its benefits.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect social emotional learning has in public high schools in the United States. The first specific purpose was to describe the school characteristics associated with the presence of social emotional learning in public high schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. A second purpose was to ascertain the extent to which student attendance is related to social emotional

learning in public high schools for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A third purpose was to identify the degree to which disciplinary problems and actions are related to social emotional learning in public high schools for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A final purpose was to examine whether consistencies might be present in the relationships of social emotional learning and public high school students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

COVID-19 forced many schools to shut down physical campuses and to shift to remote learning in March 2020, (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Due to the intensive disruption of COVID-19, schools across the United States were forced to answer the urgent question, "How much social-emotional development loss and learning loss have students endured due to COVID-19?" (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020, p. 3). Recently, student absenteeism patterns and the influence of students being away from school had on their social emotional learning were examined through a California statewide analysis (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020). Absences were determined to hurt social emotional development and negatively affected social awareness and self-efficacy (Santibanez & Guarino, 2020).

According to researchers (Deming, 2017; Duckworth et al., 2010; Farrington et al., 2012; Kautz et al., 2014; Yeager & Dweck, 2012), social emotional skills are strong predictors of educational and career success and social emotional skills control the differences in cognitive ability and academic achievement. It is essential for school systems to develop ways to incorporate social emotional learning for the development of student social emotional competencies because social emotional skills predict student

achievement gains. A systemic approach to social emotional learning creates equitable learning environments that involve all students in developing competencies socially, emotionally, and academically (Mahoney et al., 2021).

According to Mahoney et al. (2021), an organized learning system is necessary through partnerships that include schools, families, and communities to enhance student development. Policies, resources, and actions need to be aligned at the local, state, and district levels prior to establishing conditions that incorporate social emotional learning. Findings from this article will offer school district leaders and policymakers information about the presence of disparities in public high school student outcomes regarding social emotional learning.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What percent of public high schools have offered social emotional training for students?; (b) What is the difference in the average daily attendance rate of public high schools that offered social emotional training for students by urbanicity(i.e., city, suburb, town, and rural)?; (c) What is the difference in discipline problems and actions of public high schools that offered social emotional learning training for students by urbanicity?; and (d) What is the effect of social emotional training on the importance of public high school students' academic achievement by urbanicity? These research questions were addressed for two school years.

Method

Research Design

In this study, a causal comparative, ex facto research design was present because of the use of pre-existing data (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Already existing data from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety was downloaded and analyzed. In such a study, neither the independent variable of social emotional learning training nor the dependent variables of average daily attendance, discipline problems and actions, and academic achievement can be altered because data are archival survey data (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

Participants and Instrumentation

Participants in this study were public high school principals who participated in a school safety survey that solicited input about safety and security. The School Survey on Crime and Safety is mandated by the federal government and gathers data from public school principals in efforts to promote school safety (Diliberti et al., 2019). According to Diliberti et al. (2019), the survey is produced by the National Center of Education Statistics to collect information, from the perspective of the schools, on topics related to crime, the presence and activities of security staff, disciplinary actions, and practices to prevent and reduce crime. Participants were asked questions to be answered with either a Yes or a No.

For the purpose of this study, school level was based on the high school level. Public school characteristics, discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance were measured according to social emotional learning practices by using the data from the results presented in the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime

and Safety. Present was a focus on whether public high schools that incorporate social emotional learning practices differ from high schools that do not teach social emotional learning practices in their characteristics (e.g., regular public school, charter school, magnet school), discipline problems and actions, and average daily attendance.

Archival data were collected from the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 School Survey on Crime and Safety Datasets and converted to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) data. A codebook was used to recode the data from the following survey questions: (a) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school have any activities that included social emotional learning for students (e.g., social skills, anger management, mindfulness)?; (b) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, removal of a student with no services available?; (c) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, transfer of a student to a specialized school?; (d) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, out-of-school suspension?; and (e) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, did your school allow for the use of the disciplinary action, in-school suspension? Respondents completed the above survey questions by answering the aforementioned questions with either a Yes or a No. The following survey questions were open-ended questions that required respondents to report a percentage: (a) During the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school year, what was your school's average daily attendance?; and (b) What is your best estimate of the percentage of your current students who consider academic achievement to be very important?

