Chapter 7
The Development of the Teacher Social Justice Advocacy for Children Scale

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ABSTRACT

The Teacher Social Justice Advocacy Scale was developed to measure teachers' social justice advocacy orientation. Six hundred and seven K-12 teachers participated in the study. Results support a 22-item scale with three distinct factors: teacher advocacy orientation, social justice awareness, and student empowerment. Bivariate correlations demonstrated positive relationships between the TSJAS, a measure of general social advocacy, and political involvement, and a negative relationship with a measure of just world ideology. TSJAS scores also evidenced adequate internal consistency reliability.

INTRODUCTION

Social injustices can occur in many forms, such as racism, oppression, transphobia, and poverty resulting in negative consequences for many school age children. Children who suffer injustices are more likely to report lower academic achievement, have fewer positive experiences at school, and less access to opportunities. Children most affected by injustices appear to be children who are experiencing poverty, ethnic and racial minorities, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and students with disabilities (Burdick-Will, 2016; Evans, 2004; Cooper Stein et al., 2018; Heptinstall et al., 2004; Pugach et al, 2021; Wang, 2017; Wang et al., 2016; Wong & Schweitzer, 2017).

The prevalence of injustices affecting students in educational settings has caused scholars to argue for the importance of incorporating social justice advocacy into training programs for educators and counselors. The goal for these training programs is to provide educators with the knowledge, awareness, and training needed to become more effective advocates for their students (Allen, 1997; Agarwal et al., 2010; Athanases & Larrabee, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Madhuri, 2015; Reagan et al., 2016; Storm, 2013; Whipp, 2013). Teachers see students daily and know their needs, struggles, and achievements (Catone et al., 2017), and can be the strongest advocates for equity and justice both within the classroom and beyond. The objectives of this chapter are to present the development and initial findings from a recently developed scale, the Teacher Social Justice Advocacy Scale (TSJAS). The TSJAS was developed with the purpose to assess teachers' social justice advocacy efforts.

BACKGROUND

Competencies and guidelines regarding social justice exist in the field of psychology, counseling, and education. These competencies and guidelines inform professionals to go beyond their office or classroom to facilitate societal change, to collaborate with other professionals and administrators in creating change, and to develop an understanding of the impact of sociopolitical forces on students' wellbeing (Cheatham & Mason, 2021; Constantine et al., 2007; Field & Baker, 2004; Lewis et al., 2003; Proctor et al., 2019). Other recommendations include to empower students to become change agents themselves and to challenging the power dynamics between teachers and students that maintain status quo and marginalization (Allen, 1997; Duncan-Andrade, 2005).

There is no consensus in the literature as to how much training pre-service trainees need to effectively engage in or whether they need endorse social justice advocacy to be effective teachers (Goodlad, 1990). Goodlad surveyed pre-service students and faculty members in educational programs and reported that only 5% of the sample identified *change agent* as being an important aspect of the role of a teacher. In Duncan-Andrade's (2005) study of exceptional teachers and social justice in one urban school, the exceptional teachers identified important factors to advocacy to be the importance to empowering students to question injustices, collaborating with administrators, and working outside of the classroom to implement social change.

It is important to note that conclusions and implications gleaned from the empirical data on social justice advocacy are limited due to methodological or psychometric limitations, such as low statistical power, generalizability to teachers, and homogenous samples in research studies. Some available scales on social justice lack evidence of reliability and validity when it comes to measuring advocacy with teachers. Of the available scales that measure social justice (Chen-Hayes, 2001; Corning & Myers, 2002; Kerpelman, 1969; Miller et al., 2009; Nilsson et al., 2011; Pinterits et al., 2009; Van Soest, 1996), we were unable to identify a scale that focused specifically on K-12 teachers. This lack of teacher-specific advocacy assessment instruments presents a gap in the existing literature.

MAIN FOCUS OF CHAPTER

The current study sought to fill this gap by developing a scale to measure teacher social justice advocacy. Scale construction recommendations emphasize the need for item development to be strongly rooted

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