

Literature Review

This literature review is a focused review of minority students in education, key themes found in transformational leadership, and key findings found in social emotional learning. The goal is to propose a trajectory for this study on how aspects of transformational leadership and social emotional learning could lead to positive, impactful student-teacher relationships. This will guide questions that still need to be asked and research that may still need to occur. The literature review examines the relevance of the topics, major themes within the literature, gaps within the literature, and author recommendations.

Literature Search

Search parameters were created to provide a narrow scope of the research, as well as keep the research relevant and manageable, as several avenues could be chosen as salient topics to minority students, transformational leadership, and social emotional learning. The following were entered into search engines such as TOPCAT, ERIC, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier databases, as well as Google Scholar: minority, minority students, minority student needs, and students; transformational leadership, classrooms, teachers and transformational leader; social emotional learning, teacher relationships, social awareness and students, social awareness social emotional learning, and self-awareness and social emotional learning. Next, the following databases have been noted as containing valuable research but have not been included at the time of this draft but will be researched in the near future: PsychINFO, CINALAH, and MEDLINE (Wigelsworth et al, 2016).

Inclusion Criteria

The first parameter set is related to the relevant time frame; where possible, this research uses a 10-year timeframe as a starting point so that the most recent research is used. Literature

related to social emotional learning were the primary emphasis; as part of the search, the reference lists were mined for additional readings. Of particular interest were readings that discussed one of the components of transformational leadership or social emotional learning.

Exclusion Criteria

While the search yielded many sources of information, only readings that appeared to contribute to the goal of this document were included. For example, if an article discusses school climate and job satisfaction (Collier et al., 2012) and has no relationship to improving teacher-student relationships, then the article is excluded. The topic of school climate and what impacts teachers, while important, is not related to the focus of this study. However, if the article explicitly tested a component of interest, such as making responsible decisions, then the article would be included. The following review is an initial review of literature and brings to light several themes found in the literature.

Minority Student Needs

Minority Students and Culturally Relevant Teaching

This review begins with focusing on the needs of minority students because the research intends to study students in an urban setting with a high number of disadvantaged, minority students. The literature discusses culturally relevant teaching, which is a type of teaching that takes into account racial and economic diversity (Mitton, J., & Murray-Orr, A., 2021). However, it has been found that not all teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching are benefiting students and may be lowering their standards (Pringle, B. E. et al., 2010). In the literature, additional equity-based questions have become a part of educational research (Howard, T. C., & Howard, J. R., 2021), as well as the need for students to have learner goals, autonomy, and competency (Isik, U. et al., 2021).

To improve classrooms and relationships in them, we need classrooms that do not reflect one, dominant culture (generally White and female) and need to take into consideration the needs of minority students (Howard, T. C., & Howard, J. R., 2021). Aside from these needs, two more, broader themes in the literature were found to relate to the current review: inclusion and relatedness.

Minority Students: Inclusion and Relatedness

Culturally relevant teaching can also lead to more awareness of diversity which may help increase a sense of belonging, inclusion, and relatedness, among students (Isik, U. et al., 2021). Students who experience relatedness, or have a sense of belonging to their environment have positive outcomes in terms of performance (Isik, U. et al., 2021). According to Espinoza (2012a) “success in school depends on opportunities to develop supportive relationships with key school agents” (p.7), and students want relationships. Students need support early in the educational process in order to stay on track and be successful (Isik, U. et al., 2021). Successful racially minoritized students likely have had an educator change their academic trajectories through interaction with them (Espinoza, R., 2011).

Furthermore, educator-student relationships can impact how students see themselves in terms of being a part of the school and if they belong (Matthews, J. S. et al., 2014). In turn, this shows the importance of relationships: positive outcomes can be seen when teachers and students share a oneness, “allowing both to work toward a common goal,” (Gutstein, E. et al., 1997). Inclusion and relatedness benefit both students and the school, as students who had positive relationships place greater value on their schooling across age groups (Matthews, J. S. et al., 2014). In addition, students believed that role models or mentors who form a support network and therefore positive relationships can be motivating if the role models are of similar ethnic or

racial backgrounds (Isik, U. et al., 2021). The next portion of this review covers transformational leadership as it relates to education and working with students.

Transformational Leadership

This part of the review focuses on themes that are found in the literature on transformational leadership that are related to education and primarily to teachers in the classroom. Transformational leadership is important to this literature review because it can impact relationship building in the classroom and influence students in a positive or negative manner (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015).