Results

Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether statistically significant differences were present between the average daily attendance rate of public high schools that offered social emotional training for students compared to public high schools that did not offer social emotional training by urbanicity, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which these data were normally distributed. Although not all assumptions were met, Field (2018) contends that the parametric independent samples *t*-test procedure is sufficiently robust to withstand violations of its underlying assumptions. Accordingly, parametric independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to answer the first two research questions.

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Average Daily Attendance

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in the average daily attendance rate by the social emotional training status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $t(772) = 0.49$, $p = .63$. Regardless of whether social emotional training was offered, public high schools had similar average daily attendance rates, within 0.29% of each other. Table 4.1 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

 Insert Table 4.1 about here

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in the average daily attendance rate by the social emotional training status of public high schools, $t(995) = -0.20$, $p = .84$. Regardless of whether social emotional

training was provided, public high schools had similar average daily attendance rates, within 0.12% of each other. Revealed in Table 4.2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2017-2018 school year.

 Insert Table 4.2 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Academic Achievement

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in the importance of academic achievement in schools by social emotional training status, a statistically significant difference was present, $t(772) = 4.25$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.31$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Public high schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, approximately 6%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public high schools that did not offer such training. Table 4.3 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

 Insert Table 4.3 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the importance of academic achievement by social emotional training status, $t(995) = 3.80$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.31$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Public high schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, 6.4%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important to

public high schools that did not offer such training. Delineated in Table 4.4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

 Insert Table 4.4 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Discipline Problems and Actions

In this section, results will be presented by discipline problems and actions. Because the independent variables and dependent variables were categorical in nature, Pearson chi-square procedures were used. Its underlying procedures were checked and were met (Field, 2018). Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in out of school suspension without services by social emotional training status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(1) = 10.39, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .12$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). High schools that did not offer social emotional learning training had a higher percentage of students, 11.6%, who were issued out of school suspension without services compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training. Table 4.5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

 Insert Table 4.5 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year for out of school suspension without services by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.66, p = .42$. Public high schools that offered social

emotional learning training had a similar percentage of their students, within 2.1% of each other, who were issued out of school suspension without services to high schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Presented in Table 4.6 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Insert Table 4.6 about here

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year for in-school suspension with services by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.08$, $p = .78$. Public high schools had similar in-school suspension with services percentages, within 0.8% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Table 4.7 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 4.7 about here

Concerning the 2017-2018 school year for in-school suspension with services by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(1) = 9.74$, $p = .002$, Cramer's $V = .10$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). High schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage of students, 12.2%, who were issued in-school suspension with services compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Revealed in Table 4.8 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Insert Table 4.8 about here

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year for loss of bus privileges by the social emotional status of public high schools, the difference was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 2.23, p = .14$. Public high schools had similar loss of bus privileges percentages, within 4.2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Delineated in Table 4.9 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 4.9 about here

Regarding the 2017-2018 school year for loss of bus privileges by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(1) = 6.11, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .08$, a below small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Public high schools that did not offer social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, 7.8%, compared to public high schools that offer social emotional learning training. Table 4.10 contains the descriptive statistics for loss of bus privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 4.10 about here

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present in loss of student privileges by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 1.71, p = .19$. Public high schools had similar percentages, within 2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Revealed in Table 4.11 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Insert Table 4.11 about here

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year for loss of student privileges by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was not present, $\chi^2(1) = 0.24, p = .62$. Public high schools had similar loss of student privileges percentages, within 0.8% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional learning training was provided. Presented in Table 4.12 are the descriptive statistics for loss of student privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 4.12 about here

Results for Social Emotional Learning and Urbanicity

In this section, results will be presented by urbanicity (i.e., city, suburb, town, and rural). Regarding the 2015-2016 school year for the extent to which differences were present by urbanicity by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(3) = 36.46$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .18$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). As revealed in Table 4.13, of public high schools located in the city, 26.4% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public high schools located in the suburb, 25.2% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public high schools located in a town, 10.8% more schools did not offer social emotional learning training compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training. Of public rural high schools, 24.6% more schools did not offer social emotional learning training compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training.

