



Social-Emotional Learning: Understanding the Factors Affecting Teacher Implementation



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ABSTRACT

With rising student mental health concerns, schools have turned to universal supports such as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. SEL programs have significant positive effects on students when they are implemented with fidelity. This study examines the elements crucial to SEL implementation fidelity, including teacher attitudes, knowledge, self-efficacy, available resources and perceived support, and their relationship to teacher concerns regarding SEL program implementation. Understanding this interplay can help School Psychologists maximize the effectiveness of SEL programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- 13% to 20% of American children suffer from a mental health disorder (Perou et al., 2013).
- Social-emotional learning (SEL) provides direct instruction of skills and strategies to students to promote positive mental health (CASEL, 2008).
- SEL programs, when implemented with fidelity, have significant positive effects on student social-emotional competencies, attitudes about themselves and others, and academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011).
- Teacher attitudes, knowledge, self-efficacy, perceived support and access to resources have been shown to impact implementation of new innovations (Reinke et al., 2011; Stormont, Reinke & Herman, 2011; Askill-Williams & Lawson, 2013).
 - 80% of teachers thought schools should support student mental health needs, but most felt they lacked the knowledge, skills, or resources to implement supports (Reinke et al., 2011).
 - Teachers with greater self-efficacy are more willing to employ strategies to reach desired outcomes (Van Uden, Ritzen, & Pieters, 2013).
 - Perceived support correlates with higher levels of SEL curriculum implementation (Ransford et al., 2009).
- Teachers go through a series of Stages of Concern, ranging from Awareness to Refocusing, that focus on the types of concern (self, task, and impact) they have as they implement and become more familiar with new innovations (Cheung et al., 2001), such as SEL.
- Little research has been done on how the variables of Attitudes, Knowledge, Resources, Self-Efficacy, and Perceived Support change a teacher's concerns about new innovations, specifically SEL.

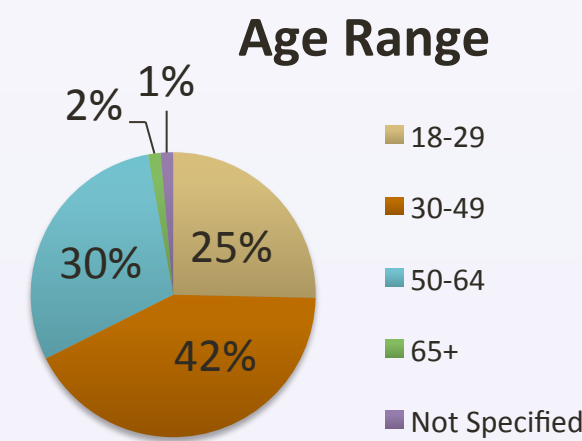
METHODS

Participants:

- 71 out of 165 elementary teachers (43%) responded to surveys using components from the Questionnaire for Staff About Mental Health Promotions (Askill-Williams & Cefai, 2014) and the revised Concerns-Based Adoption Model Questionnaire (Cheung et al., 2001).

Teacher Demographics:

- 92% Female
- 89% White
- 55% had a Master's Degree



Scale	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD	α
Stages of Concern	22	71.00	141.00	107.89	15.30	.82
Attitudes	3	15.00	21.00	19.52	1.55	.51
Knowledge	5	16.00	35.00	27.65	4.87	.94
Resources	5	5.00	35.00	25.57	6.11	.96
Self-Efficacy	4	14.00	28.00	22.54	3.08	.77
Perceived Support	10	24.00	70.00	49.68	9.35	.89

Sample Questions:

Questionnaire for Staff About Mental Health Promotions (Askill-Williams & Cefai, 2014)

- Attitudes: Students can be taught...
- Knowledge: I know how to help students...
- Resources: My teaching resources can help students...
- Self-Efficacy: I can help students...
- Perceived Support: The school leadership team actively supports...

Concerns-Based Adoption Model Questionnaire (Cheung et al., 2001).

- I do not know what SEL is.
- I know what teachers are required to do with SEL lessons.
- I have an inability to manage all the SEL requirements.
- I am concerned about my impact on the SEL of my students.
- I can revise SEL lessons to improve their effectiveness.

RESULTS

Correlation Matrix

Scale	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Stages of Concern	.31	.52	.48	.53	.24
2. Attitudes	--	.41	.22	.47	.49
3. Knowledge		--	.64	.71	.37
4. Resources			--	.47	.44
5. Self-Efficacy				--	.33
6. Perceived Support					--

Stages of Concern Regression

	Model 1	Model 2		
	B	95% CI	β	
Constant	48.686	44.976	11.341	-
Self-Efficacy	2.624	1.918	.557	.386
Resources	-	.769	.279	.309
Attitudes	-	-	-	-
Knowledge	-	-	-	-
Perceived Support	-	-	-	-
R ²	.279	.354		
F	25.573	17.843		
ΔR^2	.279	.075		
ΔF	25.573	7.568		

Dependent Variable: Stages of Concern

Qualitative Analysis

Q1: What does your school do currently to support the mental health needs of your students at the Tier 1 level?*

- 35% said Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- 52% said teacher driven lessons (25% Second Step, 27% other)
- 25% said support from Guidance Counselors and School Psychologists.

Q2: What do you do, in addition to your school, to support the mental health needs of your students?*

- 78% formed relationships (student, parents or staff)
- 51% provided explicit instruction
- 66% emphasized the classroom environment and made accommodations

Q3: What three things would help you better support the mental health needs of your students?*

- 41% said support staff
- 37% said more time for SEL lessons or planning
- 37% said professional development
- 32% said more resources - such as curriculums, lesson plans, or sensory tools.

*Teachers could identify more than one support or need, so percentages do not equal 100%. Roughly 10% of teachers left at least one qualitative question blank.

DISCUSSION

- Teacher self-efficacy and access to resources explained 35% of the variance on their emotional acceptance (Stage of Concern) in implementing Social-Emotional Learning curriculums.
- Qualitative data was consistent, revealing that teachers are already taking steps to improve student mental health but identified needing more support staff to assist in SEL, more time for planning and teaching SEL, and more training and resources to use in their classrooms.
- Districts should provide professional development and coaching that promotes teacher SEL self-efficacy and consider resources for successful implementation.
- Limitations include a small sample size, low reliability of the attitude scale, and the use of participants who do not have an SEL curriculum in their schools.
- Future research could identify which factors are most important for developing SEL self-efficacy.

Implications for School Psychologists:

- Identify and promote the use of evidence-based SEL resources such as scripted programs and the integration of SEL concepts into academic curriculum.
- School Psychologists should advocate for more mental health professionals in schools, and emphasize our ability to support teachers and students in schools.

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