

Associations Between School-Wide Practices & School-Wide Bullying:

Advancing the Cross-Country Understanding of Teachers' Perspectives from the U.S. & China

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Background

Larger research question

- what key factors to be best targeted in school-wide programs to effectively prevent and reduce bullying as an educational and public concern across the globe.

Goals of school-wide programs:

- Aim to prevent and reduce bullying in the school community.
- Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs acknowledged as promising practices in the US and some Western countries.

Challenges and Research Gaps:

- Need to understand key factors targeted in school-wide programs globally.
- Limited understanding of how commonly used practices influence bullying prevention outcomes outside North America.
- Cross-country differences in school-wide practices and bullying phenomenon evident in research literature.



Introduction

Bullying in schools:

- Common form of violence in schools, linked to negative impacts on academic, physical, and mental health outcomes.
- Recognized as a worldwide public health problem.

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School-wide Practices

Positive Disciplinary Practices

- Include praise, recognition, and rewards.
- Increase students' appropriate behavior when clear expectations and rules are established.

Punitive Disciplinary Practices

- Involve measures like classroom removals, suspensions, and reprimands.
- Effective in preventing misbehavior when combined with positive practices.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Involves learning and applying social, emotional, and associated skills.
- Results in optimal attitudes and behaviors in school, work, and life.



Cross-Country Understandings

- Crucial for developing and adapting effective evidence-based school-wide bullying prevention practices.
- Considering differences in cultural contexts and school systems between countries.
- Studies indicate varying perceptions of disciplinary practices and bullying experiences among students in different countries
 - For example, U.S. students perceive punitive practices as common, while Chinese students perceive praise and rewards as frequent
- Cultural differences, such as collectivism versus individualism and moral discipline emphasis, contribute to disparities in bullying rates and perceptions.

Significance of Cross-Country Perspectives in China:

- Examining bullying perspectives in China is crucial due to the serious bullying problem in Chinese schools
- Considering the growing Chinese American population, understanding cross-country perspectives informs culturally sensitive educational practices



Teachers' Perspectives

- Teachers play a central role as socializing agents, influencing students' behavior and classroom dynamics
- Teachers' perceptions and framing of bullying incidents influence their engagement in prevention efforts, emphasizing the need to study these perspectives for effective interventions.
- Limited research focuses on the association between teachers' perceptions of school-wide practices and their perceptions of school-wide bullying issues.
- Understanding how teachers' perceptions of school-wide practices relate to their perception of school-wide bullying issues is essential, considering the significance of teachers in both developing and implementing these practices



Purpose of Present Study

- This study guided by the socio-ecological framework to examine variations in teachers' perceptions of school-wide practices and bullying prevention between the U.S. and China.
- Focuses on three common school-wide practices: positive, punitive, and SEL practices.
- We hypothesize differences in U.S. and Chinese teachers' perceptions of school-wide practices and bullying



Methods

Participants

- $N = 1,833$ U.S. teachers; $N = 1,627$ Chinese teachers.
- U.S. teachers were from 47 public urban or suburban middle and high schools
 - 687 middle school teachers, 177 high school teachers, 1,019 middle and high school students in Delaware.
- Chinese teachers were from 50 public schools
 - 840 middle school teachers, 505 high school teachers, and 282 from schools with both middle and high school students in eight provinces in China.

School Sizes

- In U.S. schools, the mean number of students (school size) was 938.27 ($SD = 233.73$), ranging from 272 to 1767.
- In Chinese schools, the mean number of students was 2335.69 ($SD = 1628.6$), ranging from 261 to 7083.

Demographic Information (U.S. Teachers)

- U.S. sample included 68.7% female and 31.3% male teachers.
- Racial/ethnic composition: 0.7% Asian, 14% Black, 0.1% Hawaiian, 1.9% Latino, 3.3% multi-racial, and 76.7% White.

Demographic Information (Chinese Teachers)

- 59.9% of Chinese teachers were female, and 38.6% were male.
- Ethnic composition not specified, but approximately 99% of participants and students in Chinese schools were of Chinese descent.



