Examination of a multi-tiered systems of support tier 2 group intervention at the secondary level

by

Lindsey A. Sellers

B.S., Kansas State University, 2004
M.S., University of Kansas, 2007

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Special Education, Counseling, and Student Affairs
College of Education

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Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

Adolescence is a time when many changes and challenges occur in an adolescent's life. It is imperative that schools work to provide learning opportunities and supports for all students. Social emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which social-emotional competence develops. Through SEL, children and youth acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions (Weissberg et al., 2015).

In order to address and teach social emotional skills, there must be systematic implementation within the school setting. The use of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a school-wide, three-tiered approach for providing academic, behavioral and social supports to all students based on their needs and skills (Cook, et. al., 2015, Harlacher, et, al., 2014; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Using the Muli-Tiered System of Supports, student support teams can better align programs to better meet student needs, thus improving student achievement and behavior.

The study explored social behavior, academic behavior, and emotional behavior in 9th and 10th grade students from a rural high school in a mid-size Midwestern city. The study population includes 180 participants in a high school using ANCOVA analysis comparisons.

The survey administered in the study is the Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS) screening tool from Illuminate Education to identify students for participation in a Tier 2 Student Support Group. One hundred Tier 2 identified students participated in a six-session intervention Student Support Group. Sixty-eight identified students did not receive the intervention services. An ANCOVA analysis was conducted to determine the

influence of the Tier 2 Group Intervention on students who were identified with risk factors compared to those who did not receive the intervention. The findings for teacher assessment SAEBRS-TRS results did indicate statistical differences for students who participated in the Tier 2 Student Support Group Interventions versus those who were in the comparison group.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents research for a dissertation study, need for study, purpose, theoretical framework, and a brief introduction to the research design, and analysis methodology. Also included in this chapter is an introduction of Positive Behavioral Supports (PBIS), Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS), and the American School Counselor Association Student Standards Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success that serve as the foundation for this study and best practices designed to enhance the social, academic, and social emotional development of students.

Statement of Need

Adolescence can be a challenging time. Navigating high school can be especially difficult. The challenges during this formative time are complex given that during this time the brain is still developing while critical life decisions are being determined. It is a time of learning new skills, preparing for adulthood, and making decisions in regards to the future. It is important that students have the needed skills to effectively address adolescence and barriers to their the academic, social-emotional, and career success. Empirical research has demonstrated the success of addressing student needs with a positive approach in strengths-based models including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) (Bryan & Henry, 2008; Galassi et al., 2008; Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

This research study was designed to study the influence of Tier 2 Positive Support Groups on students who have low social-emotional capacity as measured by a self-screener. The study focused on the students who participated in a school counselor led group counseling intervention in which positive social emotional supports were taught for the purpose of increasing academic and social emotional regulation and capacity.

Approximately 15-20% of children experience significant academic, behavioral, social, and emotional issues that present as barriers to learning in the school setting (Costello et al., 2020; Goodman-Scott et al., 2020; Keeler & Angold, 2003; Skiba et al., 2011). Students may not only struggle with academic challenges, but also with behavioral, social, and emotional challenges. Many students experience a host of challenging situations occurring in their homes and communities, including poverty, homelessness, and, immigration and residency barriers. These situations may lead to a lack of fulfillment of basic needs including physiological needs, safety needs, and social belonging (Maslow, 1943; Kenrick et al., 2011; Shepard et al., 2013). The teaching and supporting of appropriate social behaviors are integrated in content and counseling standards and fundamental for students to achieve academic gains (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020). The Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation was a predecessor to the focus of this current study. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, focuses primarily on learning and instruction in a tiered intervention system. More recent RTI frameworks reveal pyramids split in half showing both academic and behavioral domains which demonstrate the complex entanglement between academic, social and emotional learning (Stormont et al., 2010).

It is imperative that schools work to provide students with support and interventions in order to address mental health needs. Prior to the pandemic, research indicated more than 13% of 12-15-year-old youth in the United States could meet the criteria to be identified with a mental challenge including ADHD (7.4%) or mood disorders (4.8%) being the most common diagnoses (Austin & Schwartz, 2019). Providing students with support and resources within the school setting is important for them to gain the skills needed to have successful PK-12 school experiences to set the foundation for post- secondary and career effectiveness.

The need for the MTSS framework has continued to become more apparent in schools. School districts, with leadership from school counselors, have recognized the need to become more proactive rather than reactive in a child's life. The pandemic exacerbated this need. The Center for Disease Control (2021) reported troubling trends prior to the pandemic with one in three adolescents reporting having experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019 and one in six making a suicide plan during the year 2019. The numbers increase for youth identifying as lesbian, gay, transgender, or bisexual.

Issues with mental health impact all areas of one's life and are significant barriers to academic, social, postsecondary choices, and career success (Duncan et al., 2021). Negative outcomes often connected with poor mental health of adolescents include death by suicide, suicidal ideation, attendance issues, self-harm, substance abuse, behavior problems, and emotional distress (Duan et al., 2020; Duncan et al., 2021; Yeasmin et al., 2020). These issues demonstrate the need for quality services and programs to address adolescent social emotional needs.

ASCA Student Standards Mindsets, Behaviors for Student Success

The ASCA (2021) Student Standards Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success are standards grounded in research and best practices for 36 mindset and behaviors describing knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to achieve academic success, college and career readiness, and social/emotional development. The group intervention integrated in the school comprehensive counseling program and studied in this research aligns with the ASCA Standards Mindsets, Behaviors for Student Success. Category 1 addresses mindset standards and Category 2 address behavior standards. These research-based standards provide a foundation for comprehensive school counseling programs. Counselors select the evidence-based curriculum

activities in the domains of academic, career, and social emotional based on student and school data that will best meet the needs of their school setting. The activities are a mix of classroom, small group or individual counseling. The ASCA standards serve small counseling groups in addressing the topics of this study: Standard M1: Mindset: Belief in development of whole self; including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being. Standard M3: Mindset: Positive attitude toward work and learning. The ASCA Behavior Standards are divided into three categories: learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills. The Behavior Standards addressed in this research include Learning Strategies: B-LS 2: Creative approach to learning tasks and problem solving. B-LS 4: Self-motivation and self-direction for learning B-LS 7: Long and short-term academic career and social/emotional goals. Self-Management Skills B-SMS 2: Self-discipline and self-control. B-SMS 6: Ability to identify and overcome barriers. B-SMS 7: Effective coping skills. B-SMS 10: Ability to manage transitions and adapt to change. Lastly, students will demonstrate social skills. Thus B-SS 4: Empathy and B-SS 8: Advocacy skills for self and other sand ability to assert self, when necessary and B-SS 9: Social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment. Each of these ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors (2021) will be addressed through this research study.

The specific 2016 ASCA Counselor Ethical Standards aligned with this study include: A.A.1.e: School counselors are concerned with students' academic, career and social/emotional needs and encourage each student's maximum development. A.A.1.h: School counselors provide effective, responsive interventions to address student needs. Additionally, A.7. Group Work A.7.a: School counselors facilitate short-term groups to address students' academic career and/or social/emotional issues.

Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that "many schools have a universal curriculum or set of practices implemented at Tier 1 and a standard protocol approach to Tier 2 interventions" (von der Embse et al., p. 2). Tier 2 interventions are grounded in multiple data-points. Decisions on how to best meet student needs are based on data and for this research study, the SAEBRS data (Bruhn et al., 2017) provide the data to intervention selection. Further research reported at the Tier 2 Intervention level is needed to enhance positive outcomes. This quantitative research gathered pre and post-test data to gain an understanding of how small groups of high school students can increase their social emotional well-being by participating in psychoeducational groups that impact their academic achievement. The goals of the intervention align with the research questions and the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA, 2021).

Adolescence is a critical time of dynamic experiences nurturing physical, mental, and emotional growth and development. Biological, cognitive, and social changes create opportunities and barriers to learning experiences (Pringle et al., 2016). Adolescence defined for this study as specifically between the ages of 13-18, is a time of developing personal identity through cultivating resilience and regulation skills and discovering their interests, passions and strengths. Throughout their development adolescence refine decision-making and self-regulation skills (Busso et al., 2021) by learning to successfully face obstacles and challenges (Greenberg et al., 2003; Murphy et al., 2017).

Educators seek to empower students with tools and techniques for the greatest opportunities for a successful future. Adolescents and their families rely heavily on the school system to teach students soft skills and coping mechanisms to prepare students for post-

secondary success. A multi-tiered systems of support is designed to meet the needs of all students (Goodman-Scott et al., 2019).