Transformational leaders have been described in the literature as having various traits. First, transformational leaders need to have characteristics of kindness, caring, compassion; and need to help students feel special (Bean, B. W., & Kroth, M., 2013); they need to be supportive (Balwant, P. T., Birdi, K., Stephan, U., & Topakas, A., 2019); and they need to have charisma, be inspirational, intellectually stimulate individuals, and consider people as individuals, giving them personal attention (Bass, 2008). Bass also writes, “a highly intellectually stimulating teacher, for instance, may transform students without their regarding the teacher as charismatic,” (p. 620).

Currently, studies on transformational leadership in the educational setting primarily focus on the principal of the school (Cansoy, R., 2019; Wiyono, B. B., 2018) and understanding how to better equip principals in their positions (Cobanoglu, N., 2021). Additionally, studies currently relate to the outcomes of training for administrators (Fields, J. et al., 2019). However, the goal of this document is to expand the literature to include more research related to teachers in the classroom. Teachers can improve student learning through a variety of sources (Bolkan, S., & Goodboy, A. K., 2009), and this study will hopefully contribute to the literature and be one of those sources. In doing a search on transformational leadership evident in the classroom, one

can find implementation and outcomes of transformational leadership on student learning (Bolkan, S., & Goodboy, A. K., 2009; Boyd, B. L., 2009).

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning research can be seen through the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, also known as CASEL. According to the CASEL organization, which is seen as the leading authority on social and emotional learning (SEL),

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

When SEL is part of the environment, children do well, as they are supported by teachers and the environment (Portilla, X. A. et al., 2021), as SEL is seen as a method of handling daily emotional needs (Yeager, D. S., 2017); this can help teacher-student relationships. The following portion of the review discusses the social emotional framework and research related to it.

Social Emotional Learning - The Five Components

As part of this research, this document primarily reviews the literature on the components of both transformational leadership and social emotional learning that may contribute to positive teacher-student outcomes. The next section looks at research related to the five components of social emotional learning as they are presented by CASEL: Relationship skills, self-awareness, social awareness, self management, and responsible decision-making.

Social Emotional Learning: Relationship Skills

As part of social emotional learning, the CASEL 5 framework shows relationship skills as a major component (CASEL 5). Within the literature, common themes that appear in

conjunction with relationship skills include “developing positive relationships” given self-perception between teacher and student (Poulou, M. S. 2017), “practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving,” (Rivera-Pérez, S., et al., 2020), and “self-management of emotions,” (Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T., 2009).

Maria Poulou’s study, “Students’ emotional and behavioral difficulties: the role of social and emotional learning and teacher-student relationships,” provides a look at teacher-student relationships and the impact a teacher’s self-perception and skills can positively impact teacher-student relationships in elementary-age students (Poulou, M. S., 2017). After reading this article, it appears that teachers with high emotional intelligence can have a more positive impact on teacher-student relationships.

When examining Rivera-Perez et al. (2020), we see social emotional learning relationship skills in terms of cooperative learning. In the article, the author makes clear the relationships among cooperative learning, emotional intelligence, and achievement; they write, cooperative learning can be used to “build the students’ social and emotional learning building quality relationships, learning to manage stressors, and evolve individually and in groups” (Rivera-Pérez, S. et al., 2020).

Teacher social emotional learning competence has an impact on the classroom environment, and teachers need to show they can manage their own feelings and be supportive (Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T., 2009). In their article, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) discuss social emotional competence (SEC) and show how “deficits in teacher SEC and well-being may provoke a ‘burnout cascade’ that may have devastating effects on classroom relationships, management, and climate,” (p. 492). Furthermore, relationships can have a positive impact on the brain and thus on student learning, as “The brain learns best when we are

interacting, talking, and collaborating. Talking activates the prefrontal cortex, where higher level thinking takes place” (Sprenger, M., 2020, p. 146). Thus, research has shown that providing a classroom environment where the teacher-student relationships are positive can have benefits.

Social Emotional Learning: Self-Awareness

For teachers to show social emotional competence, Jennings and Greenberg (2008) write that teachers need to have self-awareness to be effective. Arguedas, M. et al. (2016) discuss the “the need of both emotion awareness and teacher’s affective feedback as two important elements in students’ learning process,” (p. 88), and that learning, engagement, and self-management can be greatly impacted when students have emotional intelligence. Arguedas et al. (2016), in their research on emotional-awareness, which is closely related to emotional intelligence, they write, “There is not yet an extensive analysis of the relationship between emotion awareness and students’ motivation, engagement, self-regulation and learning outcome as well as emotion awareness and teacher’s attitude and feedback,” (p. 88). In their case study, they hypothesized that, “Increasing the emotion awareness of learners, their learning outcomes improve in relation to their motivation, engagement and self-regulation. Besides, by increasing the emotion awareness of teachers, their attitude and feedback become more effective and timely,” (p. 89). Arguedas et al. (2016) concluded that self-regulation (or self-management) and emotion awareness has a relationship to positive outcomes.

