

2019

Peer Support and Academic Resiliency for Recently Relocated High School Student

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Walden University

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Walden University

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Melanie M. Kennebeck

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Peer Support and Academic Resiliency for Recently Relocated High School Students

by

Melanie M. Kennebeck

MS, Walden University, 2017

MA, Bowie State University, 2011

BA, University of Maryland University College, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

November 2019

Abstract

Residential relocation requiring a change of school enrollment can negatively disrupt academic achievement, extracurricular participation, attendance, and ability to appropriately regulate emotions/behaviors. This disruption impacts military-affiliated students every 2 to 3 years. The purpose of this study was to quantitatively inform Student 2 Student's (S2S's) continued development and the Military Child Education Coalition's (MCEC's) pursuit of better serving newly relocated students. This will help the program to reach beyond good intentions and mitigate the perils of assuming that benefits occur without quantitative support. The three-factor model of Academic Resiliency was used as the theoretical framework guiding this study. Two American public high schools with similar demographics were requested to provide data for all new 9th through 12th graders, who enrolled in the school district for the first time during the 2018-19 academic year. A Mann-Whitney U was used to compare grade point averages (GPA), attendance percentages, number of extracurricular activities, and number of behavioral referrals for 179 students at a school with S2S to 97 students at a school without S2S. The 2 groups showed statistically significant differences across all 4 dependent variables. For example, the S2S group showed higher levels of extracurricular participation and fewer behavioral referrals than the control group. Additionally, a positive relationship between attendance and GPA was supported for the control group more than the S2S group. Overall, the results of this study quantitatively inform S2S's continued development and the MCEC's pursuit of better serving newly relocated students worldwide, which assists to create positive social change.

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Dedication

With love and gratitude, this dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, supervisors, mentors, and professors, who are too many to be named. I am truly blessed and could not be here without the role each of you have played over the past several years.

Acknowledgments

There are several individuals who have assisted me in remaining focused and dedicated to this program and the dissertation process. I thank God for His guidance and support through the many individuals He placed in my life. My parents and siblings have been inspirational in their unconditional love and support while assisting me to complete this iterative endeavor. My husband and children have been cheering me on since the very first enrollment signature. I would not be here without the enthusiastic encouragement these individuals have bestowed to me.

Dr. Mitchell Hicks introduced me to Walden University academia in the Foundations course and has ushered me through the dissertation process as my dissertation chair. His well-timed humor, attention to detail, and tireless support have fueled my endurance and dedication throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Middlebrook for being my content expert and second committee member. He supported my research interest and assisted me to shape it into a viable dissertation topic.

Finally, I want to thank the many service members and their families who relocate every 2 to 3 years to follow the needs of our Armed Forces and defend our country. Resilience is tested daily in the lives of these many individuals and I am honored to bring awareness to their needs with this work. I hope continue using my career to support our troops and their families.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Building the resiliency of military service members and their families is not a new topic (Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health, 2007). The resilience of both soldiers and their family members are incorporated into the pursuit of mission readiness (Conforte et al., 2017a). For military affiliated youth, resiliency is influenced by on-campus factors.

There are several studies on the needs of this population that provide program development recommendations for building school connectedness (Aronson & Perkins, 2013; Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010; Mmari, Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, & Blum, 2010). The U.S. Army contracted the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC, 2001) to conduct the Secondary Education Transition study, which resulted in the creation of the Student 2 Student Transition Support Program (S2S). This school-based program was led by students to assist both their military-affiliated and civilian-affiliated peers through times of transition with instrumental peer support (Brendel, Maynard, Albright, & Bellomo, 2013; Park, 2011). S2S was a researched-based program designed to support school-aged youth who have experienced a recent relocation to increase their resiliency by targeting campus navigation, relationships, and academics (MCEC, 2015). Each of these targets align with school connectivity, which was identified by attachment levels in school-based relationships and commitment to success (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004). School connectivity was measured through an evaluation of academic resiliency, which assesses school-based relational attachments, commitment to on-campus success, and emotion regulation

abilities (Prince-Embry, 2015). Therefore, S2S participation should correlate with improved academic resiliency factors.

Several theorists support the creation and implementation of peer support programs, where students are organized to support each other on campus in various ways. However, these peer support programs are rarely evaluated for efficacy after implementation (Aronson & Perkins, 2013; Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, & Nelson, 2003; Bradshaw et al., 2010; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Mmari et al., 2010). Similarly, there was ample support for the development and implementation of peer support programs designed to assist military families; however, there was little research on their effectiveness (Astor & Benbenishty, 2014; Brendel et al., 2013; Conforte et al., 2017a; Park, 2011). Identification of this population's strengths and assets would enable expansion and improvement of the current programs (Park, 2011). Without support for efficacy, S2S was only promoted by good intentions (Park, 2011). The Department of Defense (DOD, 2016) estimated that there are 950,196 military-affiliated students between the ages of 5 and 18. The number of non-military-affiliated students, who also relocate and are affected by transitions, increase this need for empirical research in S2S's influence on academic resiliency.

As there was a plethora of research regarding program development and implementation, evaluation was needed to ensure the enhancement of school connectivity (Forum on Health and National Security, 2014). This task requires an evaluation of the relationship between elements of multicomponent programs and school connectedness (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, & Shochet, 2013). Unlike a multicomponent program that

focuses on several elements and targets the whole school (Chapman et al., 2013), S2S focuses on peer mentoring to build resiliency for recently relocated students (MCEC, 2015). Academic resiliency provides the framework for evaluating the relationship between peer mentoring and school connectivity. The results of this study will start to fill this gap with quantitative information. In this chapter, I outline the study's background, problem statement, nature of the study, research question, hypotheses, purpose of the study, pertinent definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, implications, limitations, significance, and social change implications before ending with a short summary situating the study amid the current research.

Background

Approximately 408,922 students between the ages of 12 and 18 are affiliated with the military (DOD, 2016). Relocation occurs every 2 to 3 years for military families (DOD, 2007). Adolescence, in particular, is a time when peer relationships are vital to development; thus, relocation can be disruptive without proper safeguards (Berk, 2012). The influence of transition on military-affiliated students continues to need empirical attention (De Pedro, Atuel, Esqueda, & Malchi, 2014a; De Pedro, Astro, Gilreath, Benbenisty, & Berkowitz, 2018). This neglected topic has an array of needed variables to facilitate success. Relocation facilitates a need for social and academic support (Garner, Arnold, & Nunnery, 2014). Although S2S sets out to increase this population's resiliency, only 206 schools worldwide have an active S2S program (MCEC, 2016). This number does not reach the estimated 98,000 public schools currently in the United States

(U.S. Department of Education, 2018). More programs are needed to assist recently relocated students in each of these possible schools.

When a new student arrives at a school without S2S, it was often a school counselor, teacher, or other staff member who gives a tour of the school and provides relevant information. However, this adult support may not fully enable the student to make a smooth transition. As supported by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, a lack of peer support diminishes the student's ability to fully integrate into the new community on campus. Finch and Frieden (2014) highlighted a multisystem of variables that influence development in adolescents, which are best understood by peers. Without peer support or mentoring, these students are often left to fend for themselves, which may negatively influence their overall health. Social change is needed to positively influence school connectivity for recently relocated students.

Often school officials focus on physical health and neglect the mental health needs of students (McNeely et al., 2002). However, academic success and socialization are mutual mediators of overall wellbeing for students at school (Phan, Ngu, & Alrashidi, 2016). Students' feelings of connectedness to school negatively correlate with symptoms of depression (Newman, Newman Griffen, O'Connon, & Spas, 2007) and risk-taking behaviors (Catalano et al., 2004). School-connectedness positively correlates with school attendance (Yuksekk & Solakoglu, 2016), commitment to success (Catalano et al., 2004), and participation in extracurricular activities (Werner, 1989).

Peer mentoring enhances school connectedness (Dang, 2014). Both peer mentoring (Gordon, Downey, & Bangert, 2013) and school connectivity (Yuksekk &

Solakoglu, 2016) were linked to decreases in behavioral referrals. Positive peer mentoring has been linked to increased resiliency (Williams & Portman, 2014). Empirical support for the connection between S2S's peer mentoring and school connectivity would increase awareness of the program's existence and the frequency of use (Conforte et al., 2017a). Chapman et al. (2013) supported these correlations and requested mediation analyses to evaluate the factors affected most by peer support.

Programs designed to improve school-connectivity levels for students often lack reevaluation efforts after development and implementation to assess each programs' efficacy (Chapman et al., 2013). Lack of reevaluation also exists for programs designed to support students affiliated with the military (Brendel et al., 2013; Conforte et al., 2017a; Park, 2011). S2S falls into both neglected areas. Despite the likely positive outcomes based on research supporting program development, the need for more research continues to support program improvement and expansion (Park, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Since S2S was implemented in a limited number of schools (MCEC, 2016), it is impractical that all relocated students were enrolled at a location with a functioning program. S2S has support for its creation and implementation into schools; the program's efficiency after implementation lacks empirical research (Brendel et al., 2013; Park, 2011). No information was found on how this program's peer support correlated with grade point average (GPA), number of extracurricular activities, attendance, or frequency of behavioral referrals. This information could promote positive social change for recently relocated students by indicating how peer support influences academic

resiliency levels as well as indicating the possible elements needed for influencing school connectivity.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between participation in S2S and academic resiliency as supported by archival data from two schools within the same city and with similar demographics. One school had S2S in place and the other school did not have the program. These two groups were determined based on enrollment into one of the two schools after a recent relocation. All newly relocated students at the school with S2S participated in the program as a part of the welcoming process. Participants were high school adolescents ranging from freshman to seniors in the academic year 2017 to 2018. Four academic resiliency factors (GPA, number of extracurricular activities, attendance, or frequency of behavioral referrals) were quantitatively correlated for participants and nonparticipants in S2S. Chapter 3 includes further variable specification.