Not all students have sufficient knowledge and support to navigate high school and to understand the impact their education will have on their future (ASCA, 2021). This can present many hardships throughout the high school career. Social emotional challenges impact all parts of a student's life. This includes socially, emotionally, academic, peer and friend groups and family struggles at home.

The role of the counselor is unique in that the role encompasses meeting the counseling needs of all students in the domains of academic, career, and social-emotional. School counselors provide holistic counseling with a focus on wellness and lifelong and learning (ASCA, 2021). However, given that students are only in the school building a limited amount of time and counselors have case-loads that generally far exceed the recommended ASCA 1-250 student-counselor ratio (ASCA, 2021), it is incumbent to be effective and efficient with time and interventions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative research was to study the differences in social emotional behaviors/thoughts outcomes in students who are provided a Tier 2 Support Group in a secondary school versus those students who do not participate in a Tier 2 Support Group. The researcher collected data to determine if engaging in Tier 2 Support Group intervention had an influence as measured on the SAEBRS Assessment. The goal was to increase students' positive social emotional skills for the purpose of improving overall school performance.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study using SAEBRS Data include:

1. Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the my-SAEBRS, compared to those who do not participate?
2. Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the SAEBRS-TRS, compared to those who do not participate?

Definitions of Terms

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): MTSS is the overarching umbrella is described by PBIS as a data driven 3-tier framework designed to serve as a problem-solving tool for students from the universal prevention level to the intensive, individualized level (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: PBIS is one form of MTSS that focuses on positive behavioral supports and expectations. PBIS is an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day (Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021).

Tier 2 Interventions: Tier 2 interventions including targeted, small-group and individual counseling, consultation and collaboration with school personnel, families and community stakeholders (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

Tier 3 Interventions: Tier 3 indirect student support services through consultation, collaboration and facilitation of referrals (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

Student Support Counselor: School Counselor in-training. This person is currently enrolled in a CACREP Certified School Counseling Program. The individual is working with the

School Counseling Department to provide academic, career and social emotional, services and supports for students at the high school level.

Student Support Team: School team that includes, administrators, school counselors, school social worker, student support counselor, and family support worker. These individuals meet on a monthly basis to review, plan and assess school wide programing and student social-emotional and academic needs.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the relevant empirical literature. The theoretical framework for this study was based on the Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's Theory focuses on observational learning, modeling of behaviors, and the impact on attitudes and behaviors. The interaction of these processes is represented in Bandura's triadic reciprocal causation and, according to Bandura, influences motivation and self-efficacy. Presented in this chapter is the literature on social emotional learning and the empirical literature supporting evidence of the effectiveness of psychoeducational groups designed to increase student knowledge and social emotional skills to increase academic performance. Sections in this chapter also include targeted services of Multi-tiered and Positive Behavior Intervention Support Interventions for students with elevated needs are integral in implementing a comprehensive counseling program for students at risk (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Albert Bandura (1977) proposed the Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) which included a theory of observing, imitating and modeling needed behaviors. Bandura's theory includes three tenets: Individuals learn through observation which is known as observational learning. Secondly, mental health is an important component for learning as it is also key for intrinsic reinforcement. Finally, learning follows by a modeling process (Tadayon, 2012). The foundation of SCLT theory is that learning occurs from interactions with others in social contexts. "For learning to occur, students must exchange knowledge in an interactive environment" (Deaton, 2015, p. 3). Social learning theory takes into consideration "that people learning from one another, via: observation, imitation and modeling (Tadayon 2012, p. 6). This study examined how interventions implemented with high school students can help students to

recognize and change behaviors to be more productive and increase social emotional and self-regulation skills that can be used throughout a life time.

According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, "people observe, imitate and model the behavior others" (Deaton, 2015, p. 1). Social Learning Theory is based on a concept of learning through interactions and observations in formal and informal environments including social contexts (Tadayon Nabavi, 2012). Providing psychoeducational groups within the high school setting creates the opportunity for students to not only gain new knowledge provided by the leader of the group, but to also obverse and potential new behaviors from peers. Bandura reported direct reinforcement or strict behavioral theory could not account for all types of learning. This insight resulted in Bandura's addition of a social element to his theory emphasizing how individuals learn new information and behaviors through observation (Tadayon Nabavi, 2012).

A primary component of Bandura's Theory (1977) is the specification of four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience or successful prior based achievement; vicarious experience or observation of peers and other role models held in high regard; verbal/social persuasion or encouragement from others; and physiological and affective states, or physical/emotional conditions (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Hendricks, 2015; Tadayon Nabavi, 2012; Usher & Pajares, 2008). It is suggested that self-efficacy can have an effect on behavior and cognition through activity choice, goal setting, effort and persistence and learning (Tadayon Nabavi, 2012). Each of these can be a potential focus on resources provided and practiced in a Tier 2 group setting. With the end goal educating and providing practice and repetition for students to gain new skills that would have a positive effect on their future behavior and academic success.

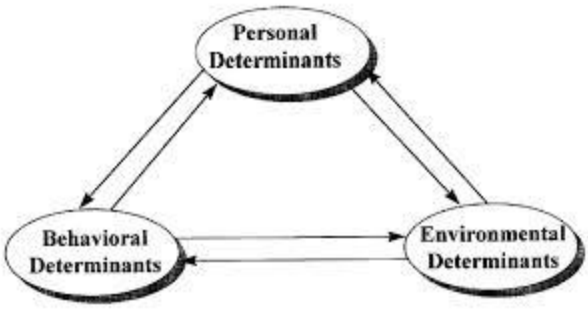
Bandura's Theory created a new focus on modeling of practices (Bandura, 2019). Modeled practices provide knowledge, skills, and strategies for effecting change. Enabling models exemplify a vision of a better future and realistic paths to it. Seeing transitional models similar to themselves succeed by perseverance raises observers' belief in their efficacy to improve their lives by their actions. The benefits of favorable practices and costs of the detrimental ones, vividly portrayed by contract modeling, provide incentives for change (Bandura, 2019). Providing students with an opportunity for modeling in a group setting will increase the opportunity for a change in behavior.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura reported self-efficacy as being central to human agency and to the decisions and actions of individuals on a daily basis and based on perceptions of personal ability to successfully complete specific actions (Bandura, 1977; 1986, 1997, 2021). Self-efficacy is dependent on a person's ability to effectively appraise the limits of one's own capabilities (Bandura, 1986.)

Students engage in learning through the four sources of self-efficacy including mastery experiences. The "triadic reciprocal causation" depicted in Figure 1, Bandura explained human agency as "interplay of intrapersonal influences (Bandura, 1986; 2012). The model of triadic reciprocal causations leads to decision and actions. These decisions influence the impact of self-efficacy regarding the level of motivation and persistence individuals expend in the face of obstacles and adversity (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).content here.

Figure 1.1. Triadic Reciprocal Causation (Bandura, 1986)



The development of self-efficacy is continuous and multi-faceted. Perceptions of self-efficacy are constructed beginning in infancy and continue throughout the life time, into adulthood and old age. These experiences happen continuously from children learning how to form new words and communicate needs through adult development of professional skills. Bandura (1997) identified "personal enablement" through which self-efficacy can be developed. This is achieved by providing appropriate knowledge, skills, and positive experiences that enhance personal control.

Education and Self-Efficacy

School experiences contribute significantly to the development of personal self-efficacy Bandura (1997). Research affirms self-efficacy's impact on cognitive development (Bandura, 1997, Bandura & Shunk, 1981; Pajares & Miller, 1994; Shunk, 1984, 2003; Zimmerman, 2000). Schools serve an essential role in providing the structures and opportunities for students to develop the cognitive and self-regulatory skills necessary for future success (Bandura, 1997). Student perception of self-efficiency has a significant impact on student academic achievement. Thus, students build and develop their skills for the purpose of persistence in challenging academic tasks throughout their educational careers (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Pajares & Miller, 1994; Schunk, 1984, 2003). Bandura's research across social and behavioral disciplines

continued with the basis of the construct of self-efficacy support of growth and development for individuals and organizations.

In the school setting, “triadic reciprocal interaction” involves a student’s belief that /she/he/they can be successful, the teacher’s belief that the student can flourish and an environment that fosters success (Bandura, 1978, 2001). Bandura (1986) reported that individuals contribute to their own motivation through the triadic reciprocal causation. The premise reflected in Bandura’s Theory and aligned in this research study is that the more positive the influences, the more positive the self-efficacy which results in more motivation within the student (Bandura, 1989).