According to Schiepe-Tiska et al. (2021), “Teachers reported an uncertainty and a lack of professional skills and knowledge in delivering SEL instructions that was particularly low for self-awareness and self-management,” however, few studies on social emotional learning have taken the various components of it, especially the components of “self-awareness, social

awareness, and self-management,” (p.2). The authors use a mixed-method to study the components, emphasizing the many qualitative but not quantitative studies that do not exist.

Social Emotional Learning: Social Awareness

This component of social awareness appears to be less researched in terms of education. However, social awareness has benefits; Sprenger (2020) states that “Students with strong social awareness adapt more easily to their environment, empathize with the perspectives of others, and engage in fewer disruptive classroom behaviors,” (p. 115). Also, “Our students need to sense nonverbal emotional signals as well as understanding others’ thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Finally, they need to know how the social world works and how to shape the outcomes of interactions,” (Sprenger, M., 2020, p. 115). Social awareness is studied as part of educational psychology and generally as part of separate studies, or ones that do not include it in the framework of social emotional learning. Abacioglu et al. (2020) discusses social awareness as a culturally responsive aspect of teaching, and writes, “teachers who have higher perspective taking abilities will more frequently engage in culturally responsive teaching,” but the authors do not provide any link to student performance and relationships. To create literature that combines all components of SEL into a study would benefit the literature on social emotional learning. Understanding the impact of social awareness will require locating resources that relate to the following:

Recognizing strengths in others, demonstrating empathy and compassion, showing concern for the feelings of others, understanding and expressing gratitude, identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones, recognizing situational demands and opportunities, understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior
(CASEL 5)

This will be a next step in the literature review process as common themes will likely come from researching those areas.

Social Emotional Learning: Self-Management

The research on self-management related to social emotional learning and the impact on students appears to be sparse in the current literature. The first article makes the statement that few sources exist on the topic; Nagaoka et al. (2015) write,

Most of the current evidence has established correlations and not causality between self-regulation skills and outcomes. In other words, it has been demonstrated that self-regulation is related to these outcomes (e.g., more self-regulation coincides with better outcomes), but it is not known whether young people's ability to self-regulate actually causes these better outcomes. (p. 20)

To utilize self-management, students need to be “connected to a larger social purpose are likely to engage with increased discipline, diligence, and persistence in pursuit of their objectives,” (Nagaoka, J. et al., 2015, p. 46). Thus, teachers need to incorporate connecting learning to goals related to social purpose.

Niu and Niemi (2020) studied self-management in the classroom and used a skill-focused class. The goal of the study is to show how self-management can have a positive impact on relationships. According to Niu and Niemi (2020), a classroom that focuses on building skills includes:

- (1) the focus is on learning the skill instead of talking about the problem
- (2) the key player is the student her or himself. He or she decides what skill to learn, and the emphasis is on students' strengths and previously learned skills.
- (3) small steps and progress are big motivation factors. (p. 3098)

This is different from other classes in that students do not generally choose their skills to learn since teachers follow core standards as a general practice. In addition, rather than focusing on the problem, the student is looking at the skill that is needed to address the problem.

To analyze their data, Niu and Niemi (2020) used content analysis on the qualitative data they collected. The data included responses to open-ended questions that were asked via a questionnaire, as the authors did not believe the students could provide reliable information due to their ages. Based on the content analysis, Niu and Niemi (2020) write, “There is clear evidence showing that students’ skills improved significantly; further, the relationships among students, teachers, and parents also improved,” (p. 2). In summary, the authors contributed to the literature related to self-management and identified three key components needed to impact teacher-student relationships: skills-based learning, student participation in choosing the skill, small wins and progress.

Sprengr, M. (2020) contributes valuable information on what comprises the component related to self-management. Sprengr describes a situation in which the students are able to practice self-management in a classroom because of the environment of the classroom. She writes, teachers must have a set of “routines, rituals, and procedures,” (p. 96) as it helps students feel safe and does not create an issue with the amygdala that responds to situations causing stress. In addition, Sprengr (2020) recommends that teachers remain calm, have calming stations, practice a soothing voice, and encourage students to track emotions in a planner.