Purpose of the Study

After the development and implementation of peer support, there is a lack of empirical support for the efficacy of these programs in general and for S2S specifically. Identifying the components needed to enhance school connectedness was proposed through the evaluation of academic resiliency's three components, which are "sense of relatedness", "sense of mastery," and "emotional reactivity" (Prince-Embury, 2015, p. 57). First, the sense of relatedness can support school connectedness, and it was evaluated by measuring participation in extracurricular activities (Werner, 1989) and

school attendance (Yuksekk & Solakoglu, 2016). Second, sense of mastery, as assessed by GPA, supports school connectedness (Zeng, Hou, & Peng, 2016). Third, emotional reactivity, as measured by the frequency of behavioral referrals, can also improve school connectedness (Yuksekk & Solakoglu, 2016). The purpose of this study was to identify if the peer support provided by participation in S2S correlates differently with academic resiliency than nonparticipation in S2S for recently relocated high school students. Specifically, I wished to predict the relationship of peer support and academic resiliency. If S2S's peer support correlates with academic resiliency, identifying the areas of correlation would allude to the program's strengths and indicate where improvements should occur. Assessing these relationships worked toward improving the program's ability to assist recently relocated students with their transition into a new community using research-based methodology rather than just good intentions.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The existing literature on peer support and school connectedness provided backing for the following question and hypotheses. Chapter 3 includes a more in-depth discussion. The research question and hypotheses were

1. For high school students who have recently relocated, does S2S's peer support vary differently than a location without S2S in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the frequency of behavioral referrals at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year?

H₁: At the end of academic year 2018-2019, S2S's peer support appears to vary differently in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the

frequency of behavioral referrals when compared to a location without S2S's peer support.

H₀₁: At the end of academic year 2018-2019, S2S's peer support does not appear to vary differently in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the frequency of behavioral referrals when compared to a location without S2S's peer support.

Definition of Theoretical Constructs

Resiliency: An individual's ability to succeed despite various challenges (Garmezy, 1971). Werner (1989) supported that some individuals thrive despite adversity and listed several commonalities among these thriving individuals. Werner (1995) highlighted that attachment to other individuals on campus, such as peers and teachers, was a strongly supported factor in building resiliency.

School connectivity: An attachment to school-based relationships and commitment to academic/extracurricular success, which received support by the documented negative relationships between school attachment and risk-taking behaviors (Catalano et al., 2004). Attachment to productive peers shows a decrease in likelihood to attach to risk-taking peers (Catalano et al., 2004). Social development theory was relevant to school connectivity because through socialization, students were shown to increase their opportunity for overall success (Catalano et al., 2004). Socialization at school with prosocial peers facilitates positive development.

Peer support: Positive development have a strong correlation, as conceptualized by several theorists. For example, Vygotsky stated that interactions with knowledgeable

peers are essential elements needed for efficient learning (as cited by Finch & Frieden, 2014). Bronfenbrenner clarified that adolescent development was influenced by a multisystem of variables that are best understood by peers (as cited by Finch & Frieden, 2014). Werner (1995) identified peer support as an element that enhances resiliency. Bandura (1991) supported the idea that a peer's ability to role model behaviors assists with enhancing transitions. Keagan stated relationships with peer-mentors assisted in constructing a holding pattern until the individual becomes ready to form other peer relationships (as cited in Finch & Frieden, 2014). Peer support facilitates learning, adolescent development, and resiliency. Relationships with peer-mentors provide a buffer zone to continue development until the individual creates attachments to self-selected peers.

Definition of Terms

Behavioral referrals: A variety of possible on-campus concerns, such as behavioral misconduct, physical aggression, psychosocial aggression, substance use, and academic shortcomings (Yukse & Solakoglu, 2016, p724).

GPA: School achievement; average of accumulated grades earned during an academic year (Zeng et al., 2016, p. 2).

Participation in extracurricular activities: Androgynous, nonacademic pursuits that play a role in the development of resiliency by offering opportunities for cooperative enterprises, leadership demonstration, and emotional support (Werner, 1989, p. 74).

School attendance: The percentage of days present at school during the academic year, and delinquency indicates deterioration of connectivity to peers, faculty, and institutionalized authority in general (Yukse & Solakoglu, 2016, p. 724).

Transition: A relocation from one geographic location to the next that requires adaptation to the new community and school for positive outcomes to occur (Astor, De Pedro, Gilreath, Esqueda, & Benbenishty, 2013, p. 234). The two schools in this study determined inclusion based on first-time school district enrollment.

Assumptions

Given the similarities in geographic location and demographic consistency, it was assumed that the two schools were comparable for this study. De-identified directory data were used with school permission, which eliminated the need for participant permission. All data were collected from recently relocated high school students during the 2018-2019 academic year. Participants consisted of students with and without military affiliation. With the data collected during the fourth semester of the academic year, no known data contaminations or influences by the researcher were possible.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was an evaluation of de-identified directory data for recently relocated high school students at two schools to determine whether participation in S2S correlates with GPA, behavioral referrals, extracurricular participation, and attendance differently than with non-participation in S2S. To date, no known quantitative scholars have examined this question, and research was needed for program improvement and justification (Brendel et al., 2013; Park, 2011). Although this study may offer potential

insights into the relationship between the factors of academic resiliency, these relationships were not fully examined within the scope of the present study. Instead, the aim of this study was to assess the relationship between participation in S2S and academic resiliency of recently relocated high school students, to allow the MCEC to help inform training programs, ongoing program development, and future expansion efforts. This study was limited to two schools within one geographic location that have similar demographic consistencies. Generalizability to other schools and demographics was not explored. The option to use academic archival directory data for this study was primarily due to the protected population's needs for limiting the possibility of harm to participants by increasing their anonymity and eliminating direct interactions with the researcher (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). Therefore, the scope of the study was to explore the relationship between participation in S2S and factors of academic resiliency, such as GPA, extracurricular participation, behavioral referrals, and attendance for recently relocated high school students.

Implications

Programs designed to improve school connectivity levels for students often lack reevaluation efforts after development and implementation to assess each programs' efficacy (Chapman et al., 2013; Climie & Henley, 2016). Similarly, a lack of reevaluation was documented as occurring for programs designed to support students affiliated with the military (Park, 2011). S2S falls into both neglected areas and despite the likely positive outcomes that students experience from participation in the program

more research was needed to support program improvement and expansion (Park, 2011).

The current study served as a preliminary study due to several limitations.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. Because the two schools were located in the same geographic area and had similar demographic consistency, the results may not be generalizable to other locations or populations with dissimilar demographics or geographical location. Although support for the correlation between variables may be derived from this study, causality will remain undetermined due to the possible influence of uncontrolled extraneous variables and unknown temporal precedence, which limits ruling out alternative explanations (Barnes et al., 2018). For instance, family support (Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011), stages of deployment (Crech, Hadley, & Borsari, 2014; Gorman, Eide, & Hisle-Gomian, 2010; Lester & Flake, 2013), and supportive faculty (Flanagan & Stout, 2010; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013) were among some possible variables influencing adolescent development that existed outside of the scope of this study. Furthermore, schools often create their own programs to assist enrolled students (De Pedro, Esqueda, Cederbaum, & Astor, 2014b). Accountability of possible informal supports was limited. Also, strict disciplinary policies negatively influence emotion regulation and school completion, which results in more behavioral concerns and school dropouts (Less, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011). The archival data requested may be difficult to compare from one school to another due to site differences in documentation (Creswell, 2014). As demonstrated, several variables exist outside of the scope of this study. Therefore, conjectures

regarding causal relationships are not possible and caution should be applied to any generalizations made as the archival data will be collected for a single academic year from two specific schools. Nonrandom participant assignment to the two groups furthers this study's inability to draw causal inferences. Chapter 3 includes more detail into the research design.

Significance

Relocation is difficult at every age, but during adolescence, the disruption in social support could be detrimental in many aspects of the adolescent's life, such as negatively impacting his or her grades, social networks, willingness to attend school, and behavior at school (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). S2S was designed to alleviate the stressful disruption of relocation by providing peer support to increase resiliency after a transition from one school to another (MCEC, 2015). Evaluating this program's peer support influence on school connectivity will indicate possible areas of strength and weakness when assisting this population. The information can then be integrated into the program that will add support to its implementation in more schools and indicate the need for further empirical studies in this area. More locations of implementation would benefit this program, allowing it to reach and assist more students with the transition after recent relocation.

Social Change Implications

Social disruption during adolescence is particularly detrimental to development and can influence willingness to succeed, behavior, GPA, social relationships, attendance, and extracurricular participation (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). S2S was

developed with empirical support in mind to counteract these possible negative influences via peer support through transition into the new school (MCEC, 2015). Positive peer support during adolescence is a part of ensuring appropriate development, and relocation can disrupt this process. Approximately 950,196 students were identified by the DOD (2016) as having an affiliation with the military, a population that relocates every 2 to 3 years (DOD, 2007), placing these students at a higher risk for developmental disruption due to displacement. An unknown number of civilian students also relocate for various reasons. The current 206 S2S programs lack efficacy data (Park, 2011). Research was needed to improve these 206 programs as well as to further implementation into additional schools. The results could inform future education policies (De Pedro et al., 2014b) and school reform (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012) to promote proactive, instead of reactive, school-based support for recently relocated students (Gilreath, Estrada, Pineda, Benbenishty, & Astor, 2014). Relocation is common for most schools nationwide and increased support is needed for the affected students to positively promote social change. This study has the possibility of expanding advocacy and improving transitions after relocations for military and civilian populations by evaluating the impact of peer support on academic resiliency.

Summary

Although fostering military resiliency was not a new topic (DOD, 2007), more research remains needed (Conforte et al., 2017b; Park, 2011). Several scholars have assessed the variables necessary to increase resiliency levels for service members and their families (Park, 2011). For military-affiliated students, these studies have assisted

with the development of school connectedness programs (Aronson & Perkins, 2013; Bradshaw et al., 2010; MCEC, 2001; Mmari et al., 2010). S2S has benefited from these studies, which have supported its development and implementation (MCEC, 2001). Still, a lack of research exists for programs after development and implementation (Alfano, Lau, Balderas, Bunnell, & Beidel, 2016; Brendel et al., 2013; Park, 2011). Efficacy data were needed to further expand the program and ensure the mission was upheld (Brendel et al., 2013; Forum on Health and National Security, 2014; Park, 2011).