Social Emotional Learning

CASEL (2021) described social and emotional learning (SEL) is a process through which individuals develop and mature to learn life skills that include managing emotions, set and achieve positive goals, develop empathy and a heart for others, cultivate and nurture relationships, and implement a data decision-making model (CASEL, 2021). This is a process through which all youth and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, character and integrity, resiliency, healthy coping skills, and anxiety prevention strategies (Clarke et al., 2021).

Mahoney et al. (2018) reported the positive short-and long-term outcomes of social emotional learning. Social emotional learning has also been described as critical to students’ long-term success in and out of school meriting careful, sustained attention throughout K-12 education (Bridgeland et al., 2013; DePaoli et al., 2017; Weissberg et al., 2015).

Durlak’s (2011) first and perhaps seminal meta-analysis reported students engaged in SEL programs were demonstrated significantly more positive outcomes with respect to enhanced

SEL skills, attitudes, positive social behavior, and academic performance, and significantly lower levels of conduct problems and emotional distress; and, higher academic performance that translated into an 11 percentile-point gain in achievement (Mahoney et al., 2018). Following the Durlak et al., 2011 analysis three additional meta-analyses have been conducted and resulted in significantly consistent positive results (Sklad et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2017; Wiglesworth et al., 2016). Mahoney et al. (2018) described the common findings of the four meta-analyses in the following domains:

- **SEL skills,** *such as identifying emotions, goal setting, self-management, problem solving, conflict resolution, refusal skills, and decision making.*
- **Attitudes** *about self, school, and social topics including self-perceptions (e.g., self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy), school bonding, drug use and violence, and helping others.*
- **Positive social behaviors,** *such as getting along with others, helping others, showing concern for others, empathy, prosocial problem solving, peace building, and cooperation.*
- **Conduct problems,** *including disruptive classroom behavior, fighting, hurting others, verbal aggression, bullying, discipline referrals, and delinquent acts.*
- **Emotional distress,** *such as depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal.*
- **Academic performance,** *including reading and math achievement, standardized test scores, school grades, and academic competence from teacher ratings.*

Small Group Counseling Research

School counselors organize and conduct group counseling and psychosocial interventions to implement with students specifically with students at the MTSS tier 2 level. In addition to

allowing programs to demonstrate efficiency and maximize resources, empirical data supports the short and long-term outcomes of group counseling. Research reported group counseling creates opportunities for counselors to reach a significantly greater number of students, in a more time efficient manner with equal effectiveness than addressing the same issues with individual students (Baskin et al., 2010; Corey et al., 2010; McRoberts et al 1998). Psycho-educational and counseling groups have demonstrated effectiveness in multiple areas including the modeling concept in Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory (Kivlighan et al., 2016). When conducting a group counseling activity, Kivlighan et al. participants reported group members modeled the interpersonal reactions, depth of group engagement, attitudes and dispositions of their group members. The group influence on other group members is congruent with the goals of MTSS and PBIS (Kivlighan et al., 2016; Kivlighan et al., 2012).

Bruce et al. (2021) conducted a small group counseling activity in her comprehensive counseling program. The activity was designed to improve test performance of African-American student achievement. Eighty percent of eligible students who participated in the intervention received passing scores on the four sections tested during the spring administration and all participating students passed the English Language Arts and Math assessment sections. The outcomes of this small counseling intervention demonstrated how counselors can impact the achievement gap, a goal of MTSS and PBIS (Bruce et al., 2009).

Another study evaluated the results of a small group counseling intervention designed for students who were not meeting expected academic outcomes. Post-test assessments indicated significant improvement for ninth- and tenth-grade students in the areas of organizational skills, time management, and motivation (Berger et al., 2013). By participating in small group counseling, students will work to address the social emotional learning competencies outlined by

the American School Counselor Association Mindsets and Behaviors (ASCA, 2021) and the ASCA Ethical Standards (ASCA, 2020) provide for the counseling profession. Ethical standards should always be taken into consideration when conducting research and working with students in an educational setting. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) provides Ethical Standards, Student Standards and Professional Standards and Competencies for School Counselors (ASCA, 2016).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support System (PBIS)

Positive Behavior Intervention Support is a school management system designed to assist schools recognize students for behavioral expectations. The three-tiered continuum functions on a platform that fosters accountability and fidelity based on preventative, culturally responsive, evidence-based, data driven interventions. The system is founded on applied behavior analysis principles with the aim of creating a positive school climate, teaching measurable and appropriate behavior to all students and staff, reinforcing desired behaviors and viewing the school as a system. All students are placed in one of the three prevention categories: Primary Prevention, Secondary Prevention and Tertiary Prevention. (Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs).

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provides a framework that aligns with PBIS and comprehensive school counseling programs. The MTSS framework includes a continuum for educators to engage in data-based decision making related to program improvement, high-quality instruction and intervention, and social emotional learning, and positive behavioral supports necessary to ensure positive outcomes for districts, schools, teachers

and students. The MTSS framework is comprised of four essential components: screening, progress monitoring, multi-level prevention system, and data-based decision (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, 2020).

MTSS provides school counselors an additional opportunity to engage with students and make impact for a lifetime. Through integrating MTSS into comprehensive school counseling programming the student outcomes for academic success and behaviors development are enhanced (Zoimek-Diagle et al., 2016). Providing students with leveled tiers of support promotes best practice within the school setting. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support emphasizes wellness skills and prevention in the curriculum. The prevention foundation is the focus of Tier 1, universal or primary prevention skills, appropriate for all students and includes effective academic and social skill development (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020). For students who demonstrate Tier 2 behaviors of social emotional /mental health concerns including but not limited to chronic absenteeism, becoming socially withdrawn, anxious, and/or aggressive behaviors. Interventions for Tier 2 focus on strengthening protective factors of peer supports, social skills, emotional regulation, and contextual connections with strengths, academics and post-secondary options/career development (Zoimek-Diagle et al., 2016). In a data-informed system, student needs are analyzed and serve as the foundation for curriculum and program decisions. These decisions include the identification of students in the tier 2 level indicating a need for small group or personalized learning (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

The recommended MTSS Tier implementation is as follows: 80% of students being able to function appropriately within the Tier 1: Universal Prevention. 15% of students should be classified in Tier 2: Targeted Prevention. The Tier 3: Intensive Prevention should only have approximately 5% of the total population of students needing those supports. Essentially, all

students receive the Tier 1 supports, select students receive the Tier 2 supports and few students receive the Tier 3 supports. The school counselor's role is aligned their direct and indirect services within the counseling program with the MTSS data-informed needs assessment (ASCA, 2021). These services include:

- Tier 1 interventions in the form of classroom instruction and schoolwide programming and initiatives
- Tier 2 interventions including small-group and individual counseling, consultation and collaboration with school personnel, families and community stakeholders
- Tier 3 indirect student support services through consultation, collaboration and facilitation of referrals (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020, pp. 50-52).

Included in the role of Tier 1 services for school counselors is collaborating in the collection and analysis of school wide data designed to assess student and staff needs for effective decision- making on programming and curriculum to address all ASCA domains (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Goodman-Scott et al., 2016). The 15% of students identified through the universal screener for Tier 2 are provided direct service interventions including small group counseling (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020; Sherrod et al., 2009) and individualized interventions check in, check out; (Besler et al., 2016; Dart et al., 2012; Goodman-Scott et al., 2020). Tier 3 services are approximately 5% of the student population. The school counselor role in this tier is often in a crisis response, consultation, providing wrap-around services and/or facilitation of referrals as members of the MTSS team (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

School Counselors Role Using PBIS AND MTSS

School counselors possess both the training and job roles to create school-side interventions addressing student behaviors (Sherrod et al., 2019) their training and schedule make them ideal staff to collaborate with PBIS school leadership team to implement individual student interventions (Martens & Andree, 2013); and school counselor and PBIS naturally align because both prioritize utilizing a systemic, data-driven, preventative framework focusing on student success (Goodman-Scott, 2014).

ASCA (2021) describes the school counselors as stakeholders in the development and implementation of MTSS. School counselors align the interventions of an MTSS approach within a comprehensive counseling program. Informed by data, MTSS academic and behavioral interventions at tiered levels are integrated into the counseling programs domains of academic, social-emotional, and career development (ASCA, 2021; Ehren et al., 2006; Sink, 2016).