In addition, Sprengr, M. (2020) discusses self-discipline as part of self-management. Students should be “asking for help when needed, staying on task, listening to directions, setting out materials when needed, coming to class prepared, and turning in assignments on time,” (p. 106). Finally, as part of self-management, students must be able to set their goals and practice

skills related to organization, as “When students are willing to work toward a goal despite setbacks, they show their ability to focus and persevere,” (Sprenger, M., 2020, p. 109).

Social Emotional Learning: Responsible Decision-Making

The literature on social emotional learning and responsible decision-making has yielded a few writings that lead readers to other sources. For example, researchers who study responsible decision-making may be interested in studying and including the ideas of perspective taking (Cojuharenco, I. & Sguera, F., 2015), which is a part of the responsible decision-making component of SEL. Sprenger (2020) offers several options for students to practice decision-making that a teacher can incorporate into their classroom, however, the components that impact decision-making appear to be less of an emphasis.

Summary of Findings

Based on this initial literature review, the following is a summary of findings that can be the focus of this research to study the impact of the components of transformational leadership and social emotional learning on teacher-student relationships:

For minority student needs, students need to have:

- Learner goals, autonomy, competency, feel included, and support network (Isik, U. et al., 2021)
- Pivotal moments (Espinoza, R., 2011)

Transformational leaders need to be:

- Kind, caring, and compassionate and helpful (Bean, B. W., & Kroth, M., 2013)
- Supportive (Balwant, P. T., Birdi, K., Stephan, U., & Topakas, A., 2019);
- Charismatic, inspirational, intellectually stimulating to individuals, while showing individualized attention (Bass, 2008)

For social emotional learning, the following themes were highlighted in the literature; teachers need to:

- Have high emotional intelligence can have a more positive impact on teacher-student relationships. (Poulou, M. S., 2017; Arguedas, M., et al., 2016)
- Allow cooperative learning and achievement. (Rivera-Perez, S. et al., 2020)
- Show they can manage their own feelings and be supportive (Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T., 2009)
- Provide a classroom environment where the teacher-student relationships are positive (Sprenger, M., 2020, p. 146)
- Connect to a larger social purpose (Nagaoka, J. et al., 2015, p. 46)
- Focus on learning of the skill and not focus on a problem (Niu, S. J., & Niemi, H., 2020)
- Make the key player the student her or himself. He or she decides what skill to learn (Niu, S. J., & Niemi, H., 2020)
- Remember that small steps show progress and can be motivating (Niu, S. J., & Niemi, H., 2020)
- Have routines, remain calm, have calming stations, practice a soothing voice, and encourage students to track emotions in a planner (Sprenger, M. 2020).

Perceived Gaps in the Literature

Studies show that minority students have several needs, but there seems to be a lack of research that studies the needs and uses components of transformational leadership and social emotional learning to show what could have a positive impact on teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, we do not see a process to follow for managing or creating relationships with

students that leads to levels of autonomy and thus positive outcomes. If these are needs, we will want to study what goes into meeting those needs to have positive outcomes.

Furthermore, there is little information on the components of transformational leadership and social-emotional learning coupled together (Treslan, D. L., 2006), even though many benefits are evident (York-Barr, J. & Duke, K., 2017). This leaves a gap in the research. Thus, further studies on transformational leadership, especially when coupled with social-emotional learning, could lead to additional, useful information. There does not seem to be an intersectional study on transformational leadership and social emotional learning in relationship to teacher-student relationships. There has been transformative social emotional learning, however. This is a type of social emotional learning that Jagers et al. (2019) describe as “anchored in the notion of justice-oriented citizenship,” (p. 1) and not unrelated to this study.

In terms of social emotional learning, the single components have not been widely studied in terms of how they impact the student. In short, the goal of this literature review was to review the literature related to social emotional learning and transformational literature in terms of what could impact students in a positive manner. As part of this research, understanding what components of transformational leadership and social emotional learning that could have a positive impact on teacher-student relationships will be the goal of this study, contributing to the need of each component, especially, of SEL to be studied in more detail than has been studied previously, as well as provide insight on improving relationships.

Items still being researched:

1. Building teacher-student relationships
2. Scales for measuring: emotional intelligence, leadership,
3. General SEL Research - Benefits of SEL
4. Other SEL items that do not appear related at this point:
 - a. SEL Program evaluation
 - b. SEL as an Intervention