This study will aim to contribute to the body of research addressing the relationship between peer support and academic resiliency by evaluating the correlation between S2S participation. GPA, extracurricular participation, attendance, and behavioral referrals compared to nonparticipation. The information gathered will assist program development and prediction of relationships between variables to create positive change for relocated students.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the documented outcomes of peer support, needs of school connectivity, and literature related to academic resiliency.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Scholars have established the necessity for empirical research pertaining to the correlation between peer mentoring and academic resiliency after a recent relocation. The relationship between peer support and academic resiliency was previously explored in resiliency research. Scholars have examined the outcomes of peer support. The quality of the peer support relationship was an element in the construction of academic resiliency, which influences overall health during high school and throughout adulthood. The theoretical framework of this dissertation was rooted in academic resiliency. A key tenet of this theory is a student's ability to maintain "emotional reactivity," demonstrate a "sense of mastery," and a "sense of relatedness" (Prince-Embry, 2015, p. 57). An individual's perceived support positively correlates with his or her ability to cope with adversity (Prince-Embry, 2015).

A search of the reviewed literature was conducted through electronic psychology and education databases such as PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, Education Source, ERIC, and Military and Government Collection as well as through Walden University's library database. The list of terms used to conduct the literature search included *resiliency*, *academic resiliency*, *Student 2 Student*, *peer-support*, *school connectivity*, *relocation support*, and *military child support*. The sources of articles reviewed for this study were obtained digitally. Multiple books were also used, which provided overviews of decades of resiliency research.

This chapter provides a review of the academic resiliency theory as well as a discussion of peer support, specifically the inherent importance of efficient peer support on the development of school connectivity. In addition, school connectivity research relating to the questions addressed in this study were included for analysis. Research that explored the connection between academic resiliency and peer support was incorporated into this chapter. For objectivity, this chapter included challenges to the relationship between peer support and academic resiliency. An explanation of the influence of past research had on this study was used as a conclusion to this chapter.

At-Risk Population

Academic success and physical health are frequently the focus of most U.S. school-based programs, while proactive methods for increasing mental health are often overlooked (McNeely et al., 2002). Proactive efforts decrease later costs to overall health and academic success, which makes these outcomes essential to increasing support for proactive programs. Students typically spend more time at school than at home, which makes support at school essential for overall development (Astor et al., 2013; Garcia, De Pedro, Astor, Lester, & Benbenishty, 2015). At-risk populations need programs to supplement shortcomings and facilitate success despite adversity.

Military families typically relocate every 2 to 3 years, making this a lifestyle with additional stressors (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). The stressors experienced by this population are often exacerbated in civilian schools, a factor that was not relevant to their civilian counterparts (Lester & Flake, 2013). Civilian schools are often underprepared

for assisting this population, and many schools do not track newly enrolled students to ensure a successful transition.

School transitions were qualitatively ranked as the top stressor for students with military affiliations (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). In an effort to address this stressor, the U.S. Armed Forces created the school liaison program to assist military-affiliated students both socially and academically, through relocation processes (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). School liaison officers spend a significant amount of time working with schools to promote smooth transitions (Aronson, Caldwell, Perkins, & Pasch, 2011). Liaisons often assist school counselors to implement and maintain S2S. Kitmitto et al. (2011) supported S2S's positive influence on transition with a liaisons' assessment. Schools must be responsible for their part in facilitating academic success and promoting mental health (Astor et al., 2013). Often, faculty members lack confidence in their ability to assist transitioning students (Ohye, Kelly, Chen, Zakarian, & Simon, 2016), which supports the need for intervention efforts at the school level. Frequent transitions have displayed mixed results, with some military-affiliated students demonstrating resiliency (Nordford & Medway, 2002) while others displaying heightened risk-factors. These factors included decreased social support (Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, & Richardson, 2010), increased use of addictive substances (Gilreath et al., 2013), and school violence without help seeking behaviors (Elliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010). Mitigation of these factors requires identification of this population's needs.

Transitioning students request assistance with support network development, academics, and extracurricular programs (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010).

Ideally, participation in a support program would increase academic resiliency (Astor et al., 2013). Social support was correlated with lower rates of school-based violence (Flanagan & Stout, 2010). The necessary program elements for ensuring mental health were identified as promoting ownership of personal success while enabling an operative support network of peers, faculty, and parents with frequent stakeholder communications (Williams & Portman, 2014). Therefore, the military families requested that support areas align well with the core elements of programs designed to proactively promote overall health and build academic resilience.

Need for Transition Support

Relocation influences a variety of possible outcomes. Oishi (2010) concluded that personal independence and nonobligatory friendships are often common outcomes. However, these positive outcomes are likely to decrease the individual's sense of interpersonal belonging, which negatively impacts both physical and emotional wellbeing (Oishi, 2010). Personal independence was detrimental to an individual's sense of school connectivity due to a decreased likelihood to seek out social support and build social relationships. The decrease in using social support as a resource derives from resiliency being born out of social connections and environmental resources, instead of a vacuous personal trait (Easterbrooks, Ginsburg, & Lerner, 2013). Social connections are needed to develop resiliency. Additionally, relocation can negatively impact behavior, academics, and overall development (Weber & Weber, 2005). Consequently, transition assistance for military families is essential, and theoretical foundations for program development are plentiful.

Program Development

Several programs were designed to increase resiliency for the military population. In an attempt to evaluate where programs should focus supplementation efforts, the MCEC (2001) was contracted to conduct the U.S. Army Secondary Education Transition study, which resulted in the creation of the S2S program. Additionally, several theories support the creation and implementation of S2S. For instance, functionalism is used to support the rationale for this issue needing social change. According to functionalism, societies attempt to maintain homeostasis (McClelland, 2000), and each school houses its own society with governing rules for appropriate behavior. A new student may have difficulty integrating without proper guidance outlining the expectations of the new society. Unsuccessful integration likely leads to ostracization or bullying while the campus's society attempts to maintain homeostasis after the newcomer's arrival (McClelland, 2000). Each incoming student requires transition support, which occurs in the relationship between peer support and academic resiliency.

Peer Mentorship

Finch and Frieden (2014) argued that peer support was framed by the work of Vygotsky (1978), Bronfenbrenner (1979), Keagan (2000), and Bandura (1991). First, in the sociocultural theory, Vygotsky (1978) speculated that experienced peers assist to scaffold the learning of less experienced peers when paired together. Peer support enhances education because students learn best from other students. Second, in the social ecology theory, Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that everyone was influenced by a multisystem of variables, and peers have the best vantage point for understanding.

Understanding cultural rules of a new society was boosted with peer support. Third, in the constructive developmentalism theory, Keagan (2000) posited that relationships with a peer mentor can form a comfort zone until the recently relocated student is willing to create other relationships with peers outside of the program. The safe environment built by peer mentorship can increase the recently relocated student's self-efficacy until she or he is ready to join the rest of the student body. Fourth, in the social cognitive learning theory, Bandura (1991) postulated that appropriate peer role models are essential for internalizing behaviors for success by increasing wellbeing, academic engagement, and achievement. Learning and cultural understanding are enhanced by the safe environment created by peer support, which increases several positive outcomes (Gordon et al., 2013), such as GPA, retention rates, and school connectivity (Soria, Lingeren Clark, & Coffin Koch, 2013). Decreases in delinquency (Yuksekk & Solakoglu, 2016), aggression, and drug use received empirical support as well (Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, & Nichols 2014). Each of these theorists postulated that peer mentorship was a fundamental necessity for successful development, which received ample empirical support.

Peer support and school connectivity share a bidirectional relationship. The benefits of peer mentorship are not restricted to only mentees. Coyne-Foresi (2015) supported that both mentors and mentees benefit from participation in prosocial programs. For example, increased school connectivity was one advantage of peer support for both mentors and mentees (King, Vidourek, Dabis, & McClellan, 2002). There are several benefits to school connectivity. Warner (1995) suggested that for adolescents,

school connectivity and peer support ranked as frequent commonalities for individuals possessing resilience. Support for this positive correlation has continued within the military community (Bowen et al., 2003; Dang, 2014). For example, school connectivity correlated with reductions in risk-taking behaviors (Chapman et al., 2013), such as violence and transportation risks (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, Shochet, & Romaniuk, 2011). Additionally, school connectedness levels predict the likelihood of peer victimization, which increases with family member deployment and school transition (Conforte et al., 2017a). Also, symptoms of depression negatively correlated with school connectedness as moderated by peer attachment (Joyce & Early, 2014; Millings, Buck, Montgomery, Spears, & Stallard, 2012; Newman et al., 2007), especially during adolescence (Okafor, Lucier-Greer, & Mancini, 2016). Anxiety also negatively correlated with school connectivity, which demonstrated long-term benefits in adulthood (Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006). In general, emotional wellbeing improves with school connectivity and positively influences later mental health outcomes. Additionally, peer mentorship provided a pathway toward the enhancement of school connectivity (Strolin-Goltzman, Woodhouse, Suter, & Werrback, 2016). Attachments to peers builds school connectivity and resiliency while staving off risk-taking behaviors, peer victimization, anxiety, and depression.

These correlations are also rooted in theoretical support. Catalano et al. (2004) posited that three main theories bolster school connectivity, which are Bowlby's (1958) attachment theory, Hirschi's (1969) control theory, and Catalano et al.'s (2004) social development model. First, Bowlby supported that relationships with primary care

providers influenced overall wellbeing. Ainsworth (1991) expanded this theory to incorporate relationships with peers. The need to belong is fundamentally motivational for influencing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that impact overall health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Variations in health had stronger correlations with perceived social support than with depressive symptomatology (Capp et al., 2016).

Depression has less influence than social support for ensuring overall health.