ASCA National Model Alignment with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

It is important to recognize the alignment between a comprehensive school counseling program and MTSS. Coordination and collaboration of services include effectively using the "school counselors' time and expertise through tiered supports; collecting and reviewing student and school data implementing evidence-based practices' developing culturally responsive interventions that close achievement gaps; promoting prevention and intervention for students through a tiered continuum; and facilitating school wide systemic change and positive school climate" (Ziomek-Diagle et al., 2016, p. 226-227).

School counselors often facilitate MTSS in a Comprehensive School Counseling Program. The overlap and alignment of MTSS in a comprehensive program are important within the school setting as the school counselor may implement varying roles in each programmatic

structure. MTSS and comprehensive school counseling programs share over-lapping characteristics and school counselors act as leaders vacillating between the roles of supporter, intervener, and facilitator (Ockerman et al., 2012; Ziomek-Diagle et al.).

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the proposed research study's purpose, research questions, research methodology, data collection, procedures, and analysis. The chapter provides the alignment of the research questions, literature review, and data collection.

The purpose of this quantitative research was to study the differences in social emotional behaviors/thoughts outcomes in students who participated in a Tier 2 Support Group versus those students who did not participate in a Tier 2 Support Group. This study measured students' social emotional, behavioral and academic outcomes through a Social, Academic and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS). The SAEBRS Screener is a two-part screener, Social, Academic and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener, Student Rating Scale (mySAEBRS) and Social, Academic and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener, Teacher Rating Scale (SAEBRS-TRS). Specifically, this study examined mySAEBRS results of students and the SAEBRS-TRS results of ELO (Extended Learning Opportunity) or homeroom teachers. This assessment was provided as part of the curriculum in the high school setting.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study using SAEBRS Data include:

1. Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the my-SAEBRS, compared those who do not participate?
2. Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the SAEBRS-TRS, compared those who do not participate?

The study examined the mean percentile scores of both the mySAEBRS and SAEBRS-TRS results of students who participated in Tier 2 Intervention groups within the secondary school and of those who did not. The Social, Academic, Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (mySAEBRS), student assessment and the Social, Academic, Emotional, Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS-TRS), teacher assessment were administered as a screening for all freshmen and sophomore students. The data collected from these screeners served to identify students who are struggling on a social emotional or academic basis. The aggregate data were collected as a component of the high school assessment plan.

Students who were identified by their mySAEBRS and SAEBRS-TRS scores were then eligible to participate in a Tier 2 Intervention group. Students were not selected due to a variety of reasons including lack of staff to facilitate the groups, student or parent declined to participate in the group or other reasons within the school setting. The curriculum for the group intervention addressed content provided in Merrell's Strong Teens – Grades 9-12 Curriculum. Students attended 6 weeks of group sessions led by professional school counselors, student support counselors, and family support workers. Tier 2 Intervention group topics include: Emotional Strength Training, Understanding Your Emotions, Understanding Other People's Emotions, Dealing with Anger, Clear Thinking, Solving People Problems, Letting Go of Stress, Positive Living, and Creating Strong and SMART Goals.

SAEBRS Screener in the School Setting

Universal screening serves as a foundation for school-based, multi-tiered, prevention-focused models of service delivery that emphasize data-based decision making for students experiencing academic, social, emotional, or behavior difficulty in the school setting (von der Embse et al., 2016). The SAEBRS was intended for school-wide use in identifying students on

an at-risk continuum. Comprehensive behavioral rating scales were then recommended for those students identified at-risk to inform the decision making and intervention selection. (von der Embse et al., 2016). The SAEBRS was originally validated with a sample of 243 elementary students (Kilgus et al., 2013). The SAEBRS now includes two forms: Social, Academic and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener – Teacher Rating Scare (SAEBRS-TRS) and the Social, Academic and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener – Student Rating Scale (mySAEBRS) (Kilgus et al., 2021).

The SAEBRS-TRS is a 19-item teacher rating scale available via Fastbridge (fastbridge.org), an electronic web-based system of assessment tools. Specifically, the measure serves as the foundation of behavior universal screening within the system and is a component of a broader suite of behavior assessment tools (Kilgus et al., 2015).

The mySAEBRS is a student self-evaluation. The self-evaluation provides a tool for students to self-report on their perceptions of personal functioning across three behavioral domains: social, academic and emotional. These data were used to support decision-making of school professionals in determining which students have low, medium or high risks and what interventions are appropriate to best meet student needs.

The SAEBRS-TRS and mySAEBRS Screeners align with Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks and interventions. The school in this study currently implements these screeners as standard curriculum. The data from both screeners were implemented for the purpose of evaluating the placement of students for a Tier 2 Student Support Group.

SAEBRS Scoring

Fastbridge reports students' performance on the SAEBRS score as a sum of the item scores within each scale. Scores range from 0-18 for Social Behavior, 0-18 for Academic Behavior, 0-21 for Emotional Behavior, and 0-57 for Total Behavior. The Total Behavior score is calculated by summing the sub-scale scores of the Social Behavior, Academic Behavior, and Emotional Behavior scores (Gresham & Elliot, 2008). SAEBRS scores are reported as low-risk, some-risk, and high-risk.

Through careful consideration and consultation the SAEBRS authors, and research teams made a national norm-referenced model of the SEB supports. The national norms were derived from a national sample of students demographically matched to the U.S. school population.

The benchmark norms that were set for each risk category are as follows: low risk – scores above the 15th national percentile, some risk – scores from the 3rd to 15th national percentile, and high risk – scores below the 3rd national percentile. The screener cut scores represent approximately 1 and 2 standard deviations below the national mean, which is consistent with the approach applied by other behavior screening tools (Illuminate Education, 2021).

The benchmarks for the total scores and the Social, Academic, and Behavior subscales are provided in the tables below. The students' scores on the SAEBRS and mySAEBRS should not used as a sole determinant of overall risk or intervention services in any educational setting. Scores should be examined by a team of professionals, potentially consisting of teacher(s), counselor, school psychologist, administrative leader, and others who know the students well. SAEBRS and mySAEBRS must be compared and used with other sources of information about

the students' behaviors in order to confirm the presence of risk and need for support (Illuminate Education, 2021).

Table 3.1. mySAEBRS Benchmarks for High Risk, Some Risk, and Low Risk

Scale	High Risk	Some Risk	Low Risk
Total	0 - 24	25 - 34	35+
Social	0 - 9	10 - 12	13+
Academic	0 - 6	7 - 9	10+
Emotional	0 - 7	8 - 10	11+

Table 3.2. SAEBRS-TRS Benchmarks for High Risk, Some Risk, and Low Risk

Scale	High Risk	Some Risk	Low Risk
Total	0 - 23	24 - 36	37+
Social	0 - 7	8 - 12	13+
Academic	0 - 5	6 - 9	10+
Emotional	0 - 11	12 - 15	16+

The type of risk depends on the specific subscale. A description of each type of risk is included with the assessment screeners: Students who are at risk for social behavior problems display behaviors that limit his/her ability to maintain are appropriate relationships with peers and adults. Students who are at risk for academic behavior problems display behaviors that limits his/her ability to be prepared for, participate in, and benefit from academic instruction. Students who are at risk for emotional behavior problems display actions that limit the ability to regulate internal states, adapt to change, and respond to stressful/challenging events. Teachers

should always interpret the Total Behavior score first because it is the most reliable (Illuminate Education, 2021).

Setting

This study was completed in a rural public high school, grades 9 and 10, in a medium sized Midwestern city with a population of approximately 46,000. The public unified school district where the research was completed has a total enrollment of 7,766 students in grades K-12. The total male population was 3,967, 51.1% and the total female population was 3,798, 48.9%. The district had a race breakdown of African American, 353, 4.8%; Asian, 188, 2.42%; Hispanic, 1,905, 24.5%; other 1040, 13.0%; and, White, 6,184, 91.5%. The Hispanic ethnicity has 1,905, 24.5% of students included in this category (State Department of Education).

The unified school district is composed of two high schools, two middle schools, 8 elementary schools and a virtual school. The high school where the present study took place has a population of 1,165; total male population was 564, 48.4%. The total female population was 601, 51.6%. The ethnicity breakdown of the school is as follows: African American, 37, 3.2%, Asian, 49, 4.2%, Hispanic, 299, 25.7%, Other 108, 9.3%, and White, 971, 83.3%. The building had 614, 52.7% economically disadvantaged students and 551, 47.3%, non-economically disadvantaged students (State Department of Education).

