

Elementary School Social Emotional Learning Status and Attendance, Discipline, and Achievement in the United States: A National Analysis

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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. We analyzed data from two School Surveys on Crime and Safety conducted across the United States. Across the two years, social emotional learning training was determined to be unrelated to public elementary schools' location (i.e., urban, suburban, rural), 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, School Features, Social Emotional Learning.

ABSTRAK

Dipastikan dalam penelitian ini pengaruh pelatihan pembelajaran sosial emosional terhadap kehadiran siswa, masalah kedisiplinan dan tindakan, pemikiran siswa tentang pentingnya prestasi akademik, dan urbanisasi di SD Negeri tahun ajaran 2015-2016 dan 2017-2018. Kami menganalisis data dari dua Survei Sekolah tentang Kejahatan dan Keamanan yang dilakukan di seluruh Amerika Serikat. Selama dua tahun, pelatihan pembelajaran sosial emosional ditentukan tidak ada hubungannya dengan lokasi sekolah dasar negeri (yaitu, perkotaan, pinggiran kota, pedesaan), kehadiran siswa atau masalah dan tindakan disiplin. Kehadiran pelatihan pembelajaran sosial

emosional, bagaimanapun, ditentukan terkait dengan pentingnya prestasi akademik. Implikasinya terhadap kebijakan dan praktik, serta rekomendasi untuk penelitian di masa depan, telah dibuat.

Keywords:

Rata-rata Kehadiran Harian, Tindakan Disiplin, Masalah Disiplin, Ciri-ciri Sekolah, Pembelajaran Sosial Emosional.

1. Introduction

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).

1.1. 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.

1.2. 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.

1.3. 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.

1.4. 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.

1.5. 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.

2. Methods

2.1. 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).

2.2 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. Principals from middle and high schools did not contribute to the survey data analyzed in this article. 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. We used these two school years so that a baseline could be established regarding the topics covered in this article prior to the Covid pandemic. The Covid pandemic has clearly affected the social emotional health of individuals, not only in the United States but in the world, as a whole. Having a baseline for the relationship of social emotional learning and the topics we covered herein should be valuable for researchers examining this relationship after the Covid pandemic.

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 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?

3. Results and Discussion

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.

3.1. 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 1 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 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.

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 the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 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.

3.2. 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 3 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 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.

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 4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 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.

3.3. 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 5 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 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.

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 6 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 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.

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 7 contains the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 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.

Concerning the 2017-2018 school year for in-school suspension with services by the social emotional status of public elementary schools, the difference approached 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 8 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 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.

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 9 are the descriptive statistics for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 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.

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 10 contains the descriptive statistics for loss of bus privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 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.

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 11 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 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.

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 12 are the descriptive statistics for loss of student privileges for the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 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

3.4. 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 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.

Table 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.

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 14 contains the descriptive statistics for urbanicity for the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 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.

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.

3.5 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.

3.6. 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).

3.7. 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.

3.8. 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. Third, 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. Fourth, our results are based on survey data gathered before the Covid pandemic. Given the dramatic effects of the pandemic on people's social emotional health, researchers are encouraged to collect current data on the issues we covered in this article. Fifth, our results are based solely on survey data gathered in the United States. We do not know the extent to our results and findings might be generalizable to individuals in other countries.

4. 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.

5. References

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