 Insert Table 4.13 about here

Concerning the 2017-2018 school year for the extent to which differences were present by urbanicity by the social emotional status of public high schools, a statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(3) = 14.51$, $p = .002$, Cramer's $V = .12$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Regardless of their location, more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Regarding public high schools located in the city, 68.2% more schools

offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public high schools located in the suburb, 69.8% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public high schools located in a town, 52.8% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural high schools, 48% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Table 4.14 contains the descriptive statistics for urbanicity for the 2017-2018 school year.

Insert Table 4.14 about here

Discussion

In this investigation, the degree to which student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity were influenced by the presence or absence of social emotional learning training in public high schools was addressed. Inferential statistical procedures were used to answer the previously mentioned research questions. Results will now be summarized.

Specifically examined was the extent to which differences were present in public high schools that offered social emotional learning training compared to public high schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Analyses were conducted separately for average daily attendance, academic achievement, discipline problems and actions, and urbanicity, as well as separately for each of two school years (i.e., 2015-2016

and 2017-2018). Across the two years, the presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public high schools' student attendance. Readers should note, however, that social emotional learning training was related to school location, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Connections with Existing Literature

In this national investigation, the relationship of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public high schools was addressed. The effect of social emotional learning has not been well documented in the extant literature. Durlak and Mahoney (2019) established that when schools have an intentional focus on social emotional learning, students show an improvement in academic performance along with lower levels of distress, and conduct. Kanopka et al. (2020) demonstrated that student academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, and attendance improved and the outcomes were related to social emotional learning.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

In this multiyear analysis, an emphasis was placed on the social emotional learning theory, which is the positive development that emerged from the emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995). Suggested in this emotional intelligence theory is that noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills for life success. Because noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills, this investigation was focused on noncognitive factors that contribute to student academic outcomes (i.e., attendance,

discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement).

Implications for Policy and Practice

In this investigation, implications may be derived for policy and for practice. With respect to policy, first, school district administrators are encouraged to pay greater attention to noncognitive factors to focus on whole-child education and implement required social emotional learning training for all district employees. Second, all teachers should receive social emotional learning professional development to increase their understanding to respond appropriately to students' needs and to implement social emotional learning strategies as means to improve overall student success and academic achievement.

Concerning practice, school administrators should incorporate social emotional learning into school and classroom environments, and daily lessons. Finally, all educators should focus their attention on social emotional learning to provide their students with social emotional learning tools to develop social emotional competencies. Social emotional learning not only increases students' thoughts about academic achievement, but social emotional learning can have lasting effects for students beyond the walls of the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

As established in this empirical investigation, several recommendations for future research can be generated. First, researchers are encouraged to address potential effects of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public elementary

schools. Secondly, researchers are encouraged to examine potential effects of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public middle schools. Finally, social emotional learning training looks different from school to school. Researchers are encouraged to evaluate the different types of social emotional learning programs to determine which programs are the most effective in terms of student attendance, disciplinary problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Conclusion

In this multiyear analysis, the degree to which student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity were influenced by social emotional learning training in public high schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years was addressed. The presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public high schools' student attendance; however, the presence of social emotional learning training was related to school location, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

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Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for the Average Daily Attendance Rate of Public High Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	426	92.56	6.82
Did Not Offer Training	348	92.27	9.28

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics for the Average Daily Attendance Rate of Public High Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	808	92.11	7.18
Did Not Offer Training	189	92.23	7.12