Participants

This study included mySAEBRS and SAEBRS-TRS data. Data collection and the group activity are standard components of the school counseling curriculum. Parents gave consent and were kept informed and invited to engage in the process. The researcher followed school guidelines and best practices to provide parents opportunities for engagement. No individual student data were used in the research study. All data in the research study were aggregated data.

As per the school policy, 100% of the 9th and 10th grade student population, males and females participated in the mySAEBRS assessment. The total 9th and 10th grade population at this research site is 561. Among them, the students who qualify to be selected in the Tier 2 Intervention Groups participated in this study. See the Procedure section for the selection details. Approximately 30-35% of the total 9th and 10th grade student population fall into the Tier 2 Range. Parent permission informed consents were obtained for the students who were selected to participate in the Tier 2 intervention groups. The school district parental permission informed consent is included in the Appendices.

Procedures

Students in a rural Midwest Kansas high school were given the mySAEBRS Screener to complete as a part of the school counseling program. Teachers also completed the SAEBRS-TRS to gather multiple data points to determine what students might need a Tier 2 intervention. The intervention provided was a counseling group with a focus on topics related to teaching positive social emotional skills.

As per school policy, the mySAEBRS assessment was administered to all 9th and 10th grade students in a rural Midwest high school in the month of October, 2021. The SAEBRS-TRS was also completed by Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) Teachers for all 9th and 10th graders during the same time frame. The survey was administered to students during their Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO), a non-academic class time offered at the end of each school day. The ELO teacher was in charge of distributing the user names and passwords and assisting with any log-in help for each 9th and 10th grader. Each student completed the online screener using their student issued Chromebook Technology. Students were provided with a log-in name and password to complete their part of the SAEBRS Screener. When students had

completed the screener, they returned to working on any homework needed for their specific classes.

If a student had not completed their mySAEBRS Screener in the designated assessment week, the School Counselor and Student Support Counselor worked individually with students for them to complete the screener. The School Counselor and Student Support Counselor provided the student the user name and password and the student then completed the mySAEBRS Screener on their student issued Chromebook Technology.

It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic was happening at this time. During this time, schools were required to make decisions on how to best serve students in a safe educational environment. Different attendance policies were in place and the county health department was still in charge of quarantining students and families as they saw appropriate. Some students may have missed school due to being in mandated quarantines. In October, of 2021, this public school also required all staff, students, and visitors to the school to wear masks.

Students who screened as high-risk as measured by the SAEBRS data were referred to the Student Support Team. The team recommended the students for the Tier 2 intervention groups. Selected students were contacted by the school counselor and given an informed consent to share with their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians were also sent an email explaining the Tier 2 Group, purposes, curriculum, and the support that it would provide.

Students who scored in the Tier 2 range on either the mySAEBRS or SAEBRS-TRS are qualified to potentially be placed in a Tier 2 Student Support Group. Some students who screen in to the high or moderate-risk categories were not be selected for the Tier 2 intervention groups. This was due to any of the following reasons: 1. Due to staffing and capacity to serve students, there may not have been time in the school year for all students to participate in the Tier 2

intervention group. 2. School resources and time did not allow for all students to participate in the intervention. 3. The Student Support Team may have decided that the group setting is not the best way to serve a student. This was based on other services the student is receiving, behavior issues or other factors the team decided on. 4. Parents may not have wanted their student to participate in the Tier 2 intervention group. These students who scored in the Tier 2 range but not selected for the Tier 2 Intervention Groups will served as the control group in the current study.

The same data collection process was followed to administer and collect data in April, 2022 with students and teachers. Students completed the mySAEBRS and teachers completed the SAEBRS-TRS. These data were analyzed as comparison data for examination of curriculum and group interventions.

Group Intervention

Merrell's Strong Teens – Grade 9-12, Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum

The evidence-based interventions that were implemented within the Tier 2 Groups setting include curriculum and activities from Merrell's Strong Teens – Grade 9-12, Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum. Merrell's Strong Teens – Grades 9-12 is designed specifically for use with teens in Grades 9-12 or those who are approximately ages 14-19. Because Merrell's Strong Teens – Grades 9-12 is designed to be both prevention and early intervention (EI) program, it has a wide range of applications and may be used effectively with teens who are high functioning, typically developing, at risk for social and emotional problems or struggling with social and emotional difficulties. Merrell's Strong Teens – Grades 9-12 are designed to be implemented in a variety of settings: general and special education classrooms, group settings, and youth treatment facilities that have an educational component (Carrizales-Englemann et al., 2015). The topics addressed in the curriculum of Merrell's Strong Teens – Grades 9-12, Tier 2

Student Support Groups include: Emotional Strength Training, Understanding Your Emotions, Understanding Other People's Emotion's, Dealing with Anger, Clear Thinking, Solving People Problems, Letting Go of Stress, Positive Living, and Creating Strong and SMART Goals.

Merrell's Strong Curriculum in the School Setting

The curriculum is designed to increase awareness and "offer student strategies to manage emotional and social complexities while having fun and engaging in activities that support their academic, social and emotional learning" (Carrizales-Englemann et al, 2016, p. 1.) The curriculum aligns with ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success and the MTSS Tier curriculum.

Merrell et al. conducted three pilot studies implementing Strong Kids and Strong Teens Social Emotional learning program. The first study included 120 elementary students of 97.9% Caucasian and 2.1% Hispanic populations. It was reported students in study 1 indicated large and statically significant gains in knowledge, but no meaningful change in self-reported problem symptoms after participating in the Strong Kids Program. The second study included 65 general education students in a junior high school setting. These students indicated "significant and clinically relevant gains in social-emotional knowledge and decreases in negative social-emotional symptoms, after participating in the Strong Kids program" (Merrell et al. 2008, p. 1). Lastly, study 3 included 14 students in grades 9-12 identified in Special Education programs with 75% African American and 25% Caucasian. The results of this study concluded that students had a "statistically significant and clinically relevant change in their knowledge of social emotional behavior/coping strategies and in their negative social emotional symptoms, following participation in the Strong Teens program (Merrell et al, 2008, p. 2).

Each group session is led by counseling professionals within the building. Students complete the Merrell's Strong Teens – Grades 9-12 Curriculum throughout the 6-week sessions. The group activities, developed by the Student Support Team, align with the curriculum topics and ASCA Student Standards Mind Sets and Behaviors for Student Success and school counseling program standards. The topics for each session were as follows:

Session 1: Introductions, Norms and Emotional Strength Training and Understanding Your Emotions

Session 2: Understanding Other People's Emotions and Dealing with Anger

Session 3: Clear Thinking 1 & 2

Session 4: Solving People Problems and Letting Go of Stress

Session 5: Positive Living

Session 6: Creating Strong SMART Goals and Finish Up and Closing

Each session had several objectives that are covered as presented by Merrell's Strong Teen Curriculum for 9-12 students. They are as follows:

Session 1

Objectives:

1. Students will develop the ability to be able to identify what physical feelings and sensations happen with different emotions.
2. Students will identify emotions on an intensity scale.
3. Students will identify thoughts and behaviors that happen with different emotions.
4. Students will identify behaviors that can communicate emotions and how that may affect our relationships

5. Students will understand that how we express and experience emotions can depend on our culture and background.

Session 2

Objectives:

1. Students will understand how to determine how someone else may feel.

2. Students will understand other people's perspectives to better understand motivation and actions of others.

3. Students will be able to identify differences in how individuals show different emotions.

4. Students will be able to name and describe anger management techniques in a variety of situations.

Session 3

Objectives:

1. Students will be aware of their own thoughts and behaviors and understand how these influence emotions and behaviors.

2. Students will be able to notice and observe thoughts

3. Students will be able to distinguish between healthy thought patterns and ones that may hinder them.

Session 4

Objectives:

1. Students will distinguish between helpful and unhelpful decision-making strategies to resolve conflict

2. Students will identify and apply the steps of a problem-solving model

3. Students will learn how relaxation and coping techniques to reduce stress.

Session 5

Objectives:

1. Students will understand positive daily choices and how these can lead to a healthy lifestyle 2. Students will understand the importance of increasing and maintaining healthy activities

3. Students will learn how to set SMART goals.

Session 6

Objectives:

1. Students will develop an awareness of supports and networks within their school setting and beyond

2. Students will enhance their understanding of resilience and persistence.

Each session of the group was planned in outline form on a power point presentation that was shared among all facilitators from the Student Support Team. The outline, lesson objectives and topics, and activities were also shared with all Tier 2 Group Facilitators. The Merrell's Strong Teens Curriculum – Grades 9-12 lessons and any supplemental materials were given to each facilitator. Facilitators met once a month throughout the school year to discuss Tier 2 support groups and discuss curriculum adjustments if needed.