Relationships with productive peers decrease the likelihood of relationships with risk-taking peers while providing a gateway to overall success through socialization and social development (Catalano et al., 2004). Nevertheless, Bowlby's theory does not allude to the effects of social pressures derived from relationships with prosocial or misanthropic others. In the control theory, Hirschi (1969) theorized that perceived social values influence moral development, which results in the alignment of subsequent behaviors with the perceived social expectations. However, this theory did not highlight the importance of interpersonal attachments.

Catalano et al. (2004) combined Bowlby and Hirschi's theories into the social development model. Social connections with prosocial peers positively correlate with academic/extracurricular success and negatively correlate with risk-taking behaviors. Although peer support may have stronger influence over psychological health than on academic outcomes (Mancini, Bowen, O'Neal, & Arnold, 2015), benefits to both are supported (Zullig, Koopman, Patton, & Ubbes, 2010). School connectedness was shown to correlate with appropriate emotional regulation, and the moderating variable was secure attachment styles to peers (Allen & Bowles, 2013). Strong bonds with prosocial

peers increase school connectedness, which may mitigate transition challenges (De Pedro et al., 2011; De Pedro et al., 2018). However, school connectedness was only one of three aspects of academic resiliency.

Academic Resiliency

For almost a half century, resiliency has remained a topic of interest to define and outline its associated systematic factors. Resiliency relates to each person's level of flexibility in overcoming challenges to success (Garmezy, 1971). Flexibility is derived from protective factors, which create a process of protection from various risks (Rutter, 1980, 1987). Resiliency enables individuals to thrive despite adversity. Thriving individuals have numerous commonalities associated with their success, such as external support systems (Werner, 1989). Support during the school-age years is commonly derived from peers and teachers, which campus-based programs enhance (Werner, 1995). Additionally, researchers continue to identify social support as a resiliency factor lessening the impact of possible challenges, such as relocations (Finkel, Kelley, & Ashby, 2003). In recent years, the outcomes indicating levels of personal resiliency have received empirical attention. Outcomes factors for academic resiliency are GPA, extracurricular participation, attendance, and behavioral referrals, which are discussed in Chapter 3

Implications of Past Research on Current Research

The present study was the next logical step in the empirical lineage. Using the construct of resiliency to ground their study, Weber and Weber (2005) supported that transition frequency allows the individual to increase coping skills while decreasing

adverse reactions. Academic resiliency was not evaluated, and transition frequency does not apply to initial relocation occurrences for those new to the military lifestyle.

Additionally, mediators of resiliency require further evaluation (Card et al., 2011).

School connectivity has received a large amount of research that provided support for the correlation of school connectivity with GPA and prosocial behavior (Monahan, Oesterle, & Hawkins, 2010). However, these three domains under academic resiliency have yet to be researched regarding prosocial programs such as S2S. Negative impacts were noted for each academic resiliency domain when transition support was inadequate, and peer mentorship was identified as the mediating variable (Niehaus, Rudasil, & Rakes, 2012).

Thus, if transition support through peer mentorship was adequate, then these areas should support resiliency. Therefore, more research to substantiate peer support as a mediator of resiliency was needed (Cederbaum et al., 2014). Peer support and school connectivity were correlated by Dang (2014), who conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study on homeless youth to evaluate the correlating effects of self-esteem and overall connectivity on resiliency levels. School connectivity is only one-third of academic resiliency.

Strolin-Goltzman et al. (2016) assessed the relationship between student engagement, positive relationships, and postsecondary education while qualitatively describing relationships as the element fostering educational resiliency for those at risk and found that peer support was correlated with school connectivity, and school connectivity was correlated with resiliency. A link between peer support and school connectivity as encompassed by academic resiliency remains to be established.

Quantitative studies are needed to further evaluate the influence transitions have on high school students (Clever & Segal, 2013; Reed, Bell, & Edwards, 2011). Previous quantitative studies had mixed results in reinforcing qualitative findings that transitions are detrimental to adolescent social outcomes (Nordford & Medway, 2002). The disconfirming results may be due to methodological limitations, such as participant selection and data collection tools. For example, Nordford and Medway (2002) used subjective self-reports and did not account for the participants' school attendance. Without the inclusion of attendance information, unaccounted for levels of school connectivity would bias results (De Pedro et al., 2011). Use of objective outcome measures, such as attendance, would counteract these limitations to evaluate the level of school connectivity, which would assist to ensure that a more holistic view of the population was incorporated into this study.

Prosocial school-based programs in general are rare and often lack empirical support to validate each program's continuation and expansion. Often GPA was utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of school-based programs and stakeholders are requesting more distal outcome measures in addition to academic standing (Kracher, Davis, III, & Powell, 2002). Measuring academic achievement in isolation does not provide a holistic view of the benefits derived from a specific program. Instead, outcomes for emotional, academic, and social factors are needed for military-affiliated and civilian students alike (Astor et al., 2013; De Pedro et al., 2011). Further highlighting the lack of research, a literature review conducted by Chapman et al. (2013) located only seven prosocial

programs with minimal support for the influence of participation on positive outcomes such as school connectivity. When researched, the results were favorable.

For example, prosocial programs were linked to decreased school disciplinary actions and behavioral referrals (Gordon et al., 2013; McNeely et al., 2002). Risk-taking behaviors, such as aggression and substance abuse, decreased while prosocial behaviors (Li et al., 2011) and academic standing increased (Tolan et al., 2014). Prosocial programs were correlated with favorable outcomes in the participants' behavior and academic performance.

Peer-support through mentorship appeared to facilitate the program elements needed for developing resiliency (Dang, 2014; Gordon et al., 2013). However, multicomponent programs implement a variety of interventions throughout the campus, which hinders the researcher's ability to isolate variables and identify the specific elements of a prosocial program needed for enhancing school connectivity (Chapman et al., 2013). Multicomponent programs create challenges in variable isolation for researchers. Furthermore, multicomponent programs' correlation with school connectivity (Chapman et al., 2013) was only one of the three aspects of academic resiliency. Honing in on the influence of peer support on the three aspects of academic resiliency provide the foundation of the current study.

S2S is not a multicomponent program; it focuses on peer mentoring to assist transitions and build resiliency (MCEC, 2015). S2S was one of many programs designed to assist the military community. These programs are often researched for development and implementation; however, evaluation of effectiveness was lacking (Brendel et al.,

2013; Conforte et al., 2017b; Park, 2011). Without research support, these programs are bolstered only by good intentions (Park, 2011). Therefore, transition support programs for military-affiliated families require research attention (Drummet, Colman, and Cable, 2003); which would begin to provide information on how social support mitigates negative responses to relocation (Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013). Researchers should strive to identify the program's influence on this population's strengths and assets facilitating their resilience (Cozza & Learner, 2013; Easterbrook et al, 2013; Park, 2011). Additionally, a strength-based approach would enable greater acceptance of the results from the stakeholders while improving recommendation compliance through feelings of optimism and motivation (Climie & Henley, 2016). Evaluating S2S was the next step (Chapman et al., 2013; Forum on Health and National Security, 2014).

Summary

Chapter 2 demonstrated how academic resiliency theory frames this study while identifying the outcome variables correlating with peer support. Peer support has a long empirical history linking the construct to development, prosocial behaviors, and academic success. While S2S was developed to assist recently relocated students with transitions, empirical studies had yet to evaluate outcome factors. As presented in this chapter, the proposed study built on current empirical knowledge by quantitatively assessing the relationship between student participation in S2S and academic resiliency. A multivariate analysis assisted to provide information (Alfano et al., 2016). An outline of the methodology utilized to evaluate these relationships exists in the following chapter (Chapter 3).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Youth experience relocation as a commonly faced stressful change. Oishi (2010) noted the paucity of research to guide an understanding of the impact relocation has on youth and the associated risks to each individual's overall wellbeing. Military personnel and their families relocate every 2 to 3 years (Aronson & Perkins, 2013), making this population both vulnerable to the adversities associated with relocation and a relevant group to study the impact of relocation on youths. Relocation did not correlate with an individual's well-being (Weber & Weber, 2005). Some scholars showed support for the construct of resiliency despite life's stressors (Garmezy, 1971; Werner, 1989).

Recently relocated students face several challenges when enrolling into a new school. These challenges can influence their participation in extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and behavioral referrals. These variables are encompassed by the three domains of academic resiliency. In this study, I retrospectively evaluated the correlation between peer mentorship and academic resiliency after a recent relocation and first-time enrollment into one of the two locations. In this chapter, justifications for the population sample, setting, data sources, methodology, plan for analysis, implications, and ethical limitations are outlined.

Research Design and Rationale

I followed Creswell's (2014) guidance that methodological decisions must be made with salience of the nature of the research problem, intended audience, and the researcher's experiences. Scholars supported the effectiveness of school-based programs on increasing resiliency (Aronson & Perkins, 2013), S2S effectiveness (Kitmitto et al.,

2011), and the correlation between the proposed variables (Strolin-Goltzman et al., 2016). Alfano et al. (2016) noted a gap in understanding about how these variables relate to resiliency and indicated that a multivariate analysis may help close this gap.

The correlation between peer support and academic resiliency was examined using archival data to compare two nonequivalent groups with demographic similarities. Only one of the schools had an active S2S program while the other school provided the control group. The data were obtained through collection of archival data. Academic resiliency was assessed through data on percentage of attendance (Yukse & Solakoglu, 2016), number of behavioral referrals (Esqueda et al., 2012; Gorman et al., 2010), GPA (Zeng et al., 2016), and number of extracurricular activities (Knifsend & Graham, 2012). Therefore, attendance, behavior referrals, GPA, and extracurricular activities were the four dependent variables, which were respectively measured from the attainment of archival data from two schools for the academic year 2018 to 2019.

A quantitative, between-subjects design was used to fill the identified gap in the literature. The independent variable was participation compared to nonparticipation in S2S during the 2017-2018 academic year. To measure the relationship between participation and academic resilience the four dependent variables were evaluated through the use of archival data from a convenience sample. The use of archival data ensured an unobtrusive approach while eliminating the opportunity for researcher bias to impact the outcome data. A between-subjects design with a convenience sample was chosen to further the least restrictive and most discreet methodology for the rightfully protected population.

