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Teacher and Parent Perspectives Regarding Challenging Behavior of Preschool Children of Deployed Parents

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2020

Abstract

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EdS, Walden University, 2018

MS, Walden University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The problem addressed in this basic qualitative study was understanding the underlying reasons for challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children who experience disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. Many teachers and parents are challenged by the need to support these children during this stressful time and untreated stress can lead to long-term issues. The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. Interviews of 7 parents and 7 preschool teachers addressed 3 research questions about reasons for challenging behavior, and the disruption of social bonds and trust following a deployment. The conceptual framework for this study was the attachment theory of Bowlby and Ainsworth. Data were analyzed using a priori, open, and axial coding. Results indicated challenging behavior in preschool children following deployment is affected by the strength of the bond and level of trust a preschooler has with a caring adult. Most teachers and parents described the cause of disruption in social bonds as deployment for the reason for challenging behavior. Teachers believed that their strong relationship with preschoolers helps children feel safe and secure following parental deployment. Parents believed that a supportive environment with family and friends makes a positive difference when trust between the child and others is disrupted following parental deployment. Implications for positive social change include improved support strategies and positive outcomes for children that may result from new emphasis on support for social bonds and feelings of trust in children. Children's challenging behavior may be alleviated when children of deployed parents feel more secure.

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Dedication

I dedicate this success to the little girl I once was, or who I now desperately try to quiet, who was never told she could succeed and never given praise for the amazing things she did. To all the parents who are suffering from something that consumes them and take it out on their children. To those parents who allow their past deeds to keep them from forming strong bonds with their children. To all the little boys and girls who grow and develop despite the lack of love, trust, and nurturing they did not receive. It is possible to turn off the voices in your head that told the child in you what or who you will never be and do it. Do everything you were told you could not and be happy, be your true authentic self. Be the person you should be under the right circumstances. I dedicate this to my children and husband, whom I have fought to undo the damage I am recognizing my childhood did to me by loving them the way they need to be loved, unconditionally. To all those responsible for not providing me the love, patience, and environment suitable for a child, I forgive you. To all the adults who were not as lucky as I have been and let the trauma from their childhood immerse them into a life that they only heard stories about, you still have time to change it. This dissertation is also dedicated to my future adult children. I desperately want you to be happy, defining success by however you see fit. Make mistakes so that we can love you through them. Know that there is no such thing as perfect except Christ. Love, God, who will teach you how to love yourself. Recognize people loving you, know the people who cannot, and give grace to those who do not know how. Understand that I hope the upbringing you received can represent everything I learned about myself and how loving adults can impact young children's lives in extraordinary ways.

Acknowledgments

I want to give obedience and thanksgiving to Christ my Savior; without him, I would not have been able to get this far. To my mother, I would not be where I am today without your actions. My mother is not perfect, but one thing she is is authentic. I want to thank my husband, Chief Master Sergeant Cornelius Phillips Sr. and our four military brats who so graciously sacrificed time with me, and allowed me to birth another child, my dissertation. Through all our military challenges and stressful transitions, this was made possible because of you. I would also like to acknowledge the intentionality of everyone whom I have worked with, friended, and overall learned from; Whether you embodied intention or not, you taught me something. The intention is my motivation to complete this degree. The intention is one thing that many humans do not give themselves credit for; it is not created from someone telling you to be intentional; it is intrinsic. Surrounding yourself with intentional humans doing things with intention will take you and everyone around you to greater heights. Last but not least, Dr. Desi Richter, God placed you in my life at the right time because he knew this process mentally and emotionally took a toll on me, and the authenticity of your feedback helped me when I did not believe in myself and for those boosts, I appreciate you more than words can express.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The topic that I explored in this study was teacher and parent perspectives regarding the challenges for preschool children caused by parental military deployment. This study expands knowledge of teacher and parent understanding of stress experienced by children during parental deployment, how this stress may affect children's behavior and learning, and how they might support those preschool children whose parents have been deployed. The results of this study indicated how teachers and parents themselves can be supported in working with children of deployed parents. This study supports positive social change by filling a gap in practice surrounding teacher and parent perspectives of support for children affected by parental deployment and lead to positive outcomes for children. In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the background literature, the problem of focus in this study, and the study's purpose. I describe the research questions, conceptual framework, and methodology

Background

The literature related to the scope of the study topic relates to challenging behavior in preschool children, causes to challenging behavior, needs of insecure children, the role of adults in supporting children with challenging behavior. Parental stress can have negative consequences on the child's behavior, and social-emotional development (Carapito, Ribeiro, Pereira, & Roberto, 2018). Han (2019) stated the child's environment plays a significant role in how the child responds to stress. If the child does not live in a nurturing home with love and acceptance, the environment can harm the

overall development of the child (Han, 2019). As Han (2019) and Lester et al. (2016) reported, the more a parent is absent, the more likely a child will feel stress and be unable to respond to stress. Carapito et al. (2018), Han (2019), and Lester et al. (2016) claimed that when a child has empathetic parenting and a stable environment, the child will be less likely to suffer from stress.