Students attended the group during their Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) class at the end of the school day. This class time was used to enrich and support the learning for students. Examples of activities that take place during ELO time are: study time, completion of missing work, participation in relationship building, participation in career exploration, and other school initiatives. Each group lasted approximately one hour. Students were led through activities, case studies and discussions to help them understand and process cognitive patterns

and how those connect to behaviors and feelings. A goal was to teach students to better regulate their own emotions.

Teachers and students were reminded of the group activities with regular communication to enhance student attendance and participation. Students reported to their assigned group meeting location and were dismissed from there at the end of the school day.

Instruments

SAEBRS Assessment Tools

The mySAEBRS is a student self-report screening tool of 20 items rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (0 = never to 3 = almost always) (Kilgus et.al., 2021). The survey is a universal screener, administered online to students in grades 2-12 to self-assess their social, academic, and emotional behavior. The survey can be completed in approximately 10 minutes (Illuminated.com).

The SAEBRS-TRS is a 19-item teacher rating scale available via FastBridge an electronic web-based system of assessment tools. The SAEBRS is a norm-referenced tool for screening all students for the purpose of identifying students at-risk for social-emotional behavior concerns. SAEBRS-TRS is created to align with a dual-factor model of student social-emotional functioning, which asserts that mental health should be defined by both the absence of problem behaviors and symptomatology and the presence of well-being and competencies (Illuminate Education).

The SAEBRS-TRS Assessment is a conceptual model that has three subscales: Social Behavior, Academic Behavior, and Emotional Behavior. These subscales are divided into two categories: Social behavior examining Externalizing Problems, and Social Skills. Academic behavior is divided into Attentional Problems and Academic Enablers. Emotional Behavior

categories are Internalizing Problems and Emotional Competence. These subscales and domains are interrelated with the CASEL Framework.

The mySAEBRS Assessment uses a Likert-type scale in order to give an all-over score report that is divided into three sub score areas: 1) Risk for social behavior problems 2) Risk for academic behavior problems, and 3) Risk for emotional behavior problems. Scores are criterion-referenced and categorized with four levels of risk.

Evidence of technical quality was collected on the SAEBRS Assessment Tool. The reliability internal consistency (Chronbach's Alpha) was estimated for each scale separately for elementary and middle school students. Estimates range from 0.79 to 0.94 (Kilgus et al., 2016). Estimates of interrater reliability ranged from 0.41 to 0.48 for the overall, academic behavior, and social behavior scales (Kilgus et al., 2015).

Initial items were reviewed by experts (including school psychology professors and doctoral students) and sorted into categories based on expert judgment to ensure content validity. The expert panels also provided feedback on item wording (Kilgus et al., 2013).

Validity evidenced based on internal structure was shared in "Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor analysis demonstrated that the overall, academic behavior and social behavior scales were supported (Kilgus et al., 2013; Kilgus, 2016). Additional multilevel factor analysis substantiated these findings (von der Embse et al., 2016).

SAEBRS Construct Validity

To test the construct validity, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to assess the extent to which various factor models fit SAEBRS data. The three models were: (a) unidimensional model, wherein each mySAEBRS item loads onto a single broad factor; (b) correlated-factor model, wherein each item loads onto its corresponding narrow

factor and the narrow factors are permitted to covary with one another; and (c) bifactor model, wherein each item loads onto both its corresponding narrow factor and the overall broad factor (von der Embse et al., 2016).

Model fit was evaluated through a series of fit statistics, including the chi-square goodness-of-fit test, Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root-mean square residual (SRMR). Observed fit statistic values were compared with the following cut-offs in evaluating model fit: chi-square goodness-of-fit test, $p > .05$; RMSEA $\leq .08$; CFI/TLI $\geq .90$; and SRMR $\leq .08$ (Little, 2013). It displayed excellent fit by all fit statistics.

Another SAEBRS validity study was conducted with a random sample of 10,000 students from 338 school districts were selected to evaluate factor structure using anonymized data, based on race and gender to match the U.S. school population (2019). The sample included a population of 51% male, 58% White, 16% African American, 17% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 4% other.

There were also additional studies conducted to evaluate the construct validity of SAEBRS. The first study completed during the 2010–2011 academic year used the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS; Gresham & Elliott, 2008) as the criterion measure. The SSIS is a comprehensive teacher rating scale (83 items) used to assess the three domains of student behavior: social skills, problem behaviors, and academic competence. The SSIS was considered a particularly important criterion given the scale's assessment of social and academic functioning as well as its pertinence to problem behaviors, which are also assessed within each SAEBRS subscale. For this study, only the social behavior (6 items) and academic behavior (6 items) scales of SAEBRS were implemented.

The study referenced above was conducted across three public schools within a single school district in the Southeastern United States. In this district, 4% of students are English language learners, and 40% qualified for free/reduced lunch. The race/ethnicity composition of the sample was: 50.6% White, 32.5% African American, 10.3% Hispanic, 2.1% Asian, and 3.7% other (Kilgus et al., 2013). Within the three schools, 56 K–5 teachers agreed to participate. Using a random number generator, researchers randomly selected five students for participation in each classroom, resulting in identify 276 student participants. Four teachers requested to rate only four randomly selected students due to time constraints (Kilgus et al., 2013).

SAEBRS Reliability

The reliability of mySAEBRS' subscales and the Total Behavior scale was assessed as part of a larger study examining the factor structure, factor structure invariance across age levels, and item parameters (von der Embse et.al., 2016; Kilgus et.al., 2020). In the 2016-2017 academic year, data were collected from 24,094 individual student responses in grades between kindergarten and 12th grade. Males comprised 53% of the sample. The racial distribution of students of data available from 70% of the schools was as follows: 40.3% White, 16.7% African American, and 6.9% Hispanic. The sample consisted of students from Kindergarten through Grade 8 in the following percentages: K = 2.1%, first = 2.1%, second = 6.4%, third = 14.8%, fourth = 15.0%, fifth = 14.6%, sixth = 14.8%, seventh = 11.0%, eighth = 11.1%, ninth =2.1%, 10th = 2.5%, 11th = 2.1%, and 12th = 1.3%.

The Fastbridge (2020) study reported internal consistency of reliability was evaluated using the omega coefficients from best fitting factor model. In subsequent research Omega coefficients were chosen over other commonly evaluated internal consistency statistics (e.g., coefficient alpha) given (a) limitations associated with these latter statistics (Sijtsma, 2009) and

(b) the applicability of omega coefficients to multidimensional factor structures, including bifactor models (Reise et al., 2013). Three types of omega coefficients were calculated: omega (ω), which denotes the proportion of variance attributable to all factors (i.e., both global and specific) common to the target items; ωH, which represented the proportion of variance attributable to the global factor after controlling for all specific factors; and ωS, which represented the proportion of variance attributable to the specific factors after controlling for the global factor. Acceptable reliability was defined as coefficients greater than .70 for ω values (Salvia et al., 2010) and .50 for ωH and ωS values (Gignac & Watkins, 2013; Reise et al., 2013). The results for omega (ω) were as follows: Total Behavior ω = 0.828, Academic Behavior ω = 0.767, Emotional Behavior ω = 0.767, and Social Behavior ω = 0.725. These results indicated that the Total Behavior score is highly reliable and that the subscale scores are also very reliable. The result for ωH was 0.464 for Total Behavior, suggesting that after accounting for the subscales specific factors, the global factor accounted for about 50% of the variance. The results for ωS were 0.371 for Academic Behavior, 0.630 for Emotional Behavior, and 0.541 for Social Behavior, indicating that after accounting for the global factor, the specific factors still accounted for some variance.

This quantitative study compared data for the pre and post the group intervention. Data were analyzed for the purpose of examining the curriculum to determine if a difference was made for students attending the Tier 2 Intervention group, compared to those who did not attend. These data inform decision-making for selecting and modifying curriculum to meet student needs and program standards.