Methodology

Population and Sample

The population consisted of recently relocated high school students, who enrolled at one of the two schools for the first time during the 2018-2019 academic year. A convenience sample was gathered from two Northern American schools located in the United States. This study included data from male and female students in the ninth to 12th grades. An a priori F-test MANOVA: Global effects computation with two groups and four response variables using GPower indicated a total sample size of 54 or two groups of 27 was necessary to have .80 power for detecting a medium sized effect when employing the .05 criterion of statistical significance as recommended by Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, and Buchner (2007). The S2S group consisted of $N = 151$ and the control group consisted of $N = 97$.

Research Setting

Adolescent resiliency is facilitated in settings that are normative for this population (Astro & Benbenishty, 2014; Astro et al., 2013; Garcia et al., 2015). For example, adolescents spend the majority of their weekdays on campus participating in school-based activities. Moreover, peer support was identified as a school-level factor in need of evaluation (De Pedro et al., 2011). Subsequently, the focus of this study was on the relationship between school-based peer support and academic resiliency outcome factors. The research setting included two schools within the same regional area with similar demographics between the student bodies at each location. The locations were selected based on active S2S programs and the recommendations of the MCEC's Debra

Longley. Data were requested from two U.S. public high schools educating students in Grades 9 to 12.

Archival Data Collection Procedures

In this study, no direct contact with the participants was needed before or after archival data collection. The data were de-identified before inclusion in this study. Walden University's institutional review board (IRB) reviewed and approved this study. After approval was granted, a formal request for the data was made to the school districts. The target data were regularly collected by all schools within the United States and archived for various individual, school, district, and national reasons. My request pertained to a single de-identified collection from the previous school year, 2018-2019, to ensure that requests for data had no influence on the variables to be evaluated. The archival data were requested at the end of the fourth quarter of the 2018-2019 academic year from both schools. It was a one-time data collection of GPA, extracurricular participation, attendance, and behavioral referrals to compare between the two selected schools.

Dependent Variables

Personal resiliency for school-aged individuals can be broken into a three-factor model of academic resiliency (Prince-Embury, Saklofske, & Nordstokke, 2016). The three domains are mastery, relatedness, and susceptibility to stress (Prince-Embury, 2015). Each domain was assessed through lateral products to indicate resiliency levels (Prince-Embury, 2011).

First, mastery pertains to the individual's expectations toward the attainment of success through academic and extracurricular activities (Prince-Embury, 2015). School-based expectations of success promote positive outcomes. Academic achievements, such as GPA, test scores, and entrance exams, positively correlate with overall wellbeing and resiliency (Zeng et al., 2016). However, transitions to a new school can negatively impact a student's ability to meet graduation requirements and maintain academic success (Esqueda et al., 2012), which highlights the importance of evaluating GPA. Furthermore, academic achievement is motivated by the social expectations created by peer support (Wentzel, Battle, Russell, & Looney, 2010). I used GPA to evaluate mastery levels.

Second, relatedness, or school connectivity, was assessed by a student's level of attachment to school-based relationships, such as those with peers and faculty (Prince-Embury, 2015). Relatedness builds from supportive peers, positive influence of teachers, and success from academic or nonacademic sources (Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodick, & Sawyer, 2003). Zeng et al. (2016) supported the correlation between school engagement and resiliency levels. However, school connectivity was one-third of academic resiliency, which reaches beyond each individual's achievement ability as demonstrated by his or her GPA (Gillen-O'Neel & Gluigni, 2013). Although school connectivity was well supported in the section above, the outcome factors have yet to be identified in this literature review. One outcome variable for school connectedness was through the evaluation of attendance (Yukse & Salakoglu, 2016). Attendance also provided an avenue toward predicting school retention rates (Gottfredson & Gottfredson,

1989; Niehaus, Irvin, & Rogleberg, 2016). Hence, attendance was a viable outcome measure to assess current school connectivity and predict high school completion rates. Additionally, physical activity, such as extracurricular participation, correlated with academic achievement (Trudeau & Shepahard, 2008). Participation in at least two activity domains boosted self-reports of school connectivity, which also correlated with higher GPAs (Knifsend & Graham, 2012) and attendance (Lucier-Greer Arnold, Mancini, Ford, & Bryant, 2015). Relocation was supported as negatively impacting extracurricular participation (Nordford & Medway, 2002). I used attendance and extracurricular participation to evaluate school connectedness levels.

Third, susceptibility to stress was measured through the evaluation of the individual's ability to regulate emotions and behaviors (Prince-Embury, 2015). Demonstrating inhibition during the academic day would reflect a lower occurrence of negative behavioral referrals. Effectively adjusting to transition directly includes learning the new location's rules and policies for expected behavior, which presents a challenge for recently relocated students (Esqueda et al., 2012; Gorman et al., 2010). Without transparency and understanding of behavior expectations, behavioral referrals may inadvertently occur. In addition, GPA and behavioral referrals negatively correlate (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011; Masten et al, 2005). Separating emotion regulation from achievement ability, behavioral referrals correlate more with school connectivity than GPA (Wentzel, Russel, & Baker, 2016). Therefore, I used behavioral referrals to measure emotional regulation and the participants' demonstrated understanding of behavioral expectations.

These three academic resiliency domains provide an avenue toward monitoring preventative treatment and participation outcomes (Prince-Embury & Steer, 2010) as demonstrated in Figure 1 below. Achievement, connectivity, and regulation are each connected through academic achievement to fully evaluate the students' progression toward positive growth. Behavioral referrals (Wentzel et al., 2016), GPA, attendance, and extracurricular participation are avenues toward measuring this change (Phan et al., 2016). The domains of academic resiliency, also, align well with the goals of S2S, which include relationships and academics (MCEC, 2015).

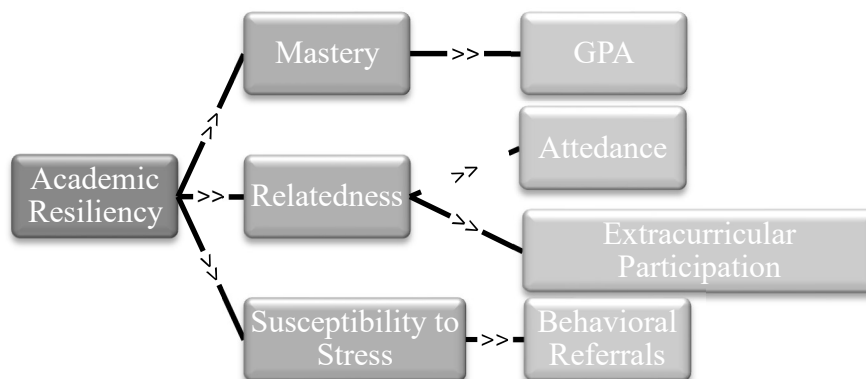


Figure 1. Theoretical framework and dependent variables.

Independent Variable

As described above, S2S was a school-based peer mentoring transition support program, which was created by the MCEC (2001) after the coalition was contracted by the U.S. Army to research the needs of recently relocated students. The MCEC's (2001) study was titled The Secondary Education Transition Study, and the results informed the

creation of the S2S program, which exists in 206 schools worldwide (MCEC, 2016). The influence of participation in S2S on the four dependent variables was evaluated by this study in comparison to those who do not participate in the program.

Ethical Protection of Participants

The selected U.S. schools provided signed data agreements after permission was provided by Walden's IRB. To protect participants, the schools were requested to send a copy of de-identified data to me. Upon receipt, the data were entered directly into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version 25. The original records will continue to remain stored by each school as directed by the school district. The copied data will be saved to a digital storage device and locked in a fire-proof safe for 5 years and then deleted.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. For high school students who have recently relocated, does S2S's peer support vary differently than a location without S2S in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the frequency of behavioral referrals at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year?

H₁: At the end of academic year 2018-2019, S2S's peer support appears to vary differently in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the frequency of behavioral referrals when compared to a location without S2S's peer support.

H₀: At the end of academic year 2018-2019, S2S's peer support does not appear to vary differently in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the

frequency of behavioral referrals when compared to a location without S2S's peer support.

Data Analysis

A one-way between-subjects MANOVA was used to assess the effects of participation in S2S or nonparticipation on the four archival data categories. SPSS was used to conduct the MANOVA. Evaluation of the intercorrelations between the dependent variables indicated if the use of MANOVA was justified to reduce the Type-1 error rate. Means and standard errors for the dependent variables were broken down by participation in either S2S or the control group. First, a Shapiro-Wilks test for normality with alpha set at 5% enabled an exploratory data analyses for evaluating the assumption of univariate normality within each group of the four dependent variables. Univariate or multivariate within-group outliers were evaluated with alpha set at .01. Second, Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was proposed to detect any significant between group differences for any of the dependent variables, using the 5% level of significance. Third, Box's *M* test was proposed to evaluate variance of between group differences for the dependent variables. Box's *M* test evaluated equality of variances-covariances among the four dependent variables across the two groups. Fourth, the Wilks' criterion was evaluated to provide information on the significance of the combined dependent variables to indicate association and variability percentages. Fifth, univariate ANOVAs was employed to assess the effects of participation on behavior, extracurricular, academics, and attendance. If the null hypothesis was rejected, the Roy-Bargmann's stepdown analysis was used on the prioritized dependent variables for investigation of the transition group's influence on each of the individual dependent variable. In the stepdown analysis, each

dependent variable was analyzed, in turn, with the other three dependent variables treated as covariates in a univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Homogeneity of regression was evaluated for all components of the stepdown analysis.

Interpretation of the results evaluated the influence of participation in S2S on GPA, attendance, extracurricular activities, and behavioral referrals in comparison to the levels observed for participation in the control group. Stepdown analysis was further used to evaluate the effects of transition on each dependent variable while controlling for the other dependent variables. These findings suggested the effects of transition on the dependent variables with indication of the mediating dependent variable.