Teachers serve a role similar to parents in supporting children who are affected by stress (Pexton, Ferrants, & Yule, 2018). However, teachers and parents need an understanding of how to support children who feel stress and how to appropriately respond to children's behaviors (Dumitriu & Duhalmu, 2017; DuPaul et al., 2018). There are multiple ways to approach supporting children who experience stress. Dumitriu and Duhalmu (2017) agreed that when children receive an individualized approach that focuses on the cause of the behavior, they show positive results. Responding to stress in children is not a one size fits all approach; it takes a deep understanding of the whole child and the antecedent of the stress (Dumitriu & Duhalmu, 2017; DuPaul et al., 2018). Stress in children affects the whole child and can have long-term consequences if not treated appropriately (Dumitriu & Duhalmu, 2017; DuPaul et al., 2018).

The role of teachers and parents in ameliorating children's stress is crucial to a child's success (Gagnon, Huelsman, Kidder-Ashlye, & Lewis, 2019). Jeon, Buettner, Grant, and Lang (2019) explained teachers ensure their classroom environments are welcoming and calming to encourage children's ability to feel accepted. Teachers establish bonds and create relationships with families to respond to the child's needs

(Jeon et al. 2019). All too often, military families are preoccupied with getting through deployment and neglect what children may be experiencing (Heiselberg, 2018). Providing the basic needs of food, shelter, and other necessities are the primary focus, without consideration for different areas of development (Heiselberg, 2018). Early childhood teachers and parents can fill this gap, but they must recognize its importance and be skilled in remediation.

A gap in practice is represented by evidence that preschool children in one military community on an island that is part of the United States experience stress following the deployment and the absence of a parent, and the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the effect of deployment on children and supports children's needs are not known. This study is needed because the perspectives of teachers and parents regarding children of deployed parents are not known, but children's behavior suggests they may not receive the support they need to overcome the challenge of parental deployment. This study fills the gap in practice regarding teacher and parent perspectives about children of deployed parents.

Problem Statement

The problem that was the focus of this study was understanding the underlying reasons for challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children who experience disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. According to a facility director at a child development center, high teacher turnover is a result of children's challenging behavior. Many teachers and parents are challenged by disruptive

behavior these children exhibit during the stress of parental deployment, and, according to Totenhagen et al. (2016), teachers and parents are not sufficiently trained to respond to children's negative behavior. Many teachers resign from their positions before training is offered (Totenhagen et al., 2016). Children's negative behavior has consequences for other children in the classroom, causing additional stress for those children and the classroom teacher (Jeon et al., 2019). Teachers and parents need approaches to treating stress that is logical and accessible (Dumitriu & Duhalmu, 2017).

Children's behavior may be a result of insecurity caused by parental deployment (Heiselberg, 2018). The transition from combat to noncombat, or vice versa, places most Armed Forces households in stressful circumstances, along with the day-to-day struggles that already exist (Cozza, Lerner, & Haskins, 2014). Fifty percent of preschoolers whose parents are deployed have made more visits to the doctor than children whose parents are not deployed (U.S. Department of Defense, 2017). Factors such as family influence, and children's social, emotional, and intellectual development, play a role in preschoolers' reaction to the absence of a parent (U.S. Department of Defense, 2017). Children's negative behavior due to parental deployment leads to teachers' frustration in the classroom (Jeon et al., 2019). When teachers are frustrated in the classroom and lack resources to support them, it increases teachers' turnover rate and lack of consistency for children and families already going through stressful transitions. The gap in practice that I addressed in this study was regarding teacher and parent perspectives about children of deployed parents. Culler and Saathoff-Wells (2018) stated many teachers and parents

struggle with the stress that preschool children experience following the deployment and the absence of their parent during their early developmental stages, and the resources and supports that children need are unknown.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. The research paradigm that I used was a basic qualitative study regarding the perspectives of teachers and parents regarding challenging behavior exhibited by preschool children following military deployment of a parent. I analyzed the responses from teachers and parents based on the guiding research questions and the theoretical framework of Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979). My goal for this study was to explore teacher and parent understanding of challenging behavior in preschool children who have experienced disruption of social bonds and trust following parental deployment. The findings from this study have implications for positive social change because they provide insights into teacher and parent perspectives regarding children affected by parental deployment and may lead to improved support strategies and positive outcomes for children.

Research Questions

I used three research questions to guide this study. These questions reflect the basic requirements for developing secure attachment, described by Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979).

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do teachers and parents describe the reasons for challenging behavior in preschool children following deployment?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in social bonds between child and others following a deployment?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in trust between child and others following a deployment?

Conceptual Framework

I used attachment theory as described by Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979) as the framework for this study. According to Bowlby (1978), children require a nurturing relationship with a primary parent to have other secure relationships. A strong emotional and physical attachment to a parent is critical to a child's overall development (Bowlby, 1978; Ainsworth, 1979). Attachment to a parent in later development impacts the child's development (Ainsworth & Bell, 1969). The relationship with the parent influences the relationship the child has with the world around him (Ainsworth & Bell, 1969). Attachment theory focuses on how individuals form a healthy relationship from the onset of life until adolescence and what factors cause estrangement and the results of insecure attachment (Bowlby, 1978; Ainsworth & Bell, 1969). The theory suggests that the relationship between parent and child is the bond that provides a secure base for the child to grow and develop (Bowlby, 1978). Failure to form a secure relationship can lead to depression, ADD, and ADHD (DuPaul & Stoner, 2014; Galloway, Newman, Miller & Yiull, 2016).