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Students Who Believe Academic Achievement is Important in Public High Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	426	76.36	19.00
Did Not Offer Training	348	70.27	20.86

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.4

Descriptive Statistics for the Percent of Students Who Believe Academic Achievement is Important in Public High Schools by Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year

Training Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
Offered Training	808	73.41	20.63
Did Not Offer Training	189	67.01	21.98

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.5

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	183	43.0
Did Not Offer Training	190	54.6

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.6

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	718	88.9
Did Not Offer Training	164	86.8

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.7

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	343	80.5
Did Not Offer Training	283	81.3

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.8

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	526	65.1
Did Not Offer Training	100	52.9

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.9

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	341	80.0
Did Not Offer Training	293	84.2

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.10

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	642	79.5
Did Not Offer Training	165	87.3

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.11

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	411	96.5
Did Not Offer Training	329	94.5

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.12

*Descriptive Statistics for Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools by
Social Emotional Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
Offered Training	772	95.5
Did Not Offer Training	179	94.7

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.13*Descriptive Statistics for Public High Schools by Urbanicity and Social Emotional**Learning Training Status for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Urbanicity and Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
City		
Offered Training	132	63.2
Did Not Offer Training	77	36.8
Suburb		
Offered Training	184	62.6
Did Not Offer Training	110	37.4
Town		
Offered Training	50	44.6
Did Not Offer Training	62	55.4
Rural		
Offered Training	60	37.7
Did Not Offer Training	99	62.3

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 4.14*Descriptive Statistics for Public High Schools by Urbanicity and Social Emotional**Learning Training Status for the 2017-2018 School Year*

Urbanicity and Training Status	<i>n</i>	%
City		
Offered Training	212	84.1
Did Not Offer Training	40	15.9
Suburb		
Offered Training	321	84.9
Did Not Offer Training	57	15.1
Town		
Offered Training	107	76.4
Did Not Offer Training	33	23.6
Rural		
Offered Training	168	74.0
Did Not Offer Training	59	26.0

Note. The *n* refers to the number of public school principals who responded to the survey.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the influence of social emotional learning on public schools. The first specific purpose was to describe the school characteristics associated with the presence of social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. A second purpose was to determine the extent to which student attendance is related to social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A third purpose was to ascertain the degree to which disciplinary problems and actions are related to social emotional learning for the 2015-2016 and the 2017-2018 school years. A final purpose was to determine whether consistencies might be present in the relationships of social emotional learning and student academic achievement.

In the first study, social emotional learning training status was examined in terms of its relationships with student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public elementary schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. In the second study, the relationships of social emotional learning training were addressed with respect to student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public middle schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. In the third study, social emotional learning training status was analyzed with respect to student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public high schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. In this chapter, the results of each

of the three articles will be discussed and analyzed. Implications for policy and practice are discussed and recommendations for future research are provided.

Summary of Results for Study One

In the first investigation, social emotional learning training status was examined in relation to student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public elementary schools. Archival data for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were addressed. Data from the School Survey on Crime and Safety were analyzed with respect to social emotional learning training status in elementary schools.

In both school years, a statistically significant difference was not present in the average daily attendance rate by social emotional learning training status. For the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided, public elementary schools had similar average daily attendance rates. Across the two years, social emotional learning training was determined to be unrelated to student attendance.

A statistically significant difference was present in the importance of academic achievement in schools by social emotional training status in the 2015-2016 school year. Concerning the 2015-2016 school year, public elementary schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, approximately 5%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public elementary schools that did not offer such training. In the 2017-2018 school year, schools that offered social emotional training had a higher percentage, approximately 6%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public elementary schools that did not

offer such training. The difference approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance.

A statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding out of school suspension without services by the social emotional training status. Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, public elementary schools had similar out of school suspension percentages, within 0.3% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public elementary schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage of students, 12.6% higher, who were issued out of school suspension without services compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. The difference approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance.

A statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding in-school suspension by the social emotional training status. Concerning the 2015-2016 school year, public elementary schools had similar in-school suspension with services percentages, within 3.4% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public elementary schools that did not offer social emotional learning training had a lower percentage of students, 13.4% lower, who were issued in-school suspension with services compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training.

In the two school years, a statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding loss of bus privileges by the social emotional training status. Concerning the 2015-2016 school year, public elementary schools had similar loss of bus privileges percentages, within 4.4% of each other, regardless of

whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public elementary schools had similar loss of bus privileges, within 1.6% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided.

A statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding loss of student privileges by the social emotional training status. Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, public elementary schools had similar loss of student privileges, within 0.3% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public elementary schools had similar loss of student privileges percentages, within 1% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional learning training was provided. As revealed in Table 5.1, the percentage difference increased in the 2017-2018 school year from the 2015-2016 school year with respect to discipline problems and actions in public elementary schools that offered social emotional training compared to public elementary schools that did not offer such training, with the exception of loss of bus privileges.

Table 5.1

Summary of Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Elementary Schools that Offered Social Emotional Learning Training for the 2015-2016 School Year and the 2017-2018 School Year

Disciplinary Actions	Statistically Significant	% Difference in Schools That Did Not Offer Training
Out of School Suspension Without Services		
2015-2016	No	0.3
2017-2018	No	12.6
In-School Suspension with Services		
2015-2016	No	3.4
2017-2018	No	13.4
Loss of Bus Privileges		
2015-2016	No	4.4
2017-2018	No	1.6
Loss of Student Privileges		
2015-2016	No	0.3
2017-2018	No	1.0

A statistically significant difference was not present in urbanicity by the social emotional training status. Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, public elementary schools located in the city, 49% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public

elementary schools located in the suburb, more than half, 54.2%, offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public elementary schools located in a town, 39.2% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural elementary schools, 28% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. For the 2017-2018 school year, regardless of their location, more than 80% of public elementary schools offered social emotional learning training.

Summary of Results for Study Two

In the second investigation, social emotional learning training status was examined in relation to student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public middle schools. Archival data for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were addressed. Data from the School Survey on Crime and Safety were analyzed with respect to social emotional learning training status in middle schools.

In the two school years, a statistically significant difference was not present in the average daily attendance rate by social emotional learning training status. Concerning the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided, public middle schools had similar average daily attendance rates. Across the two years, social emotional learning training was determined to be unrelated to student attendance.

A statistically significant difference was present in the importance of academic achievement in schools by social emotional training status for the 2015-2016 school year.

In the 2015-2016 school year, public middle schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, approximately 5%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public middle schools that did not offer such training. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, schools that offered social emotional training had a higher percentage, approximately 2.5%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public middle schools that did not offer such training. The difference approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance.

In both school years, a statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding out of school suspension without services by the social emotional training status. Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, public middle schools had similar out of school suspension percentages, within 4.2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public middle schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage of students, 5.6% higher, who were issued out of school suspension without services compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. The difference approached, but did not reach, the conventional level of statistical significance.

A statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding in-school suspension by the social emotional training status. Concerning the 2015-2016 school year, public middle schools had similar in-school suspension with services percentages, within 3.1% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public middle schools that did not offer social emotional learning training had a lower percentage of

students, 3.9% lower, who were issued in-school suspension with services compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training.

A statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding loss of bus privileges by the social emotional training status.

Concerning the 2015-2016 school year, public middle schools had similar loss of bus privileges percentages, within 1.2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public middle schools had similar loss of bus privileges, within 1.8% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided.

In both school years, a statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding loss of student privileges by the social emotional training status. Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, public middle schools had equal percentages loss of student privileges regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. In the 2017-2018 school year, public middle schools had similar loss of student privileges percentages, within 0.3% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional learning training was provided. As revealed in Table 5.2, the percentage difference increased in the 2017-2018 school year from the 2015-2016 school year in respect to discipline problems and actions in public middle schools that offered social emotional training compared to public middle schools that did not offer such training.