Ethical Limitations

Feasibility of access to this rightfully protected population led to several limitations in this study. First, the convince sample allowed for collection of archival data from both transition groups without intrusion of privacy or to the integrity of the school day (Kline, 2005). However, this may have limited the level of external validity, and caution should be given to the generalizability of the results (Kline, 2005). Second, the use of archival data limited the ability of causal interpretations to be drawn from this study (Simonton, 2000) due to a lack of variable control as common for most quasi-experimental studies (Creswell, 2014). Although internal validity was supported by the literature on academic resiliency, the third limitation revolves around reliability concerns. S2S lacks empirical evaluation after development and implementation (Park, 2011); therefore, reliability of the current findings remains unknown. Third, the study occurred in only one U.S. geographical region, and results may be different in other areas as well

as different temporally (Brooks-Gunn, Phelps, & Elder, 1991). For reliability to be ensured and generalizability tested, future scholars should evaluate possible differences based on location, demographics, and time frame (McNeeley & Warner, 2015). Fourth, internal validity was at risk due to instrumentation used by each school when collecting data on the four variables. Observer differences may have caused changes in data that were not accounted for by this study (Campbell, Stanley, & Gage, 1963). To mitigate this occurrence, each school was requested to provide their operationalization of the variables requested. Fifth, internal validity threats may have arisen from the dissimilar groups (Campbell et al., 1963). Although some similarity was ensured through demographic comparisons, demographic similarities does not account for all possible differences. Sixth, internal validity may be confounded by selection-maturation interaction where unaccounted for variables influence the independent variables (Campbell et al., 1963). This study was the first, but hopefully not the last, to provide information evaluating the correlational relationship between peer support and academic resiliency.

Summary

To begin the collection of data evaluating the relationship between peer support and academic resiliency, IRB approval was obtained. I proposed a study with recently relocated high school students ranged from the ninth to 12th grade enrolled at one of two locations in the United States. Relationship evaluation occurred through the use of archival data from four variables: GPA, extracurricular activities, attendance, and behavior with a comparison between participants and nonparticipants in S2S. A

MANOVA was used to evaluate the data. Reliability and generalizability of this study's findings will hinge upon future studies. This study provided information on the relationship between peer support and academic resiliency. Chapter 4 presents the results for this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Research Study Recap

Military-affiliated students relocate every 2 to 3 years, and the frequency of relocations for civilian-affiliated students is unknown. Peer support during adolescence is a vital aspect of lifespan development (Berk, 2012), which relocations may disrupt. Although some adolescents demonstrate resiliency to relocations, this population is at greater risk for truancy, academic achievement decline, interpersonal conflict, dropping out of high school, substance use/abuse, mental health risks, and decreased physical health as described in Chapter 2. To mitigate these pitfalls, the MCEC was tasked by the U.S. Army to study this population's needs and create a support program. The MCEC research project concluded with the creation of S2S, which use peer mentorship to create a smooth transition into the new location (Park, 2011). Students who move to one of the schools with S2S have a peer waiting for them to arrive on their first day to assist with navigating the campus, knowing what clubs/sports are available, answering various questions, and providing a social support system to begin networking in the new setting. However, this program lacked reevaluation after implementation.

Academic resilience theory was used to frame this study by identifying variables and supporting correlations to outcome variables as depicted in Figure 1 in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 provided justifications for archival data to be requested from two separate high schools with similar demographic for all new students enrolled in the associated district for the first time during the 2018-2019 academic year. MANOVA was proposed as the

statistical analysis for the four dependent variables, which were GPA, percentage of attendance, number of extracurriculars, and behavioral referrals.

In this chapter, a review of the research question and hypotheses. Also, the deviations from the planned methodology outlined in Chapter 3, timeframe used for data collection, external validity, basic sample demographic information, statistical results, and a summary of findings is described. This study was designed to answer the following question through the evaluation of the hypotheses below.

Research Question and Hypotheses

1. For high school students who have recently relocated, does S2S's peer support vary differently than a location without S2S in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the frequency of behavioral referrals at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year?

H₁: At the end of academic year 2018-2019, S2S's peer support appears to vary differently in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the frequency of behavioral referrals when compared to a location without S2S's peer support.

H₀: At the end of academic year 2018-2019, S2S's peer support does not appear to vary differently in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and/or the frequency of behavioral referrals when compared to a location without S2S's peer support.

Data Collection

Collection Timeframe

Several schools within the United States were contacted via telephone to request information on how to submit research participation requests to their districts.

Conditional IRB approval (03-25-19-0589307) was awarded on May 9, 2019 pending approval from the data collection sites. Full IRB approval was granted on May 21, 2019.

The data from the control group site were received on May 28, 2019. The site with a MCEC verified S2S program provided data on July 17, 2019. Both schools sent the data file in an Excel document, which, after receipt, was uploaded into SPSS 25 for data analysis as depicted below.

Sample Characteristics

The initial plan was to use data from two locations with similar demographic information within the same geographical setting. Despite unexpected location changes, data were received from two schools located in the United States, and both had a military-affiliated student population with a highly mobile community leading to frequent new enrollments. The locations collected archival data for students who enrolled to their perspective districts for the first time during the 2018-2019 school year and physically attended school for at least 1 day. The independent variable ([Transition] $N = 276$), consisted of two levels, which were the S2S group ($N = 179$) and the control group ($N = 97$). Unequal sample sizes in quasi-experimental research are common occurrences (Mazerolle, Eason, & Goodman, 2018; Siegel, 1956; Spithoven et al., 2017; van Reemst

& Fischer, 2019) that may influence the validity of the results, and, as such, will be further explored later in this chapter.

S2S group. The associated site had an active S2S program as verified by electronic communications with the school's principal, counselor, and the MCEC's (2018) Continental United States list of active S2S programs. The S2S group was included in the list of 224 possible location sites (MCEC, 2018). Although discussed earlier, it is important to note how each school approached the new students at their site. The S2S members at this site received training to ensure basic mentorship/leadership skills were developed. These skills are developed through role playing and practice with other members prior to the student mentoring a newly enrolled peer on his or her first day on campus. Peer mentors participate in weekly meetings to maintain skills and routinely check-in with their mentees. Working with the program facilitator, these students planned organized events to assist newly relocated students to further transition successfully to this location. These events serve as another method for mentors to check-in in with those they mentor beyond initial arrivals. Any concerns that arise are discussed with the site's program facilitator, who was also the school's counselor, which is common for most S2S programs. The counselor/program facilitator maintained frequent communications with the MCEC's Student Programs Manager, Debra Longley, to ensure the program alignment between the various settings, share developments, and learn from other programs.

The S2S group's data analyst provided data for 179 students with item nonresponse for GPA ($N=28$). The site's data analyst stated in a personal electronic

communication on May 20, 2019 that the district changed to a new data system during the summer of 2018, which may result in discrepancies. No other known factors could explain this missing data, as stated by the data analysts. The missing data were a monotone data pattern existing solely for GPA. Dong and Peng (2013) recommend the use of a regression model to compute missing data, if needed.

The proportion of missing data was 10.1% for cases as displayed in Table 1 below, which was .025 for variables when a summary of missing values was conducted in SPSS. Bias is less likely for statistical analyses when the missing data are .1 or less (Bennett, 2001). The data here are close to that cutoff point when the case proportion is measured and well below the cutoff when variable proportion is measured. Additionally, the method for mitigating missing data depends on the type of statistical analyses conducted, data mechanisms, and data patterns (Dong & Peng; 2013).

Table 1

Case Processing Summary for Transition

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	<i>N</i>	Percent	<i>N</i>	Percent	<i>N</i>	Percent
Attendance	248	89.9%	28	10.1%	276	100.0%
Academics	248	89.9%	28	10.1%	276	100.0%
Behavior	248	89.9%	28	10.1%	276	100.0%
Extra	248	89.9%	28	10.1%	276	100.0%

Control group. The chief academic officer for the control group location provided data for 97 students without missing cases. This location did not have an active S2S program. As described previously, each school typically develops an informal

orientation process for integrating new students, which may influence the data. The control group location had a Welcome Center to assist the high volume of students and their families with enrollment paperwork. When feasible, the new student was paired with a peer, who was assisting the office for an elective credit, to assist with campus navigation. No formal training was provided for these student helpers to ensure successful mentoring or leadership skills. No scheduled or monitored check-ins were conducted by these students or faculty members to monitor transitions after the initial arrival.

Results

A retrospective study was conducted evaluating two geographically and demographically similar high schools. One school had an active S2S program, and the other school used a faculty member or student office aid to assist with the integration of a new student on the campus. These two groups were the independent variable levels for transition. The archival data were uploaded into SPSS 25 for analysis. GPA, extracurricular activities, attendance, and behavior were the four dependent variables. GPA was the accumulative average earned by each new student. Extracurricular activities was defined by the total number of extracurricular activities each student participated in that year. Attendance was the number of attendance days divided by the number of membership days multiplied by 100 to obtain a percentage for the school year. Behavior was the number of suspensions or expulsions combined to further ensure anonymity of participants.

Descriptive Statistics

Transition ($N = 276$) consisted of two levels, which were the S2S group ([1] $N = 179$) and the control group ([2] $N = 97$). Table 2 shows the combined transitional levels for Attendance percentages (Attendance) ranged from 30.23 to 100.00 ($M = 91$, $SD = 8.49$), GPA ranged from .30 to 4.20 ($M = 2.62$, $SD = .98$), number of behavioral referrals (Behavior) ranged from .00 to 7.0 ($M = .22$, $SD = .76$) and extracurricular participation (Extra) ranged from .00 to 5.0 ($M = .88$, $SD = 1.03$). To evaluate the possible differences with the missing cases excluded, the descriptive statistics were evaluated again with the exclusion. As shown in Table 3, the combined transitional levels for Attendance percentages (Attendance) ranged from 60.5 to 100.00 ($M = 92.35$, $SD = 6.97$), GPA ranged from .30 to 4.20 ($M = 2.62$, $SD = .98$), number of behavioral referrals (Behavior) ranged from .00 to 7.0 ($M = .25$, $SD = .80$) and extracurricular participation (Extra) ranged from .00 to 5.0 ($M = .86$, $SD = 1.04$). A discussion of the missing cases continues below.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Transition with Missing Cases Included

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attendance	276	30.23	100.00	91.8795	8.48642
GPA	248	.30	4.20	2.6197	.97696
Behavior	276	.00	7.00	.2210	.76638
Extra	276	.00	5.00	.8841	1.03096
Valid N (listwise)	248				

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Transition with Missing Cases Excluded

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attendance	248	60.50	100.00	92.3463	6.97100
GPA	248	.30	4.20	2.6197	.97696
Behavior	248	.00	7.00	.2460	.80483
Extra	248	.00	5.00	.8589	1.03787
Valid N (listwise)	248				

Missing Data

There were subtle differences in GPA with and without the missing cases as visible when comparing data in Table 2 to data in Table 3. The differences were evaluated using the Mann-Whitney U test; the null-hypothesis was retained for attendance ($p = .824$), GPA ($p = 1.00$), behavior ($p = .637$) and extra ($p = .699$). This shows that no statistically significant differences existed with the inclusion or exclusion of the 28 missing data cases. These results further support Nachar's (2008) description of the Mann-Whitney U as a robust analysis toward missing data because no significant differences were identified despite the removal of 28 cases. Therefore, the influence of the missing data cases was supported as inconsequential to further analyses in this study and an exclusionary command were utilized in SPSS.