Bowlby determined that three conditions lead to secure attachment and positive outcomes for young children. These are: a strong bond between the parent and child, trust between the parent and child, and an environment that supports both. Bowlby further indicated that secure attachment can be created between a child and a nonrelative parent if these conditions are fulfilled in the relationship. For this reason, attachment theory was an appropriate framework for my study of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior, and ways children whose parent is deployed can be supported in the child care center, which I will further discuss in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used a basic qualitative research design using interviews. A qualitative research method is used to describe the human experience with the phenomena under investigation (Burland & Lundquist, 2012). A basic qualitative design was appropriate for this study of teacher and parent perspectives of children's challenging behavior. Burland and Lundquist (2012) described a basic qualitative design as highlighting trends in a problem through a semi structured data collection method. I considered and rejected other designs for this study. Ethnography situates the researcher in the study context, so they interact with the participants and observe the target phenomenon from within the target environment (Stake, 2010). However, an ethnography would not be appropriate for this study because I was unlikely to have been permitted to observe providers and children in their classrooms and homes, and my very presence would have disrupted the day to day life of the preschool and of families, and materially

altered the targeted phenomenon. A case study is an in-depth study into a particular

situation, using multiple sources of data to narrow and define an ambiguous topic

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A case study was not appropriate for the already-limited problem

presented in this study, which relies on a single source of data (the perspectives of

teachers and parents), and was not supported by data from additional sources. I could

have used a quantitative design using a survey to gather data from more participants, but I

would not have collected the rich detail that can be elicited from open-ended interviews.

In this study, I explored teacher and parent perspectives regarding challenging

behavior exhibited by preschoolers following the deployment of a parent. Due to the

various family structures within military families, a parent is defined as anyone filling the

parental role of a child, such as the child's mother, father, grandparent, other relative,

foster parent, or legal guardian. I interviewed seven teachers of preschoolers with at least

one military parent and seven parents of preschoolers who are military dependents, for a

total of 14 participants. I used open coding to analyze data and member checking of

interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Definitions

Deployment: Armed forces deployment refers to being assigned to service in a

position or place of military action. It includes both being posted in an active duty service

in a foreign nation or being assigned to U.S. strategic military stations abroad (U.S.

Department of Defense, 2019).

Insecure/ambivalent attachment is a form of insecure attachment and is uncertain responses from the parent to the child, during this. time, the child is consumed with the parent's inability to respond to the child's needs (Ainsworth, Blehar, Water, & Wall,1978).

Insecure/disorganized attachment is a type of attachment where there is a lack of attachment or way of coping (Ainsworth et al.,1978).

Insecure/avoidant attachment is formed in early childhood, this form of attachment is hesitancy of building a bond or relationship (Ainsworth et al.,1978).

Goal corrected partnership is implicit negotiation between the parent and child, allowing the child to have autonomy within the safety and security of the parent's needs (Simpson & Belsky, 2008).

Parent: filling a parental role such as mother, father, grandparent, other relative, foster parent, or legal guardian (Bowlby, 1973).

Secure attachment: is a type of attachment that develops healthy autonomy (Bowlby, 1973).

Servicemen /Armed Forces personnel: Members of all the five branches of the U.S. forces. The branches include; The Navy, Marine Corps, the Army, the Airforce and the Coastguard (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that the participants would be truthful and straightforward when responding to the interview questions. I assumed that this study's participants

represent the broader population of teachers and parents who care for preschool children affected by parental military deployment. The children for whom these teachers and parents care represent the broader population of children so affected. Assumptions are necessary in work that relies on informants who are embedded in the phenomenon under research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was the perspectives of child care center teachers and parents regarding challenging behavior exhibited by children whose parents are deployed. The study was delimitated by interview responses of seven teachers who teach preschool children ages 3 to 4 years at a child care center that supports military families in the United States and its territories and seven parents of children ages 3 to 4 years, who themselves or their spouse or both were active-duty military members who have or may be deployed. Excluded from this study were parents and teaches of children younger and older than the range of 3 to 4 years, parents who were not active-duty military, and whose spouse is also not active-duty military or who, although active-duty have not been and do not expect to be deployed, and teachers who reported no behavior challenges among the children in their class. I limited the age of children for whose care teachers and parents are responsible, because younger children are less capable of exhibiting challenging behavior than are older children, given their developmental limitations, and children older than 4 years may experience stress associated with kindergarten readiness that is not associated with parental deployment. I limited parent participants to those who have

been or may be deployed (they or their spouse), since deployment is suggested as a possible mechanism for insecure attachment and resulting challenging behavior. Likewise, I limited teacher participants to those who acknowledge challenging behavior is exhibited by some children in their classrooms, since the focal issue in this study is challenging behavior. The results of this study may transfer to other childcare centers with a large enrollment of children of military families, and families who experience challenging behavior not caused by deployment.

<div align="center">

Limitations

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A limitation of this study was the small sample size. The perspectives of the participants may have been more fully described by a larger sample. I mitigated this limitation by employing a sampling strategy designed to elicit a sample representative of the larger population of teachers and parents who care for children enrolled in childcare centers with a high proportion of children from military families. Another limitation of this study was that there its restriction to a specific geographic area. My focus on one island location reduced possible support from extended family members for some children, which may have exacerbated the stress felt by these children and parents during a time of military deployment. This limitation restricted the transferability of results, but it increased the possible significance of findings. A final limitation was the threat of researcher bias that was part of any qualitative study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that researchers should keep detailed records and be clear on the goals of the research. With

that in mind, I avoided researcher bias by keeping detailed records and being clear on what I wanted to achieve and how.