Table 5.2

Summary of Discipline Problems and Actions of Public Middle Schools that Offered Social Emotional Learning Training for the 2015-2016 School Year and the 2017-2018 School Year

Disciplinary Actions	Statistically Significant	% Difference in Schools That Did Not Offer Training
Out of School Suspension Without Services		
2015-2016	No	4.2
2017-2018	No	5.6
In-School Suspension with Services		
2015-2016	No	3.1
2017-2018	No	3.9
Loss of Bus Privileges		
2015-2016	No	1.2
2017-2018	No	1.8
Loss of Student Privileges		
2015-2016	No	0.0
2017-2018	No	0.3

Across the two years, a statistically significant difference was present in urbanicity by the social emotional training status. Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, public middle schools located in the city, 52.6% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of

public middle schools located in the suburb, more than half, 53.6%, offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public middle schools located in a town, 25.4% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural middle schools, 15.6% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training.

In the 2017-2018 school year, regardless of their location, more than 65% of schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Regarding public middle schools located in the city, 68.2% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public middle schools located in the suburb, 80.4%, offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public middle schools located in a town, 74.6.4% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural middle schools, 64.8% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training.

Summary of Results for Study Three

In the third investigation, social emotional learning training status was examined in relation to student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity in public high schools. Archival data for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were addressed. Data from the

School Survey on Crime and Safety were analyzed with respect to social emotional learning training status in high schools.

In both school years, a statistically significant difference was not present in the average daily attendance rate by social emotional learning training status. Concerning the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided, public high schools had similar average daily attendance rates. Across the two years, social emotional learning training was determined to be unrelated to student attendance.

A statistically significant difference was present in the importance of academic achievement in schools by social emotional training status for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years. In the 2015-2016 school year, public high schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, approximately 6%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public high schools that did not offer such training. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, public high schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, 6.4%, of students who believed that academic achievement was important than did public high schools that did not offer such training.

In the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in discipline problems and actions regarding out of school suspension without services by the social emotional training status. Public high schools that did not offer social emotional learning training had a higher percentage, 11.6%, of students were issued out of school suspension than did public high schools that offered such training. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in

discipline problems and actions regarding out of school suspension without services by the social emotional training status. Public high schools that offered social emotional learning training had a similar percentage of their students, within 2.1% of each other, who were issued out of school suspension without services to high schools that did not offer social emotional learning training.

In the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding in-school suspension with services by the social emotional training status. Public high schools had similar in-school suspension with services percentages, within 0.8% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in discipline problems and actions regarding in-school suspension with services by the social emotional training status. High schools that offered social emotional learning training had a higher percentage of students, 12.2%, who were issued in-school suspension with services compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training.

In the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding loss of bus privileges by the social emotional training status. Public high schools had similar loss of bus privileges percentages, within 4.2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Regarding the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in discipline problems and actions regarding loss of bus privileges by the social emotional training status. Public high schools that did not offer social emotional

learning training had a higher percentage, 7.8%, compared to public high schools that offer social emotional learning training.

In both school years, a statistically significant difference was not present in discipline problems and actions regarding loss of student privileges by the social emotional training status. In the 2015-2016 school year, public high schools had similar loss of student privileges, within 2% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional training was provided. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, public high schools had similar loss of student privileges percentages, within 0.8% of each other, regardless of whether social emotional learning training was provided. As revealed in Table 5.3, a statistically significant difference was present when there was a 7% difference, or higher, in high schools that offered social emotional learning training compared to high schools that did not offer such training.