The S2S group consisted of $N = 179$ for all dependent variables with the exception of GPA, which was $N = 151$. Table 4 shows the descriptive data for the S2S level of transition. The ranges were between 30.23 to 100.00 for attendance ($M = 91.17$,

$SD = 9.11$), .30 to 4.20 for GPA ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.00$), .00 to 3.00 for behavior ($M = .13$, $SD = .47$), and .00 to 5.00 for extra ($M = 1.07$, $SD = 1.05$).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for S2S Transition Group

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Attendance	179	30.23	100.00	91.1735	9.11286	83.044
GPA	151	.30	4.20	2.4372	1.00419	1.008
Behavior	179	.00	3.00	.1341	.46677	.218
Extra	179	.00	5.00	1.0670	1.05254	1.108
Valid N (listwise)	151					

a. Transition = 1

The control group consisted of $N = 97$ for all dependent variables. Table 5 shows the descriptive data for the second level of transition. The ranges were between 62.70 to 100.00 for attendance ($M = 93.18$, $SD = 7.05$), .52 to 4.07 for GPA ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .86$), .00 to 7.00 for behavior ($M = .13$, $SD = .47$), and .00 to 4.00 for extra ($M = .55$, $SD = .90$).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Control Group

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Attendance	97	62.70	100.00	93.1825	7.04860	49.683
GPA	97	.52	4.07	2.9037	.86385	.746
Behavior	97	.00	7.00	.3814	1.11284	1.238
Extra	97	.00	4.00	.5464	.90163	.813
Valid N (listwise)	97					

a. Transition = 2

Evaluation of MANOVA Assumptions

A one-way, between-subject's MANOVA was used to assess the probability of interactions among the four dependent variables. Exploratory data analyses indicated the four dependent variables failed to meet the assumption of univariate normality based on the results of the Shapiro-Wilks test for normality with alpha set at .05. Table 6 shows the significance for each variable ($p < .001$) as a whole and separated into transition levels. These results support the appropriateness of rejecting the null hypothesis for normal distribution. Additionally, Table 7 shows the skewness and kurtosis for each variable. The dependent variables are irregularly distributed with unequal sample sizes, and further analysis with the MANOVA was inappropriate. Maheshwari and Mani (2019) suggested the use of a Mann-Whitney U test when data have an asymmetrical distribution and unequal sample sizes. The use of a MANOVA with data that fails to uphold the assumptions increases the likelihood of result error (Maheshwari & Mani, 2019). A shift to the Mann-Whitney U was warranted for this study, which was a deviation from the proposed methodology in Chapter 3.

Table 6

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p	Statistic	df	p
Attendance	.153	248	<.001	.845	248	<.001
Attendance (1)	.160	151	<.001	.845	151	<.001
Attendance (2)	.175	97	<.001	.826	97	<.001
GPA	.091	248	<.001	.956	248	<.001
GPA (1)	.090	151	.005	.964	151	.001
GPA (2)	.122	97	.001	.934	97	<.001
Behavior	.483	248	<.001	.343	248	<.001
Behavior (1)	.511	151	<.001	.355	151	<.001
Behavior (2)	.459	97	<.001	.394	97	<.001
Extra	.264	248	<.001	.780	248	<.001
Extra (1)	.257	151	<.001	.824	151	<.001
Extra (2)	.388	97	<.001	.658	97	<.001

Note. a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

b. Significance achieved for p values equal to or less than .05

Table 7

Tests of Skewness and Kurtosis

<i>Statistics</i>		Attendance	Academics	Behavior	Extra
<i>N</i>	Valid	276	248	276	276
	Missing	0	28	0	0
Skewness		-2.973	-.460	5.313	1.297
Std. Error of Skewness		.147	.155	.147	.147
Kurtosis		14.116	-.642	35.685	1.653
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.292	.308	.292	.292

Evaluation of Mann-Whitney U and Assumptions

A nonparametric statistic enables data analysis for variables that do not fit a normal distribution pattern (Siegel, 1956; Wilcoxon, 1945). The purpose of using a

Mann-Whitney U test was to evaluate if a difference exists in the two independent variable levels for each dependent variable. The data upheld the associated assumptions with independent observations and similar distributions for all except Behavior. Table 7 shows the distributions comparison for the independent group levels across the four dependent variables. The null hypothesis for similar variance was retained for attendance ($p = .831$), GPA ($p = .110$), and extra ($p = .060$), which means that the differences were not statistically different. Distribution differences were noted for behavior ($p = .033$), and a comparison of histograms (Figure 3) shows where these differences occur due to two outliers in the control group. Caution is needed for results pertaining to this variable. No assumption of normality was needed for a nonparametric statistic (Mann & Whitney, 1947). Additionally, this statistic is robust to differences in sample size (Mann & Whitney, 1947; Nachar, 2008). The data appears to align well with the nonparametric assumptions for the Mann-Whitney U.

Table 8

Tests of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	p
Attendance	Based on Mean	.028	1	246	.867
	Based on Median	.046	1	246	.831
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.046	1	245.959	.831
	Based on trimmed mean	.020	1	246	.887
GPA	Based on Mean	2.337	1	246	.128
	Based on Median	2.572	1	246	.110
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.572	1	245.357	.110
	Based on trimmed mean	2.457	1	246	.118
Behavior	Based on Mean	16.411	1	246	<.001**
	Based on Median	4.579	1	246	.033*
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	4.579	1	157.194	.034*
	Based on trimmed mean	8.878	1	246	.003**
Extra	Based on Mean	.408	1	246	.523
	Based on Median	3.559	1	246	.060
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.559	1	239.785	.060
	Based on trimmed mean	.725	1	246	.395

Note. * = significant at .05, ** = .01, and *** = .001.

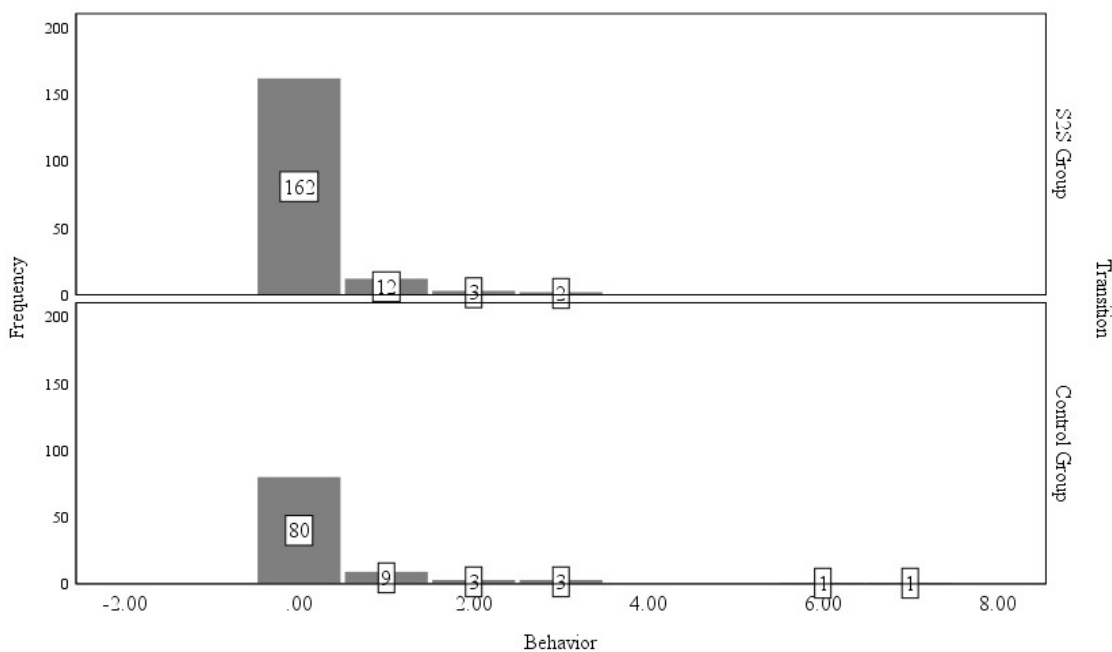


Figure 2. Histogram with Behavior separated into Transition levels.

Statistical Analysis Findings

The research question for this study was to evaluate for differences in Transition levels in Attendance, GPA, Behavior, and Extracurricular activities. The aim was to inform future researchers if this topic warrants similar investigations and provide information pertaining to S2S improvement possibilities. To this end, two hypotheses were assessed.