Significance

This study is significant because its results describe teacher and parent perspectives of children's challenging behavior in situations of past or possible future parental military deployment. Because challenging behaviors are consistent in any familial structure, this study and its recommendations could assist parents who are not military-affiliated with their child's challenging behaviors. The significance of this study benefit teachers who respond to challenging behaviors, including those who do not have military families in their classrooms. The findings of this study contribute to positive social change by filling a gap in literature about challenging behaviors of preschoolers during deployment.

Summary

The problem I addressed in this basic qualitative study was challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children who experience disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. The study was needed because the perspectives of teachers and parents regarding challenging behavior of children of deployed parents were not known, and children's behavior suggested they may not receive the support they need to

overcome the challenge of parental deployment. This study fills the gap in practice regarding teacher and parent perspectives about behavior of children of deployed parents. In this chapter, I identified why the study is needed using the background, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance sections, all providing supporting material to introduce the problem that is the basis for this study. In Chapter 2, I will provide an in-depth literature review, along with more detail about the conceptual framework of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem I addressed in this basic qualitative study was challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children who experience disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. This study expands knowledge of teacher and parent understanding of stress experienced by children during parental deployment, how this stress may affect children's behavior and learning, and how they might support those preschool children whose parents have been deployed. I used the current literature to establish the relevance of the problem by describing the link between insecure attachment and feelings of loss and children's challenging behavior that exceeds levels of behavior issues typical of young children. In this literature review, I explored the teachers' and parents' perspectives of the effects of stress in preschoolers, describe the needs of insecure children, and describe the role of adults in supporting children with challenging behavior. I also made a connection between the gap in practice and methods to be described in Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

In searching the literature, I started with words from the problem and purpose statements as key words and used the Walden University library and Google Scholar to obtain the articles about the topic. The other databases and search engines that I used

were Academic search complete, Annie E. Casey, Bloomsbury, ChildCare and Early

Education, Research connections, Child Stats, CQ Researcher, DOAJ, Academic ASAP,

ERIC, Education source, Kaiser, NAMI, Project MUSE, Proquest, PsycArticles,

PsycInfo, SAGE, SocINDEX, Taylor and Francis, Teacher Reference Center, UNESCO.

Search terms included: *Preschool development, military families, deployed parents,*

deployed relationships, deployed families, deployed marriages, understanding

deployment, misconceptions of deployment, teacher perspectives, parent's perspectives,

military parents, and *military teachers.*

Search phrases and questions included combinations of: *How does stress affect*

behavior in children, military deployment on children, teacher and parent perspectives

about the challenges that preschoolers experience following deployment, military

children and families, research military command, military culture, funding policy,

deployment combat, seven articles populated when parental experiences military

deployments were entered, what we know about military deployment was searched,

children and military families, deployment and mental health, parents intervention,

military, intimate relationships, long-distance relationships, deployment, communication,

military deployment, peer adjustment, parental locus of control, parenting intervention,

school climate, mental health, adolescents, military-connected youth, school climate,

mental health, adolescents, military-connected youth, attention-deficit/hyperactivity

disorder, behavioral parent training, online treatment, treatment development,

Parenting, military, parental deployment, child adjustment, prevention, and *when the*

challenges that preschoolers experience the following deployment in the absence of their parent.

Databases that had information on the search phrases and terms were ChildCare and Early Education, Annie E. Casey, NAMI, Research connections, Child Stats, ERIC, Education source, Academic ASAP, Proquest, and SAGE. Databases that did not have any results were UNESCO, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, DOAJ, Project MUSE, Kaiser, and Bloomsbury. I made several choices during the iterative research process. After knowing the problem and research questions, I considered several overlapping themes for completing my search. I considered the conceptual framework, data collection, and the research method and design. These items together with the resources available allowed me to complete the literature review.

Conceptual Framework

I used the conceptual framework of attachment theory, as described by Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979), to understand the phenomena of challenging behavior among preschool children affected by the military deployment of a parent. Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979) discussed the connection between the child's ability to develop secure attachment to the parent through trust of the parent to meet the child's needs, and the child's healthy social emotional development. Secure attachment is the result of establishment of feelings of consistent protection, safety, and security between the caregiver and child (Bowlby, 1978). Insecure attachment results from caregiver failure to provide protection, safety, and security to a child in ways the child recognizes

(Ainsworth, 1979). Attachment happens at different stages of the child's infancy (Bowlby, 1978). First, the pre-attachment stage occurs between birth to 3 months, where the infant does not show attachment to a particular caregiver (Ainsworth, 1979). Indiscriminate attachment manifests in primary and secondary caregivers, which happens between 6 weeks to 7 months (Ainsworth, 1979). Between 7 months to almost 1-year, the infant begins to show primary attachment to one caregiver (Bowlby, 1978). During this time children form a strong attachment to the caregiver that meets the child's needs consistently (Ainsworth, 1979). However, children form additional attachments, with multiple caregivers; these occur at 9 months of age onward (Bowlby, 1976).