Table 5.3

Summary of Discipline Problems and Actions of Public High Schools that Offered Social Emotional Learning Training for the 2015-2016 School Year and the 2017-2018 School Year

Disciplinary Actions	Statistically Significant	% Difference in Schools That Did Not Offer Training
Out of School Suspension Without Services		
2015-2016	Yes	11.6
2017-2018	No	2.1
In-School Suspension with Services		
2015-2016	No	0.8
2017-2018	Yes	12.2
Loss of Bus Privileges		
2015-2016	No	4.2
2017-2018	Yes	7.8
Loss of Student Privileges		
2015-2016	No	2.0
2017-2018	No	0.8

Across the two years, a statistically significant difference was present in urbanicity by the social emotional training status. Concerning the 2015-2016 school year, public high schools located in the city, 26.4% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of

public high schools located in the suburb, 25.2% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public high schools located in a town, 10.8% more schools did not offer social emotional learning training compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training. Of public rural high schools, 24.6% more schools did not offer social emotional learning training compared to schools that offered social emotional learning training.

In the 2017-2018 school year, regardless of their location, more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Regarding public high schools located in the city, 68.2% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public high schools located in the suburb, 69.8% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. With respect to public high schools located in a town, 52.8% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training. Of public rural high schools, 48% more schools offered social emotional learning training compared to schools that did not offer social emotional learning training.

Connections with Existing Literature

In this national investigation, the relationship of social emotional learning training status was addressed with respect to student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public schools was established. The effects of social emotional learning have not been well documented in

the extant literature. Durlak and Mahoney (2019) established that when schools have an intentional focus on social emotional learning, students show an improvement in academic performance along with lower levels of distress, and conduct. Kanopka et al. (2020) demonstrated that student academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, and attendance improved and the outcomes were related to social emotional learning.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

In this multiyear analysis, an emphasis was placed on the social emotional learning theory, which is the positive development that emerged from the emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995). Suggested in this emotional intelligence theory is that noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills for life success. Because the emotional intelligence theory suggests that noncognitive skills are just as important as cognitive skills, this investigation was focused on noncognitive factors that contribute to student academic outcomes (i.e., attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement). The results from this study are aligned with the suggestions from the emotional intelligence theory because evidence is provided in the emotional intelligence theory for the ability to be effective in all essential areas of life, including school. In all three studies, students believed academic achievement was more important when receiving social emotional learning training. As such, suggestions from this theory are the basis of the results.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In this investigation, implications may be derived for policy and for practice. With respect to policy, first, school district administrators are encouraged to pay greater attention to noncognitive factors to focus on whole-child education and implement

required social emotional learning training for all district employees. Second, all teachers should receive social emotional learning professional development to increase their understanding to respond appropriately to students' needs and to implement social emotional learning strategies as means to improve overall student success and academic achievement.

Concerning practice, school administrators should incorporate social emotional learning into school and classroom environments, and daily lessons. Finally, all educators should focus their attention on social emotional learning to provide their students with social emotional learning tools to develop social emotional competencies. Social emotional learning not only increases students' thoughts about academic achievement, but social emotional learning can have lasting effects for students beyond the walls of the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this journal-ready dissertation, several recommendations for future research can be generated. First, researchers are encouraged to address potential effects of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public elementary, middle, and high schools as social emotional learning continues to progress over time. Second, researchers are encouraged to address potential effects of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in private elementary, middle, and high schools. Third, researchers are encouraged to address potential effects of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the

importance of academic achievement in charter elementary, middle, and high schools. Fourth, since social emotional learning training looks different from school to school, researchers are encouraged to evaluate the different types of social emotional learning programs to determine which programs are the most effective in terms of student attendance, disciplinary problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement.

Fifth, researchers are encouraged to conduct a qualitative study to explore schools that offer social emotional learning to investigate the impact social emotional learning has on a campus culture and school climate. A qualitative study is encouraged to collect the thoughts and perceptions of social emotional learning from teachers and campus leaders to understand the support needed to incorporate an effective social emotional learning program. Lastly, researchers are encouraged to conduct a narrower investigation to analyze a state-to-state comparison to address potential effects of social emotional learning on student attendance, discipline problems and actions, and students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement in public, private, and charter elementary, middle, and high schools.