Null Hypothesis. A Mann-Whitney U was utilized, with alpha set at .05, to assess the null hypothesis. Table 7 shows that differences do exist between the two levels of Transition for Attendance ($p = .010$), GPA ($p < .001$), Behavior ($p = 0.44$), and Extra ($p < .001$). These differences are statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 9

Test Statistics^a

	Attendance	GPA	Behavior	Extra
Mann-Whitney U	7047.500	5318.500	7952.500	5880.500
Wilcoxon W	23157.500	16794.500	24062.500	10633.500
Z	-2.581	-3.637	-2.018	-4.742
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	<.001	.044	<.001

a. Grouping Variable: Transition

Alternative Hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis is accepted. Differences existed in the number of extracurricular activities, attendance, GPA, and the frequency of behavioral referrals. Table 9 shows the ranks for each variable. Eta-squared (η^2) was manually calculated ($\eta^2 = Z^2 / N - 1$) to evaluate the percentage of rank variance accounted for by Transition level (Gignac, 2019), which was interpreted for effect size according to Cohen's (1992) guidelines. Attendance, GPA, and Behavior showed a small¹ effect size and Extra showed a moderate effect size for treatment.

For Attendance, the S2S Group ($M = 129.37$) was present at school less often than the Control Group ($M = 155.35$) and showed a small effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.02$). GPA was lower for the S2S Group ($M = 111.22$) than the Control Group ($M = 145.17$) and showed a small effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.05$). Fewer disciplinary actions occurred for the S2S Group ($M = 134.43$) than the Control Group ($M = 146.02$) and showed a small effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.02$). The S2S Group ($M = 154.15$) participated in more extracurricular activities than

¹ Cohen's (1992) Guidelines for Eta-Squared (η^2) are .01 = small effect, .06 = moderate effect, and .14 = large effect.

the Control Group ($M = 109.62$) and showed a moderate effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.08$). S2S had a strong relationship with extracurricular participation. The group without S2S had higher GPAs, better attendance percentages, and more behavioral concerns.

Table 10

Ranks

	Transition	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Attendance	S2S Group	179	129.37	23157.50
	Control Group	97	155.35	15068.50
	Total	276		
GPA	S2S Group	151	111.22	16794.50
	Control Group	97	145.17	14081.50
	Total	248		
Behavior	S2S Group	179	134.43	24062.50
	Control Group	97	146.02	14163.50
	Total	276		
Extra	S2S Group	179	154.15	27592.50
	Control Group	97	109.62	10633.50
	Total	276		

Summary

The results of this study supported the rejection of the null hypothesis because a statistically significant difference existed. The dependent variables, Attendance, GPA, Behavior, and Extra, correlated differently with the two levels of Transition. The alternative hypothesis was supported. The control group had higher GPAs and attended school more often than the S2S group. A higher positive relationship was observed for the S2S group with the number of extracurricular activities. The S2S group had a lower rate of behavioral concerns. Additionally, this study supports that school attendance and

GPA are highly interrelated variables whereas extracurricular participation adversely connects with behavior concerns. Further interpretation of these results is located in Chapter 5 along with the limitations, recommendations, and implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

A quasi-experimental study was conducted to assess the quantitative relationship between peer support and academic resiliency among recently relocated high school students. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the two levels of transition, which were the control group and the S2S group. The control group had higher academic achievement scores and attended school more frequently than the S2S group. The S2S group had a higher number of students participating in extracurricular activities with better emotion regulation abilities than the control group. The following chapter provides a discussion of the interpretations, limitations, recommendations, and implications of this study.

Interpretation of Findings

Resiliency is not measured by achievement alone because this negates the many factors that increase an individual's likelihood of success despite adversity (Werner, 1995). Social support is a long-standing factor associated with improving resiliency (Finkel et al., 2003; Werner, 1989, 1995). The framework for this study, as provided by the theory of academic resiliency, identified the outcome variables for targeted evaluation, which were GPA, extracurricular participation, attendance, and behavioral referrals. A relationship between the four dependent variables together was not supported by this study.

Although Monahan et al. (2010) and Tolan et al. (2014) supported a correlation between prosocial behavior and GPA, I found no relationship between GPA and

behavioral referrals. Instead, I found a positive relationship for GPA and attendance. Other researchers also reported the connection between attendance and academic achievement. For example, Dey (2018) assessed longitudinal data and noted that attendance showed substantial and positive linking with test scores. Similarly, Chafloque Céspedes et al. (2018) assessed academic performance for changes based on absenteeism and supported a strong negative correlation. The results from this study aligned with previous studies by supporting the connection between attendance and academic achievement. The prediction is that absenteeism decreases academic standing while attendance increases the likelihood of higher academic standing.

Additionally, a positive relationship was supported for the S2S group with extracurricular participation and emotion regulation. This aligns with Allen and Bowels's (2013) identification of peer attachment as a moderating variable for appropriate emotion regulation. The S2S group had lower ranges of behavioral referrals, demonstrating higher levels of emotion regulation. Similarly, other scholars linked prosocial programs with decreased school disciplinary actions (Gordon et al., 2013; McNeely et al., 2002). Li et al. (2011) specified that the decrease in risk-taking behaviors correlated with an increase in prosocial behaviors such as extracurricular participation. More time spent with prosocial peers leads to less risk-taking behaviors (Catalano et al., 2004; Chapman et al., 2013). As noted by Mancini et al. (2015), positive peer influence may impact academic outcomes less than psychological health. This study supported higher levels of psychological health, as noted by increased emotion regulation ability, for individuals who participated in S2S. Consequently, the higher level of

extracurricular participation with lower behavioral referrals for the S2S group aligns well with previous findings.

Study Limitations

Generalizability is cautioned due to a wide array of possible between-school differences for the groups included in this study and other school pairings incorporated in future studies. For example, informal transition support programs are commonly developed at individual schools, which confounds generalizability (De Pedro et al., 2014b). The scope of this study also limited external validity to other school pairings due to unknown variables. As listed in Chapter 1, these variables may include differences in deployment frequencies or stage variations (Creech et al., 2014; Gorman et al., 2010; Lester & Flake, 2013), familial relationships (Gewirtz et al., 2011), campus faculty differences (Flanagan & Stout, 2010; Thapa et al., 2013), or campus climate differences (Less, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011). There are several variables outside the scope of this study and possible differences between schools, which limit generalizability.

The one-time collection of archival data from 2018-2019 restricted generalizability to other academic years due to possible temporal differences impacting the reliability of findings (Creswell, 2014). Extreme weather events and occurrences of mass violence are unpredictable. These factors impact schools and communities in various ways each year, which limits the generalization of this study to future studies using data from other academic years.

Internal validity was limited by missing data, documentation, and demographic differences between the two groups. The missing data in this study confounds internal

validity due to possible missing data patterns (Dong & Peng; 2013). Documentation differences between various schools and school districts is another factor influencing validity (Creswell, 2014). Also, as experienced by the S2S group, data systems can require a specific format for uploaded data, which may cause discrepancies within a single location from one year to the next year. Although the two groups were located in the United States and shared military affiliation, not all within group differences were accounted for by this study, which limits internal validity (Campbell et al., 1963). Reliability and generalizability of the findings in this study are limited.

Recommendations

For reliability to be ensured and generalizability tested, future scholars should evaluate possible differences based on location, demographics, and timeframe (Warner, 2013). Future scholars should use two schools located in the same city with similar demographics and collect longitudinal data to assess result reliability. Next, findings should be compared to data from school pairings within other cities to assess generalizability. The novelty of this study requires future evaluation to continue improving the care provided to this at-risk population.

Although this study provided no causation explanations, the relationship between no-peer support, attendance, and GPA identified areas for S2S to target interventions. Freeman, Wilkinson, Kowitt, Kittelman, and Flanner (2018) concluded that family support, incentives, and skill building positively influence attendance. Having peer mentors provide daily greetings to mentees in person when present and via telephone when absent would indirectly provide attendance accountability while increasing

opportunities for mentors to provide support. For example, a mentor may discover that transportation barriers exist for a mentee and disclosure of carpool opportunities may be needed. The mentor can also assist to facilitate a higher level of school engagement. A stronger interpersonal relationship between mentor and mentee will likely uncover barriers to education, which enable the mentor to know when mitigation efforts are warranted. Study groups and homework support could also be built into S2S to increase academic achievement through peer interactions.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between peer support and academic resiliency to inform transition support for recently relocated high school students. Transitions during adolescence impact peer relationships that are needed for appropriate development and overall health (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). Although S2S was developed to mitigate these detriments, the program remained unevaluated (Park, 2011) prior to the current study. This study was needed to inform education policies (De Pedro et al., 2014b) and school reform (Esqueda et al., 2012). The four variables measured to assess academic resiliency were not universally present at one school over the other. Instead, each site presented with two out of the four variables, which further stresses the need for more targeted interventions to assist this population and demonstrate all four variables at one site.

The implications for this study start small and ripple outward. The administrators, who provided archival data for this study, requested results to inform their approach to facilitating transitions for new students at each location. The MCEC also requested

results to impact the continued program development and implementation for the increasing number of active programs. I identified academic achievement and attendance as areas for S2S to develop interventions. Improvements in the program will impact current and future S2S mentors, mentees, and their families.

The results promote proactive support for this at-risk population (Gilreath et al., 2014). As relocation becomes more common and frequent due to various technology advancements, research is mandatory for continued positive change to facilitate smooth transitions. This study assists to keep this topic relevant while supporting the need for peer mentoring during transitions into new schools. Also, locations with S2S need more academic support initiatives to improve attendance and GPA. These recommendations will assist educators to move toward improving transitions for recently relocated students. Therefore, this study has the potential to impact the 950,196-known military-affiliated students (DOD, 2016) and the unknown number of civilian-affiliated students who relocate at various times during academic years and enroll at a new school.

Conclusion

Programs without efficacy are in place to assist this at-risk population and outcomes were undocumented (Park, 2011). This study contributes to the literature gap with information on outcomes while providing areas for program improvement. The comparison of observations for each group demonstrated significantly higher ranges of extracurricular participation and emotion regulation while the control group demonstrated significantly higher ranges of academic achievement and attendance. These findings may not generalize to other locations, demographic populations, or time

frames (Warner, 2010), and more research is still needed. With attendance being identified by other researchers as a mediating variable for academic achievement, S2S implementers could focus on possible methods for incorporating attendance into the program's focus and use this highlighted strength to improve the program further. More research is needed to assist the children of those who serve the country.

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