The quality of attachment is based on circumstances that encourage development of trust and security or undermine them. As described in the strange situation protocol devised by Ainsworth et al. (1978), secure attachment is indicated when a child cries when their caregiver leaves and is joyful upon their return. Avoidant, or insecure, attachment is indicated when a child avoids the primary caregiver and the child shows no preference between the caregiver and a stranger (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Less common are ambivalent attachment, indicated when a child is distressed when the primary caregiver leaves and becomes distraught, and disorganized attachment, when the child displays multiple behaviors or seems to avoid the parent (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Secure attachment between children and parents is achieved when there is a balance of appropriate and consistent interaction, that results in children's experience of love and nurturance, within a welcoming environment (Grossmann & Grossmann, 2019).

The first 12 months of a child's life are crucial for the development of secure attachment (Bretherton, 1992). The relationship built during this time shapes the child's social and emotional development for the remainder of their life (Bretherton, 1992). During the first 6 months of life the child communicates by using signaling behaviors, smiling, sucking, and crying (Bowlby, 1978). All behaviors are developed during different times and happen between the child and primary caregiver (Bretherton, 1992). Just like any other relationship, the relationship between caregiver and child requires effort from both the child and the primary caregiver. A functional relationship between mother and child depends on healthy development of the whole child, including social, emotional, mental, physical, and intellectual capacities (Bowlby, 1951), achieved when a primary caregiver consistently responds appropriately to the needs of the child (Grossmann & Grossmann, 2019).

For children to thrive during development they need a consistent relationship with their primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1951). For the relationship to be successful, primary caregivers need to respond consistently, appropriately, and according to the needs of the child (Grossmann & Grossmann, 2019). Otherwise, the child's development is at risk for negative outcomes such as challenging behavior or insecure attachment (Grossmann & Grossmann, 2019). Insecure attachment leads to poor relationships or difficulty in establishing trusting relationships (Bretherton, 1992).

The secure relationship created during early childhood between the parent and child will indicate how the child will react with the environment (Ainsworth & Bell,

1969). The relationship establishes a core autonomy that follows the child regardless of

developmental growth including cognitive and social emotional (Ainsworth & Bell,

1969). Ainsworth and Bell (1969) explained that the secure relationship between a parent

and child in the early years can either have a positive or negative impact on the later

years; this includes the tendency to engage in challenging behavior (Grossmann &

Grossmann, 2019). Bowlby explained that a secure relationship between the parent and

child, trust between the parent and child, and an environment that supports both are

needed to develop the whole child (Bowlby, 1978).

       Once attachment is established, circumstances can reinforce or undermine the

security a child feels (Bowlby, 1978). Unstable environments, inconsistent responses to

needs, and a weak relationship with the primary caregiver negates secure attachment

(Ainsworth, 1979). Secure attachment can be built over a series of positive

reinforcements and consistent responses in the first 12 months but can be destroyed by far

fewer incidents in a short period (Bowlby, 1978). Consistent incidents of mistrust,

insecurity, and instability interrupts a person's feelings of trust and security which can

lead to behavior that mirrors insecure attachment (Ainsworth, 1979). Without consistent

care and security, the child is at risk for long term effects of insecure attachment,

ambivalent attachment, or disorganized attachment (Ainsworth, 1979). This issue was

important to my study of the effect of parental military deployment, because it suggests

attachment may be disrupted or undone by feelings of instability a child experiences in

the absence of a parent.

Mikulincer and Shaver (2019) relied on attachment theory in examining behaviors, including cognitive and emotional behavior disturbances, children exhibit in insecure attachment and how insecure attachment can be avoided or remediated. Karunarathne, Froese, and Bader (2019) used attachment theory in describing how being geographically separated from loved ones can cause depression and anxiety in the person who leaves and in the loved one they left behind. Karunarathne et al. (2019) explained that attachment plays a crucial role in the development of healthy relationships and in maintaining them.

Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979) suggested that separation, such as that occurring in military deployment, disrupts parent and preschooler attachment, and consequently affects the child's social, emotional, and mental development both in the short and long term. When children have formed a strong bond with a primary parent and that parent is removed from their life for a long period of time, this creates stress on the child and on the remaining parent (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979) believed that the initial years of life are the most critical to the development of a child, so that the absence of a parent may result in high levels of stress in the child. This stress may manifest in disruptive behavior that affects the child's ability to be successful in a variety of situations (Alfano, Lau, Balderas, Bunnell, & Beidel, 2016).

This study expanded knowledge of teacher and parent understanding of stress experienced by children during parental deployment, how this stress affects children's behavior and learning, and how they support those preschool children whose parents have

been deployed. In this literature review I will present research describing social-emotional development in preschool children, challenging behaviors in preschool children, causes of challenging behavior of concern in preschool children, needs of insecure children, and the role of adults in supporting children with challenging behavior, including the barriers they face.

<div align="center">**Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables**</div>

Social-Emotional Development in Preschool Children

Healthy social-emotional development is crucial for the development of children, dependent on many factors, and the skills developed in the early years follow them into adulthood (Bracken & Nagle, 2017). Bridges (2017) explained that children learn how to communicate appropriately when their needs are met consistently. Deming (2017) stated that when children experience healthy emotional development they can understand and manage their emotions better than children who do not experience healthy emotional development. Peyre et al. (2019) found children who have the ability to express their feelings appropriately are securely attached to a primary caregiver. Peyre et al. (2019) explained that when healthy emotional development is modeled by adults by labeling feelings and talking about emotions, children learn how to establish healthy emotional development for themselves. When preschoolers are given the freedom to explore the world around them, they will test boundaries to learn their abilities (Peyre et al., 2019).