Methods

School-wide Practices

- English and Chinese versions of Delaware Disciplinary Practices Scale-Teacher (DDTS-T; Bear et al., 2016)
- 4-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 4= Strongly Agree)
- Positive Disciplinary Practices (POSI), Use of Punitive Disciplinary Practices (PUNI), Teachers' Teaching of Social Emotional Competencies (TTSEC)
- CFA results support three-factor correlational model
 - U.S. sample: $\chi^2 = 1198.44$ (df =101), $p < .001$, CFI = .910, RMSEA = .076, and SRMR = .054
 - Chinese sample: $\chi^2 = 944.90$ (df =101), $p < .001$, CFI = .931, RMSEA = .072, and SRMR = .040
 -

School-Wide Bullying

- 3-item School-Wide Bullying Subscale (SWBS)
- English and Chinese Delaware School Climate Survey-Teacher (DSCS-T; Bear et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2019)
- 4-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree a lot, 4 = Agree a lot)
- Higher mean score indicates higher level of school-wide bullying
- Omega Values:
 - U.S. Teachers: 0.87
 - Chinese Teachers: 0.72



Data Analysis

Measurement Invariance Testing:

- Hierarchical sequence tested statistical equivalence of factor structure across U.S. and Chinese samples.
- Three steps: configural invariance, factor loading invariance, intercepts of measured variables invariance.
- Change of CFI $> .01$ indicated meaningful model fit change for measurement invariance testing.

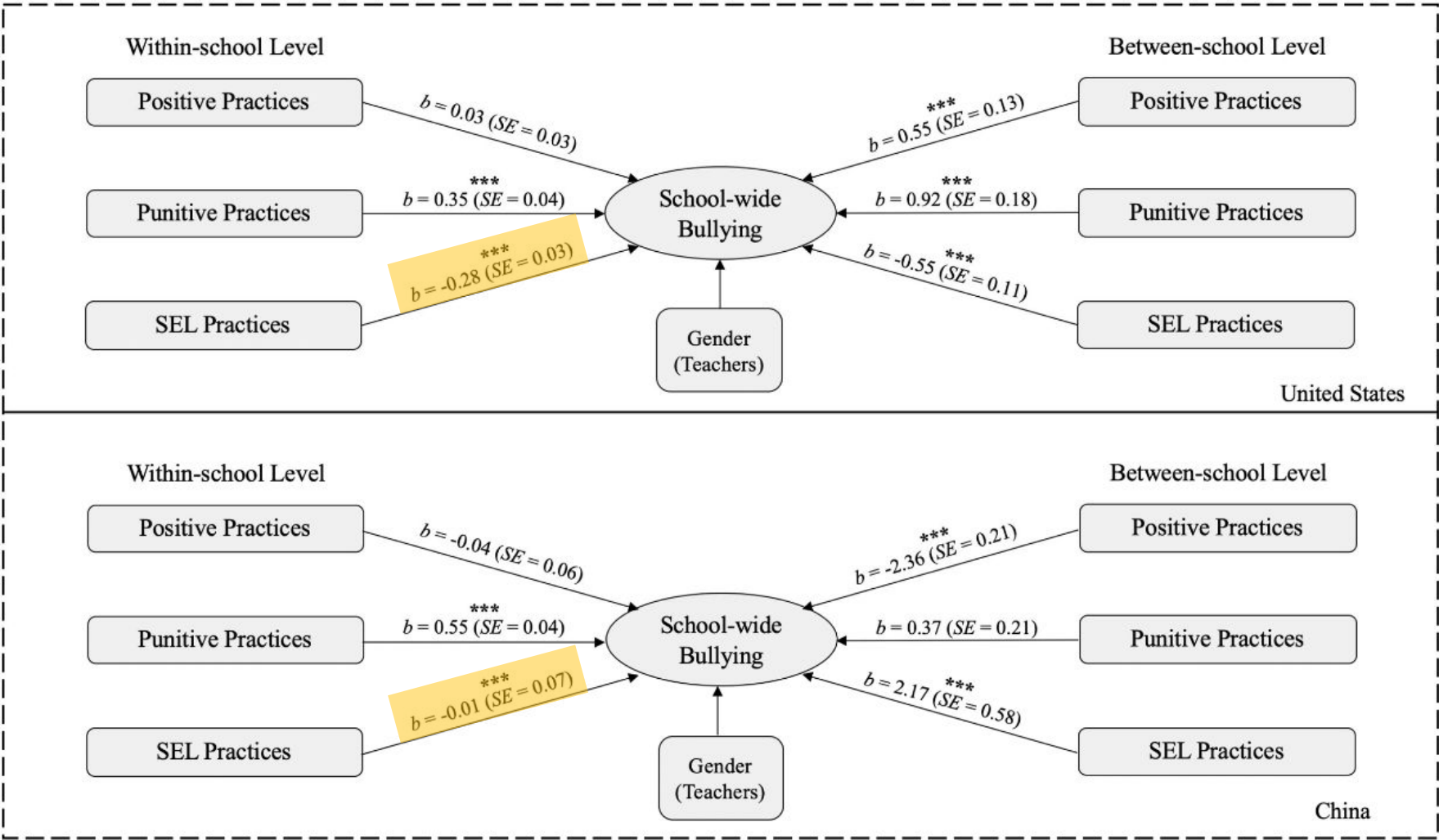
Multilevel Association Analysis:

- Preliminary analyses computed means and correlations among main variables.
- Used Mplus 8.10 to test multilevel associations between school-wide disciplinary practices (positive, punitive, and SEL practices) and school-wide bullying.
- Examined within-school (teacher-level) and between-school (school-level) effects.



Results

Figure 1
Tested Model With Standardized Path Estimates and Standard Errors

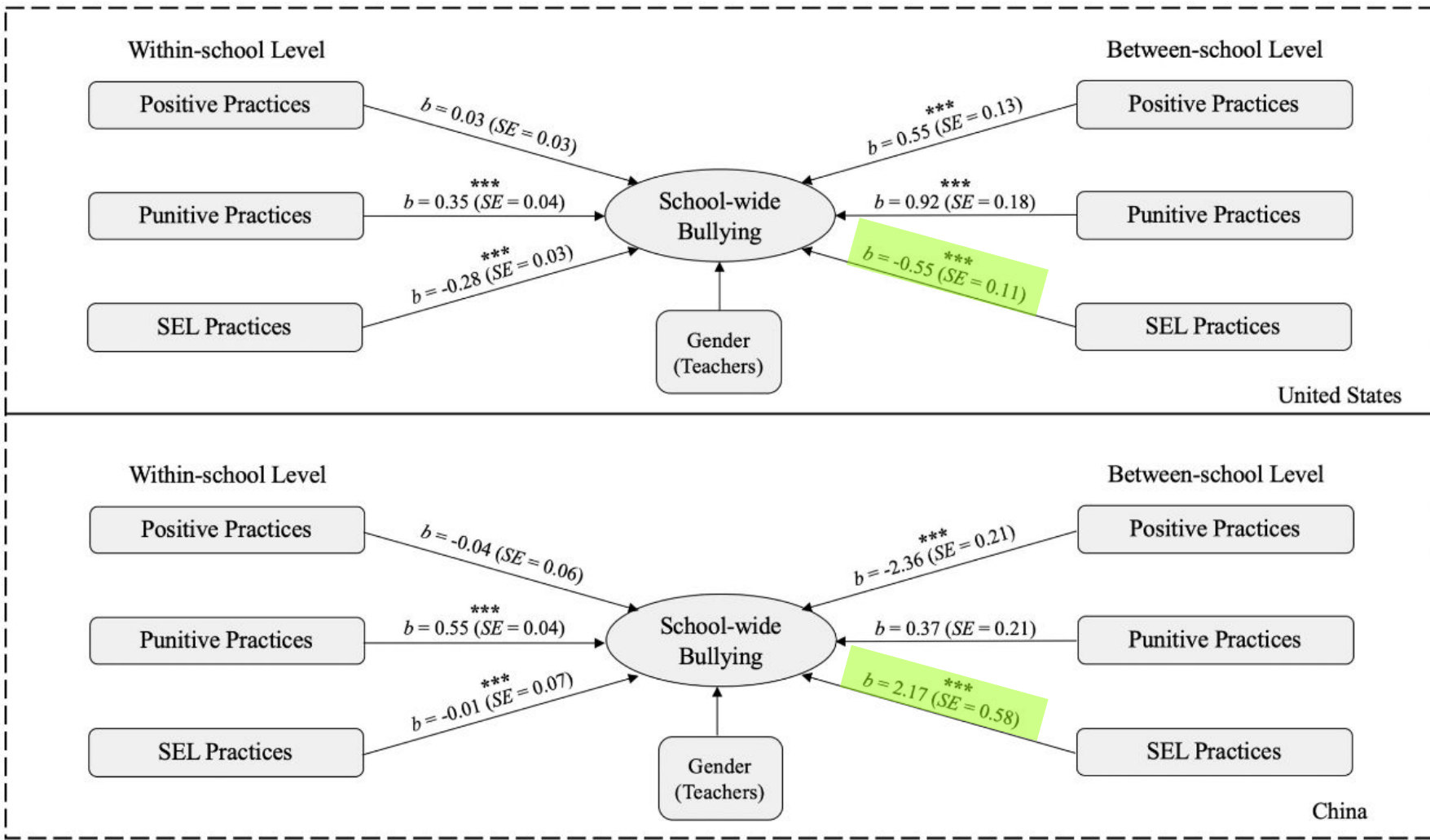


Note. SE = standard error; SEL = social and emotional learning.



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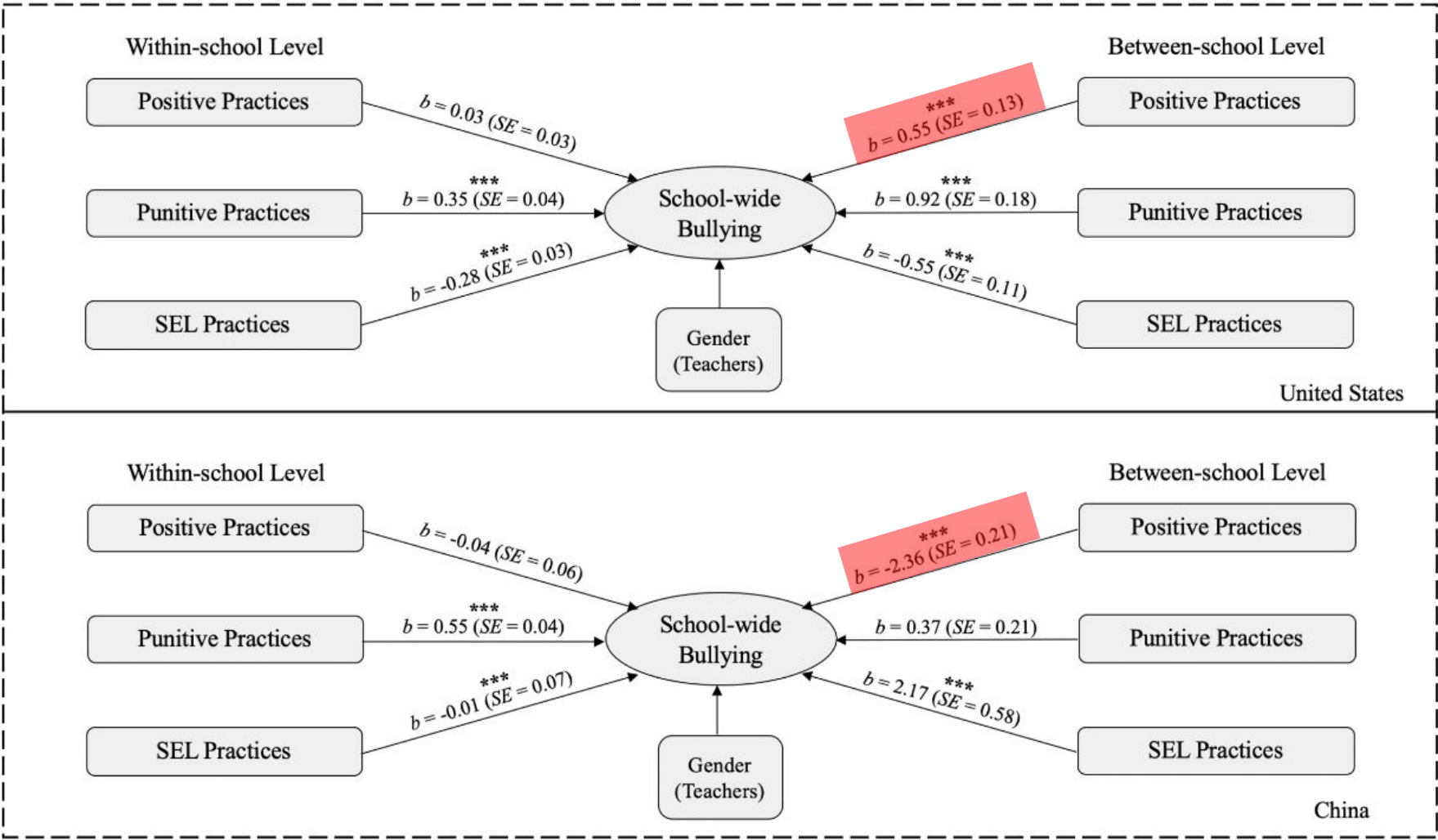