Data Analysis

Once data collection was complete, incomplete data were removed from the study. No individual data were analyzed. Only aggregate data were analyzed for this study. For each research question, a one-way ANCOVA analysis was conducted. The first ANCOVA analysis was conducted on the April Assessment (post-test) of my-SAEBRS percentile after controlling for the October Assessment (pre-test) of my-SAEBRS percentile. The independent variable was the group membership, including the group who participated in the Tier 2 intervention group and the group who did not participate in the Tier 2 intervention group.

The second ANCOVA analysis was conducted on the April Assessment (post-test) of SAEBRS-TRS percentile after controlling for the October Assessment (pre-test) of SAEBRS-TRS percentile. The independent variable was the group membership, including the group who participated in the Tier 2 intervention group and the group who did not participate in the Tier 2 intervention group.

ASCA Ethical Standards

The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2016) were also followed when conducting this research study. ASCA specifies the obligation to the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the high standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors were developed in consultation with state school counseling associations, school counselor educators, school counseling state and district leaders and school counselors across the nation to clarify the norms, values and believes of the profession (ASCA, 2016).

Protection of Human Participants

Prior to conducting the study and analyzing data for this proposed study approval from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought. Permission was also documented by the district superintendent, Director of Secondary Education and building principal as appropriate for the ethical needs of the study. All ethical standards were followed throughout the study and administration and collection of data.

Identifiable information was not included in the data collection used for this study. Data were collected only in the aggregate. Participation was voluntary and participants may have withdrawn at any time. Data were coded and stored in the Principal Investigator's KSU OneDrive. Only the Principal Investigator and PhD research candidate had access to the data.

Chapter 4 - Results

Introduction

This study examined the differences in social emotional behaviors/thoughts outcomes in students who are provided a Tier 2 Support Group in a secondary school versus those students who did not participate in a Tier 2 Support Group. In this study, the research compared data to determine if engaging in Tier 2 Support Group intervention would have an influence on social emotional behaviors/thoughts as measured on the SAEBRS Assessment. The following two research questions guided the study:

1. Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the my-SAEBRS, compared those who do not participate?
2. Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the SAEBRS-TRS, compared those who do not participate?

This chapter contains the results of the study. The presentation of the analysis of the data has been organized around the two research questions that guided the study.

Descriptive Statistics

The study's population consisted of 561 students in one high school who were administered the SAEBRS self-assessment and the SAEBRS-TRS assessment completed by ELO homeroom teachers in the Fall of 2021 and the Spring of 2022. Of the 561 students, 205 total students scored in the "some risk" or "high risk" category on the SAEBRS or SAEBRS-TRS assessments. A total of 84 students were served in Tier 2 Intervention Groups.

For the first research question, the dependent variable is the SAEBRS Spring data. The independent variable is the Tier 2 Student Support Group Participation. The aggregated data were retrieved from the Illuminate Education, FastBridge System, inputted into an Excel spreadsheet and imported into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for a more detailed analysis. The data were coded for the comparison group and the intervention group, using a 0 and 1 respectively.

For SAEBRS self-assessment, the mean percentile score was 22% for those who participated in the Tier 2 Student Support group and 19% for those who did not participate in the Tier 2 Student Support group. The results for Spring SAEBRS Student Self-Assessment by 9th and 10th grade students in the comparison and intervention groups are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variable: Spring SAEBRS Student Self-Assessment

Dependent Variable: Spring SAEBRS Student Percentile at Nation

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Comparison Group	22.94	17.567	114
Intervention Group	19.58	22.544	55
Total	21.85	19.324	169

For SAEBRS-TRS teacher assessment, the mean percentile score was 28% for those who participated in the Tier 2 Student Support group and 14% for those who did not participate in the Tier 2 Student Support group. The results for Spring SAEBRS-TRS Teacher Assessment by 9th and 10th grade students in the comparison and intervention groups are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variable: Spring SAEBRS Teacher Assessment

Dependent Variable: Spring SAEBRS Teacher Percentile at Nation

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Comparison Group	28.38	23.107	116
Intervention Group	14.33	15.996	57
Total	23.75	22.003	173

Results

Research Question 1.

Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Group Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the my-SAEBRS, compared to those who do not participate?

For research question one, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed on the data using the dependent variable, the SAEBRS Spring data, the independent variable is the Tier 2 Student Support Group Participations. The covariate is the SAEBRS Fall data.

ANCOVA revealed that after controlling for the Fall SAEBRS scores, the intervention does not have a statistically significant effect on the Spring SAEBRS scores, $F(1, 166) = .003$, $p = .955$. Differences in the mean percentile score between the comparison group and intervention group after controlling for the covariate, reflect the mean percentile score for the comparison group and intervention group were very close. The estimated marginal mean percentile score for the comparison group was 21.90 and the estimated marginal mean percentile score for the intervention group was 21.74, after controlling for the Fall SAEBRS scores.

Research Question 2.

Do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the SAEBRS-TRS, compared to those who do not participate?

For the second research question, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed on the data using the dependent variable, the SAEBRS-TRS Spring data, the independent variable is the Tier 2 Student Support Group Participation. The covariate is the SAEBRS-TRS Fall data.

ANCOVA revealed that after controlling for the Fall SAEBRS-TRS teacher scores, there was a statistically significant effect of intervention on the SAEBRS-TRS spring data, $F(1, 170) = 4.81$, $p = .03$, partial $\eta^2 = .028$. The estimated marginal mean percentile score for the comparison group was 25.81 and the estimated marginal mean percentile score for the intervention group was 19.55, controlling for the Fall SAEBRS-TRS teacher scores.

Summary

This chapter included the descriptive findings and inferential results of the study. The chapter reviewed the results of the examination of the differences in social emotional behaviors/thoughts outcomes in students who are provided a Tier 2 Support Group in a secondary school (Intervention Group) versus those students who do not participate in a Tier 2 Support Group (Control Group). Chapter five provides the implications of the findings and recommendations.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

The results of the study were presented and analyzed in Chapter 4. This chapter contains a summary of the investigation, a discussion on the implications for practice, and recommendations for future researchers.

Summary

This study examined the differences in social emotional behaviors/thoughts outcomes in 9th and 10th grade students who were provided a Tier 2 Support Group in a secondary school versus those students who did not participate in a Tier 2 Support Group. The population consisted of 561 high school students who took the SAEBRS self-assessment and the SAEBRS-TRS assessment conducted by ELO homeroom teachers in the Fall of 2021 and the Spring of 2022. Of the 561 students, 205 total students scored in the "some" or "high risk" category on the SAEBRS or SAEBRS-TRS assessments. A total of 84 students were served in Tier 2 Intervention Groups.

The data were cleaned and an ANCOVA analysis completed. To strengthen the study, covariates of Fall SAEBRS data and Fall SAEBRS-TRS data were included. The instruments administered were the FastBridge SAEBRS and FastBridge SAEBRS-TRS screeners.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of the first research question was to examine if students who participate in a Tier 2 Student Support Group have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the SAEBRS student self-assessment compared to the control group. These questions were posed as the researcher sought to find ways to support students' social emotional needs and behaviors as highlighted in Chapter 2.

The first research question examined whether students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Group Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the my-SAEBRS, compared to those who do not participate? The participants in this research included all 9th and 10th grade students in a Midwest high school. the SAEBRS and SAEBRS-TRS assessments were administered to all students in the high school.

For research question 1, the results of the analysis indicated that the student group participation does not have a statistically significant effect on the Spring SAEBRS student data after controlling for the Fall SAEBRS student data. The mean percentile score for the comparison group was 21.90 and the mean percentile score for the intervention group was 21.74.

Overall, the literature from Chapter 2 supports that students' participating in groups within the school setting has a positive impact. Research reported group counseling creates opportunities for counselors to reach a significantly greater number of students, in a more time efficient manner with equal effectiveness than addressing the same issues with individual students (Baskin et al, 2010; Corey et al 2010; McRoberts et al 1998). Psycho-educational and counseling groups have demonstrated effectiveness in multiple areas including the modeling concept in Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory (Kivlighan et al., 2016). When conducting a group counseling activity, Kivlighan et al. participants reported group members modeled the interpersonal reactions, depth of group engagement, attitudes and dispositions of their group members. The group influence on other group members is congruent with the goals of MTSS and PBIS (Kivlighan et al., 2016; Kivlighan et al., 2012).

The findings of this study did not support the literature as the self-assessment scores on the SAEBRS student assessment were not statistically significant. However, this leads to

questioning some of the limitations of students doing the self-assessment and what factors may influence into these results.