Social-emotional development is a process that allows children to express their feelings appropriately and build skills they will need in adolescence and adulthood

(Bracken & Nagle, 2017). When children are younger, their testing of boundaries, temper tantrums, acting out feelings in pretend play, and verbalizing emotions without consideration for others are normal responses to challenging situations. Shy behavior around new or unfamiliar people is also normal for children; once they become acclimated then that behavior will stop (Park, Tiwari, & Neumann, 2019). Children may experience sad feelings when something does not go the way they anticipated but, with other options made available, they quickly recover (Park et al., 2019). Aggressive behavior is also normal for children to display when it is in response to something they do not have the words to express, and the reaction may be hitting or biting (Park et al., 2019).

Once they develop key social emotional skills, these behaviors are replaced with more pro-social ones (Collie, Martin, Nassar, & Roberts, 2019). Key social-emotional skills needed for children include decision making, social awareness, relationships skills, self-management, and self-awareness (Bierman et al., 2019). Decision making allows the child to be able to make good responsible choices (Bierman et al. 2019). Collie et al. (2019) described social awareness is being able to demonstrate empathy. Bierman et al. (2019) stated that relationships skills are the ability to maintain healthy relationships. Self-management is the ability regulate behaviors and feelings (Collie et al., 2019). Self-awareness is being able to understand the connection between one's thoughts, emotions, and actions (Bierman et al., 2019). When all these skills are used, children become

successful at understanding the world around them (Collie et al., 2019). Learning these skills early determines how successful one is during adulthood (Bierman et al., 2019).

Challenging Behavior in Preschool Children

Parents and teachers have a difficult time differentiating between normal behavior and behavior that is abnormal for preschools (Branje & Koper, 2018). Often it is hard to know what is normal and what is abnormal because preschoolers are developing their ability to recognize boundaries and their place in the environment (Hallett et al., 2019). Due to egocentric thinking and lack of impulse control young children display aggressive behaviors often (Stoddard, Scelsa, & Hwang 2019). Behaviors that are common with preschoolers are hitting, temper tantrums, and testing boundaries are (Stoddard et al., 2019). With limited language and understanding of the world around them, preschool children's decision making is based on their limited experiences (Slentz & Krogh, 2017).

Preschool children's challenging behavior, like crying uncontrollably, mood swings, and indecisiveness, is often a reaction to their inability to understand the world around them (Kirby & Hodges, 2018). Behaviors such as hitting occasionally or testing boundaries in preschoolers are typical, should be addressed, but given the developmental capacities of these children, it does not mean they are incorrigible or need medical attention (Hallett et al., 2019). Because children do not have impulse control, behaviors like uncontrollable hitting, anxiety, depressive mood, and aggressive behaviors grow stronger, more intense, and last longer and become worse are concerning (Bufferd, Dougherty, & Olino, 2019). One of several reasons these behaviors are of concern to

parents and teachers because it places the child and those around them at risk of getting hurt (Bufferd et al., 2019). However, when preschoolers have the language and understanding to label and express emotions, they develop social-emotional control (Peyre et al., 2019).

Aggressive Behavior of Concern in Preschool Children

Aggressive behaviors are typical for all preschoolers (Kliem et al., 2018). The aggressive behaviors discussed in this section and subsequent sections are behaviors that are of particular concern to parents, teachers, and other professionals and not the everyday aggressive behaviors of preschoolers such as brief temper tantrums, occasional biting, and hitting (Yoder & Williford, 2019). Preschoolers who display aggressive that is behavior especially violent or uncontrolled are at risk for long term behavioral problems if the behaviors are not controlled (Kliem et al., 2018).

Challenging aggressive behavior that exceeds ordinary misbehavior, such as biting that leaves marks, destruction of property, and hitting or kicking others, results in the child not being allowed to play with others and fear of the child from adults (Kliem et al., 2018). When adults are in fear of an aggressive child, they have lost control of the environment, which creates an unsafe place for children, including the one who is aggressive (Bufferd et al., 2019). When a child is not permitted to play with others due to their aggressive behavior, they are prevented from gaining the social skills needed for their development (Peyre et al., 2019). Aggressive behavior that is uncontrollable can result in long term social and emotional effects (Bufferd et al., 2019).

Aggressive behavior in children is formed by the environment and personal temperament and other causes (Stoddard et al., 2019). Parents and teachers may feel overwhelmed by aggressive behavior because responding to these behaviors is in addition to their typical responsibilities (Yoder & Williford, 2019). Teachers often are not trained in how to respond appropriately to aggressive behaviors and their approaches frequently are either not in the best interest of the child or do not provide the child with techniques to self-correct (Yoder & Williford, 2019). When teachers respond to aggressive behaviors in the classroom, their ability to teach and interact with the other children in their care is reduced, causing other children not to receive the quality teaching they deserve (Kadry, Ali, & Sorour, 2017). Responding to aggressive behaviors at home may be difficult for parents because it interferes with their ability to enjoy positive time with the child after work (Kadry, Ali, & Sorour, 2017).

Responses to aggressive behaviors by teachers and parents can vary in consistency and effectiveness (Yoder & Williford, 2019). Without proper understanding of the causes of the aggressive behaviors it can be difficult to determine the best response (Kadry et al., 2017). The responses from teachers and parents must be developmentally appropriate and respond to the behavior displayed instead of engaging in a personal confrontation with the child (Bick, Lipschutz, Lind, Zajac, & Dozier, 2019). Without an understanding of child development or the cause of aggressive behavior, parents and teachers may respond inappropriately by belittling the child, with yelling, or corporal punishment (Bick et al., 2019). In addition, parents and teachers may not know what the

best way is to respond to the behavior and choose a punishment that does not allow the child to understand why the behavior was unacceptable, unsafe, or ineffective (Kadry et al., 2017).