Conclusion

In this journal-ready dissertation, the degree to which student attendance, discipline problems and actions, students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement, and urbanicity were influenced by social emotional learning training in public elementary, middle, and high schools for the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 school years were addressed. The presence of social emotional learning training did not have an effect on the public elementary schools' location, student attendance or discipline

problems and actions; however, the presence of social emotional learning training did have an effect on elementary students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement. Social emotional learning training was not related to the public middle schools' student attendance or discipline problems and actions; however, the presence of social emotional learning training was related to school location and to middle school students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement. Social emotional learning training was not related to the public high schools' student attendance; however, the presence of social emotional learning training was related to school location, discipline problems and actions, and high school students' thoughts on the importance of academic achievement. An argument could be made that as school district and campus administrators understand the effect social emotional training has on student outcomes, more schools will offer social emotional learning training in years to come.

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APPENDIX

IRB-2022-157 - Initial: Not Human Subjects Research

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>

Thu 7/7/2022 5:22 PM

To: Lunenburg, Fred <[REDACTED]>; Morris, Oleavia <[REDACTED]>



Date: Jul 7, 2022 5:22:31 PM CDT

TO: Oleavia Morris Frederick Lunenburg

FROM: SHSU IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Differences in Disciplinary Problems and Actions, School Characteristics, and Average Daily Attendance of Public Schools by Social Emotional Learning Practices

PROTOCOL #: IRB-2022-157

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial

ACTION: No Human Subjects Research

DECISION DATE: July 7, 2022

OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK: To access the survey, click [here](#). It only takes 10 minutes of your time and is voluntary. The results will be used internally to make improvements to the IRB application and/or process. Your feedback will be most appreciated.

Greetings,

In accordance with applicable federal law governing the use of human subjects in research the SHSU Institutional Review Board ("IRB") has reviewed your proposed project entitled "Differences in Disciplinary Problems and Actions, School Characteristics, and Average Daily Attendance of Public Schools by Social Emotional Learning Practices" and determined that this project does not meet the definition of human subjects research as defined in Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 et al (also known as the "Common Rule") - specifically, secondary data analysis of a public dataset. Therefore, this project is not subject to further SHSU IRB oversight. Even so, please remember that you are responsible for ensuring that your study is conducted in an ethical manner and in accordance with applicable law and SHSU policies and procedures. You may initiate your project. Please contact the IRB office at irb@shsu.edu or [REDACTED] if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

SHSU Institutional Review Board

VITA

Oleavia Shaunte Morris

Academic Degrees

Doctorate of Education, Sam Houston State University, 2022

Educational Leadership

Dissertation: Differences in Disciplinary Problems and Actions, School Characteristics, and Average Daily Attendance of Public Schools by Social Emotional Learning Practices

Master of Science, University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2008

Educational Management and Principal

Bachelor of Arts, University of Houston-Downtown, 2000

Education with a Specialization in Speech Communication

Professional Experience

2017-current	Cunningham Middle School, Galena Park Independent School District Principal
2014-2017	Galena Park Middle School, Galena Park Independent School District Principal
2011-2014	Galena Park High School, Galena Park Independent School District Associate Principal – Curriculum and Instruction
2008-2011	Galena Park Middle School, Galena Park Independent School District Assistant Principal – Curriculum and Instruction
2007-2008	Cunningham Middle School, Galena Park Independent School District Math Specialist
2000-2007	Cunningham Middle School, Galena Park Independent School District Teacher

Awards/Career Highlights

Principal of the Year, Galena Park Independent School District, 2021

Assistant Principal of the Year, Galena Park Independent School District, 2014

Teacher of the Year, Cunningham Middle School, Galena Park Independent School District, 2007

Rookie Teacher of the Year, Cunningham Middle School, Galena Park Independent School District, 2001

Regional Presentation

Morris, O. S. (2022, February). *Social and Emotional Learning in Inner-City Middle Schools*. Workshop presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (SERA), New Orleans, LA.