The purpose of the second research question was to examine if students who participate in a Tier 2 Student Support Group have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the SAEBRS-TRS teacher assessment. These questions are asked as the researcher sought ways to support students' social emotional needs and behaviors as highlighted in Chapter 2.

The second research question, do students who participate in the Strong Teen Curriculum Tier 2 Student Support Interventions have a lower social emotional behavior (SEB) risk as measured by the composite percentile on the SAEBRS-TRS, compared to those who do not participate? For research question 2, the results of the analysis indicated that student group participation does have a statistically significant effect on the Spring SAEBRS-TRS teacher data after controlling for the Fall SAEBRS-TRS teacher data. The mean score for the comparison group was 28.38 and the mean percentile score for the intervention group was 14.33.

The literature from Chapter 2, supports that psycho-educational and counseling groups have demonstrated effectiveness in multiple areas including the modeling concept in Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory (Kivlighan et al., 2016). The findings of this study questions support the current literature by examining teacher's perceptions of students who participate in a Tier 2 Student Support Group Intervention.

Through the lens of Bandura, the findings of this study could be a result of the Tier 2 Student Support Group Intervention. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Bandura stated that students engage in learning through the four sources of self-efficacy including mastery experiences. The "triadic reciprocal causation" depicted in Figure 1, Bandura explained human agency as

"interplay of intrapersonal influences (Bandura, 1986; 2012). The model of triadic reciprocal causations leads to decision and actions. These decisions influence the impact of self-efficacy regarding the level of motivation and persistence individuals expend in the face of obstacles and adversity (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).

By engaging in the Tier 2 Student Support Group Intervention, students engaged in experiences to learn skills that may potentially have an impact on their development throughout a life time. The development of self-efficacy is continuous and multi-faceted. Perceptions of self-efficacy are constructed beginning in infancy and continue throughout the life time, into adulthood and old age. These experiences happen continuously from children learning how to form new words and communicate needs through adult development of professional skills. Bandura identifies "personal enablement" through which self-efficacy can be developed through. This is achieved by providing appropriate knowledge, skills, and positive experiences that enhance personal control (1997). Providing students with group experiences in the high school setting is one modality of helping them to learn and develop social emotional skills. The finding of this research study support group experiences.

This data analysis reported interesting findings in which the SAEBRS student self-assessment did not show statistical significance, yet the SAEBRS-TRS teacher assessment did indicate statistical significance. There could be multiple factors regarding this finding.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was due to the administration of the SAEBRS self-assessment. Each student completed the assessment in their ELO homeroom class. The teachers presented the information and assisted students with logging-in, if needed. Alternate arrangements were made by the school counselors and student support counselors for students

who did not complete the survey in their ELO homeroom to complete the survey. Although given the same directions to keep administration similar, differences in how the survey was administered could have influenced how students responded to their SAEBRS self-assessment.

Second, teachers were given the information to complete the SAEBRS-TRS and asked to complete the survey on their ELO homeroom students. Teachers were asked to complete the assessment for each student within a week time frame. Support was provided by the school counselors and student support counselor, if requested be teacher. However, differences could have occurred in how the teachers completed the survey and the professional information and perceptions each teacher based their assessment for each student.

Third, this is a quasi-experimental study without random assignment. There may have been selection bias in regards to students who did and did not receive the intervention of the Tier 2 Student Support Group. Since all high-risk or some-risk students were placed in a group by the Student Support Team, not all students who scored in that range received the Tier 2 Student Support Group Intervention. Therefore, the comparison group and the intervention group were not equivalent and some differences may have occurred through the selection process.

Lastly, one limitation may be that this study was conducted in a rural high school using 9th and 10th grade students. Because the study only collected data from one high school, there may be further findings in data that would be analyzed from students in different settings or from a more diverse student body.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study could be used by teachers, counselors, schools, school districts and legislation as a resource for data collection or professional development for staff identifying student needs, providing additional supports and interventions as needed. Using this data,

educators are able to identify students in need of more support, create groups or provide needed interventions. Furthermore, empirical data provides a basis for understanding, monitoring, implementing, and evaluating the impact of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) interventions. The results of this study can help guide educators in the decision-making process on the importance of implementing SEL practices within the school setting.

There were also several qualitative notes to make in regards to the study. As school staff worked with students and parents, there was positive feedback in regards to student support and the relationships that were built within the school setting. When parents were notified for informed consent of students participating, they were positive in their responses and thankful to the school staff for their willingness to provide support for their student. Throughout the group process, counselors worked to not only provide and teach helpful information, but to also create and grow relationships with students. There were many positive adult and student interactions and relationships that were formed and nurtured through providing the Tier 2 Student Support Groups.

Furthermore, given the differences in results of student self-assessments (SAEBRS) and teacher assessments (SAEBRS-TRS) there could be benefits to developing more robust group curriculum around the specific social emotional behavior (SEB) risks and needs of students in the high school setting. Perhaps additional time for student self-discovery to enhance self-efficacy would improve self-assessment scores.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study provided a basis for annual research to better understand student social emotional behavior needs in regards to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) interventions, as measured by the SAEBRS and SAEBRS-TRS assessments in students in the 9th and 10th

grades. The study examined the SAEBRS student self-assessment of students who participated in a Tier 2 Student Support Intervention Group versus students who did not. In addition, the study examined the SAEBRS-TRS teacher assessment of students who participated in a Tier 2 Student Support Intervention Group versus students who did not.

It is recommended that additional studies continue to examine Tier 2 Students Support group interventions at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels. Data could also be disaggregated to examine greater insight into the influence of student social emotional behaviors on postsecondary decision-making. Future research including districts across the United States which would provide a broader outlook students and teachers perceptions of student needs.

Summary

Implementing systematic methods to collect, analyze, and study data results provide educators an informed decision -making model. This model provides a base to inform the standards, curriculum, and assessments to best meet the needs for all students. This study provided a glimpse into using Tier 2 Student Support Group Interventions to help lower student's SEB risk throughout one school year. The findings for student self-assessment SAEBRS results did not indicate statistical differences for students who participated in the Tier 2 Student Support Group Interventions versus those who were in the comparison group.

The findings for teacher assessment SAEBRS-TRS results did indicate statistical differences for students who participated in the Tier 2 Student Support Group Interventions versus those who were in the comparison group. The results for this study supported the need for MTSS implantation at the high school level. By implementing systematic methods for educators to organize and use data driven decision making, schools can provide appropriate services for all students. Implementation of MTSS supports is integral for key stakeholders, including

administrators, educators, legislators, and parents in providing comprehensive services to meet the social emotional behavioral needs of all students. Research indicates that social emotional learning has also been described as critical to students' long-term success in and out of school meriting careful, sustained attention throughout K-12 education (Bridgeland et al., 2013; DePaoli et al., 2017; Weissberg et al., 2015).

It is recommended for future studies to continue to examine student's social emotional behavior (SEB) risk throughout the school year. Expanding this study to include other school districts across the United States would also provide information that school districts could use to best help students. Additionally, it would be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study that follows adolescents over a longer period of time, perhaps their entire high school career, to see if their social emotional behavior (SEB) risk would decrease, with further interventions over time, looking at both the SAEBRS self-assessment and the SAEBRS-TRS teacher's assessment.

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Appendix A - Parent Permission for Tier 2 Group in School Setting

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year, _____ High School will be offering a group to students focused on strengthening their social-emotional skills. This program is aimed at helping students develop skills to face hardships and persevere with success. This group encourages teens to grow in tenacity, persistence, and determination when facing challenges. Your child has been recommended to be a part of this group due to their results from the SAEBRS self-assessment that was given to all freshman and sophomore students this fall.

These groups will require students to listen to each other and learn from the experiences and responses of others. This program focuses on helping teens understand how to persist and put forth their highest effort when facing challenging issues.

The _____ High School Student Support Team, led by the professional school counselors will facilitate the group. The group will be held during the student's Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) period or rotating throughout the school day so that students do not miss the same classes. Students will attend for 6 sessions. Once students make a commitment to this group, attendance is required.

Please print and sign the letter below. You can either scan it and email it back or return it to the main office, acknowledging that you are aware of your student's weekly attendance at the group and granting permission to participate. It is very important that your student attend group weekly in order to gain the full benefit from this experience. If you have any questions in regards to the group, please contact_____ at ###-#### or contact your student's grade level counselor (see the list below).

Respectfully,

Student Name:

_____

Parent Signature/Permission:

_____