Withdrawn Behavior of Concern in Preschool Children

Withdrawn behaviors that I discuss in this section are concerning to parents, teachers, and professionals because they exceed the shyness a preschool child typically experiences when meeting a new person, the sadness a preschool child typically might express when something goes amiss, or the engagement in solitary play that is ordinary behavior in many preschool children (Rubin et al., 2017). Withdrawn behavior discussed in this section interrupts the child's ability to develop according to their milestones, and includes withdrawal from everyday activities, depressed mood, clinginess, and extreme anxiety, especially when separated from a significant adult (Rubin et al., 2017). Withdrawn behavior in preschoolers may go unnoticed more often than aggressive behavior because it is less likely to be disruptive of the school day or viewed as dangerous to other children (Bufferd, Dyson, Hernandez, & Wakschlag, 2016). According to Bufferd et al. (2019), although withdrawn behavior does not cause immediate problems like biting does, it can have a significant effect on the children's social, emotional development.

Separation anxiety is a normal part of development for children six months to three years and although most children experience moments of separation anxiety when away from their parents, anxiety that interferes with a child's ability to participate in

everyday activities becomes a concern when they do not outgrow this anxiety or recover from being away from their parent until the parent returns (Campbell, 2017). Excessive fear or worry consumes the child, causing mistrust, depression, or withdrawal from parents and teachers (Archbell, Bullock, & Coplan, 2019). Preschoolers who suffer from anxiety due to separation are at risk for long term social, emotional issues like low self-esteem, speech delays, and lack of social skills (Campbell, 2017). For teachers and parents, ignoring withdrawal is easier than ignoring aggressive behavior, with the result that withdrawn children may not get the help they need (Archbell et al., 2019).

Causes of Challenging Behavior of Concern in Preschool Children

Causes of challenging behavior in preschoolers that rises to the level of concern can vary (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019), and includes insecure attachment, childhood trauma, and parental absence (Osher, Cantor, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2020). These can lead to life-long issues if not treated early (Alesech & Nayar, 2019). Leskin, Blasko, Williams, and Harrell (2018) believed that challenging behavior was a direct result of the environment surrounding the child. Children do not have the cognitive ability to respond appropriately or logically to stressors and the result is alarming behavior (Kirby & Hodges, 2018). Having trusting adults around to help provide reassurance and guidance helps mitigate the challenging behavior (Cramm, McColl, Aiken & Williams, 2019; Hughes et al., 2017). In this section, I will present problems with infant attachment and childhood trauma as sources of challenging behavior of concern in preschool children, and will link these causes to parental absence, as in military deployment.

Problems with infant attachment. Bowlby (1978) indicated that secure attachment is developed when adults provide consistent protection, safety, and security to a child. When a child does not establish secure attachment within the first twelve months, it can cause problems with challenging behavior later in development (Bowlby, 1978). Children who experience insecure attachment during infancy have difficulty trusting parents and respond with challenging behavior (Bowlby, 1978). Childhood trauma, unsupportive adults, unstable environments, and a lack of a sense of belonging can upset or prevent secure attachment from happening (Alesech & Nayar, 2019). These incidents can leave internal scars and emotions that children are unable to handle causing them to react aggressively or withdrawn (Blaustein, & Kinniburgh, 2019).

Since secure attachment is the foundation for healthy development during early childhood, when the secure attachment is absent, children are at risk for unhealthy development (Bowlby, 1978). Insecure attachment causes behaviors like fear, reluctance in the relationship, and rejection (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019). Where it becomes concerning is when these behaviors manifest into defiance and aggression for some, while others may display withdrawal and anti-social behavior (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019). Blaustein and Kinniburgh (2019) agreed that instability within the home environment or childhood trauma within the first year is a contributing factor for problems with attachment.

If during infancy the infant is securely attached, that does not mean attachment cannot be disrupted (Steele & Steele, 2017). Attachment can be disrupted during the

toddler, preschool, and later years by deployment or other events (Yarger, Bronfman, Carlson, & Dozier, 2019). Feelings of abandonment can cause the child to feel insecurely attached to the parent (Yarger et al., 2019). Parents may unknowingly, due to the preoccupation of the deployment, become distracted by the deployment, causing the child to become insecurely attached (Cramm et al., 2019). This preoccupation with deployment has reciprocal relationship effects, in that parents themselves can become insecurely attached to their children due to limited opportunities to maintain attachment during deployment (Cramm et al., 2019). Support for attachment does not stop during infancy, but continues to evolve throughout the child's development (Fearon & Belsky, 2018). When attachment is disrupted, the foundation needed for a child to form relationships, and to grow and nurture these throughout life, is not properly developed (Fearon & Belsky, 2018). Attachment can become disrupted by events over which parents and children have no control, but which take control over them. Such traumatic events, in which confidence in personal agency and feelings of security are lost can cause the child to become insecurely attached or attachment to be disrupted (Reisz, Duschinsky, & Siegel, 2018).