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Results

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Discussion

Cross-Country Measurement Invariance:

- Configural and Factor Loading Invariances: Achieved for DDTS-T and SWBS scales (Chen, 2007; Widaman & Reise, 1997).
- Intercept Invariance Not Achieved: Prevents comparison of latent means between U.S. and Chinese samples (Chen, 2007).

Implications:

- Inability to Compare Latent Means: Cultural differences hinder direct comparison of teachers' perceptions across countries (Chen, 2007).

Consistency with Previous Studies:

- Punitive Practices in China: Less common due to cultural value of social harmony and self-discipline (Crystal et al., 1994; Hui et al., 2011).
- Positive Practices in China: Contrary to Chinese modesty values; praised discouraged (Sun, 2015).
- SEL Practices in China: a three-dimensions SEL framework aligns with Chinese collectivism that focuses on “self, others, and society” (Yu & Jiang, 2017).



Discussion

Between-School Positive Practices:

- U.S. Sample: Associated with higher school-wide bullying.
- Chinese Sample: Linked to lower school-wide bullying due to cultural emphasis on social harmony (Crystal et al., 1994).

Punitive Practices:

- Universal Association: More frequent use linked to increased bullying incidents in both U.S. and Chinese contexts (Lewis et al., 2005).
- Chinese Context: Larger influence due to higher perceived social status of teachers (Jia et al., 2009).

SEL Practices:

- U.S. Context: Preventative factor against bullying due to social learning opportunities (Kramer et al., 2014).
- Chinese Context: No significant association, potentially due to cultural differences in educational approaches (Lin & Yao, 2014; Yoo & Miyamoto, 2018).

Between-School SEL Practices in China:

- Contradictory Association: Associated with higher school-wide bullying, contrasting with Western studies (Nickerson, 2019; Yang et al., 2020 & 2021).
- Possible Explanation: Chinese emphasis on "rational" education and less focus on social and emotional learning (Yu & Jiang, 2017).

Cultural Factors in Practices:

- U.S. Positive Practices: Seen as unhelpful without structural focus, contrary to authoritative discipline (Gerlinger & Wo, 2016).
- Chinese Positive Practices: Effective due to Confucian value of social harmony (Crystal et al., 1994).
- Chinese Punitive Practices: Aligned with cultural emphasis on self-discipline (Bear et al., 2016).



Limitations & Future Directions

Limited Generalizability:

- Study samples limited to specific regions (Delaware in the U.S. and Southern China), impacting generalizability to other parts of the countries or different countries.
- Differences in demographic characteristics of teachers and schools in the samples further limit generalizability.

Sampling Bias and Demographic Discrepancies:

- Convenience sampling used for the Chinese sample, potentially introducing bias.
- Future studies should aim for more equivalent demographic backgrounds in sampled groups and consider matched individual and contextual factors as controlling variables.

Cross-Sectional Design:

- Cross-sectional nature limits the establishment of causal relationships between school-wide practices and school-wide bullying.
- Future research should consider longitudinal or intervention designs to explore causal links.

Subjective Measures and Multi-Informant Approach:

- Sole reliance on teachers' self-reports may introduce biases.
- Future studies should incorporate more objective measures and multi-informant approaches for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between school-wide practices and bullying.



**Thank you
for listening!
Questions?**

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