STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, STUDENT ATTITUDES, AND SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS: A STUDY OF ADOLESCENTS IN GRADE NINE

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Introduction

- The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between student engagement and factors such as attitudes toward school, preparedness, gender, ethnicity, and first language spoken.

- According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (USDE; 2013), the calculated Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) for the high school class of 2010 was 78.2%, meaning that over 20% of the nation’s youth did not graduate in the 4 years allotted for high school.

- Minorities in California comprise a disproportionately higher portion of those not graduating in four years than their Caucasian peers.
Essentially, a school social worker will be able to ensure student’s educational stability by providing students with an ecological approach for support.

The United States demographic trends are an important factor to consider when studying the educational system, noting the degree of diversity in the school system will continue to increase.

School personnel lack multicultural competence when working with families, describing the barriers parents face in being involved in their children’s education.
As mentioned, the demographic landscape of the United States, and particularly California schools has changed rapidly over the past half century. Moreover, it is overwhelmingly clear from research that Hispanic and African American students who are quickly becoming the majority in California schools are dropping out at epidemic rates (Crosenoe et al., 2012).

This study makes clear that this trend is in part attributable to low levels of student engagement. This reality demands a paradigm shift towards addressing the issues that result in minority student dropout, thus mandating that specific attention is directed towards low levels of school preparedness and poor attitudes towards school among Hispanic students.
Methods

Sample
- The sample size was approximately 15,530 adolescents.
- The information collected was obtained from ninth graders across the United States.

Data Collection Procedures
- Quantitative correlational design to examine secondary data from the High School Longitudinal Survey (HSLS) of 2009 which was conducted by the National Center of Educational Statistics.
Methods (Continued)

- Variables and Instruments
  - The HSLS-2009 utilized a student, parent, teacher, counselor, and administrator questionnaire to understand as much about the schooling experience as possible. For the purposes of this research, only the student questionnaire was utilized.

- Data Analysis
  - All variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Bivariate correlational analyses were used to determine whether there is a relationship between student attitudes towards school and student engagement, as well as levels of school preparedness and student engagement. Subsequently, one-way ANOVA and independent groups t-test analysis were used to determine whether student engagement, preparedness, student attitude differed by race, gender, or language spoken.
This study resulted in the discovery of a significant positive correlations between student attitudes towards school and student engagement, as well as school preparedness and student engagement.

The results indicated a weak, positive correlation \((r = .226; p < .005)\) between student attitudes towards school and student engagement.

The results indicated a weak, positive correlation between school preparedness and student engagement \((r = .166; p < .005)\).
The study concluded that student engagement varies according to gender, ethnicity, and first language spoken.

Females had higher levels of student engagement than males.

Asian students were most engaged in school and Hispanics were least engaged in school.

Higher levels of engagement came from students who reported their first spoken language was English and another language equally.
The current study yields the finding that students who are more prepared for school have higher levels of student engagement. These findings are similar to several studies, which established a relationship between school preparedness and student engagement (Fallis & Opotow, 2003; Fredricks et al., 2004; Miller-Cribbs et al., 2002).

This study indicated that there is a statistically significant difference in student engagement according to ethnicity, mirroring the findings of several studies (Johnson, et al., 2001; Roorda et al., 2011). Specifically, this study showed that Hispanic students exhibit the lowest levels of student engagement and school preparedness, as well as the most negative attitudes towards school.

Students who speak a language other than English as their first language exhibit higher levels of emotional engagement than other students. However, these same students exhibited lower levels of behavioral engagement, which helps to explain the findings of the present study, for student engagement is defined behaviorally in this study.
References