Childhood trauma. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) create lifelong effects on children and change how they react to stress (Hughes et al., 2017). ACEs include being in foster care, death of a parent, divorce, frequent relocations, prolonged separation from parents, and these can cause the child to have feelings of fear, insecurity, or dissonance and create both withdrawn and aggressive behaviors in children (Fairbanks

et al., 2018). Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, Saccente, and Selig (2019) noted that over time the child begins to respond to ACEs with behavior that is challenging for both parents and teachers. Behaviors such as defiance, aggression towards themselves or others, and withdrawal can be a direct result of childhood trauma (Hughes et al., 2017). Hughes et al. (2017) explained that ACEs pose a threat to the child's mental, social, physical, and emotional development.

Children in military families experience multiple ACEs due to military deployment, relocation, and a stressed home environment (Culler & Saathoff-Wells, 2018). Hughes et al. (2017) explained that these factors are a frequent occurrence in military families, leaving children at risk of living with the results of ACEs. The benefits of military deployment for the nation are innumerable but the effect it has on children of military families are alarming (Culler & Saathoff-Wells, 2018). Children struggle with the stress during the deployment of a parent due to their absence (Culler & Saathoff-Wells, 2018). Children experience anger and feelings of abandonment (Jimenez, Wade, Lin, Morrow, & Reichman, 2016). If these experiences go unaddressed, they affect children's ability to build trust, cause behavioral and emotional concerns, and negatively affect their learning (Hunt, Slack, & Berger, 2017). The increase in stress due to deployments can negatively affect the child's brain development, create long term effects on the child's health, and increase their sensitivity to depression and disease (Hunt et al., 2017). Adverse childhood experiences can be prevented with proper supports that allow for adjusting to the new life in a healthy way (Jimenez et al., 2016). Adults can interrupt

adverse childhood experiences by being supportive during this time and consistent with their support (Jimenez et al., 2016). Children who have experienced ACEs require supportive adults, stable environments, and a sense of belonging (Hughes et al., 2017).

Needs of Insecure Children

Insecure children need a combination of supportive factors to help them become confident, prosocial, and stable (Gross, Stern, Brett, & Cassidy, 2017). Challenging behavior that insecure children respond with is a direct result of their lack of a sense of security, attachment to a caregiver, and prosocial behaviors (Gross et al., 2017). Insecure children require a secure attachment to a loving adult to improve their outcomes (Juffer, Struis, Werner, & Bakermans-Kraneenburg, 2017). Without having strong attachment could lead to the child following what others are doing, withdrawn behavior, and aggressive behaviors (Juffer et al., 2017). Insecure children experience the fear of not having a supportive adult, a sense of security, and attachment to a caregiver all of which can have long-term effects on children (Kim, Woodhouse, & Dai, 2018).

Supportive adults. The presence of a supportive adult in the life of a child mitigates against developmental impediments caused by lack of secure attachment (Augimeri, Walsh, Kivlenieks, & Pepler, 2017). Cook et al. (2017) stated that by staying consistent with love, being responsive, and supportive to the child's needs, supportive adults can reverse the impacts of insecurity over time. Beier et al. (2019) stated that having supportive adults is one way to restore trust in insecure children. Supportive adults provide realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations to children while

creating safe boundaries (Augimeri et al., 2017). Beier (2019) concluded that insecure children need supportive adults to feel good about themselves and to build pride in their abilities (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019). Insecure children require supportive adults to model actions that build the child's confidence (Augimeri et al., 2017). When supportive adults make an effort to implement supportive behaviors, the child's feelings of insecurity diminish (Gardenhire, Scleiden, & Brown, 2019). Though supportive adults play a crucial role in the lives of insecure children, having a stable environment is also beneficial to the development of the child (Merrick, Pots, Guinn, & Ford, 2020).

  Stable environments. Stable environments play a significant role in building secure children (Gagnon et al., 2019). Being in the same place with the same people creates a stable environment (Son & Peterson, 2017). Shanahan, Ries, Joyner and Zolotor (2019) stated that when children can predict or expect the same routine, they feel secure. Son and Peterson (2017) described how constant changes within the environment and unpredictability create insecurity in the child. Stable environments not only encompass the location, people, or room arrangement but the attitudes within it as well (Shanahan et al., 2019). Insecure children need a stable environment to build a sense of security and belonging to help them achieve attachment and security (Merrick et al., 2020). A stable environment with healthy interactions and experiences provides a foundation that encourages growth and development (Shanahan et al., 2019). Stable environments act as a predictor of positive childhood outcomes and school readiness (Shanahan et al., 2019). In addition to stable environments insecure children need a sense of belonging (Alesech

& Nayar, 2019).

A sense of belonging. Having a sense of belonging is crucial for human growth

and development at any age (Alesech & Nayar, 2019). Greenwood and Kelly (2019)

stated that a sense of belonging supports children's emotional well-being. Latham and

Ewing (2018) explained that teachers who ensure their classroom is child-centered,

promote inclusion, and communicate acceptance create a sense of belonging for every

student. Teachers who can scaffold development, enable fun and enriching activities, and

monitor the environment while respecting learning styles provide a sense of belonging to

children (Greenwood & Kelly, 2019). When teachers create an environment that is

accepting of all children and encourages children's autonomy, children develop a sense

of belonging (Latham & Ewing, 2018). When children interact in an environment with

these qualities, they are empowered, and they feel valued and respected by their teachers

and their peers (Greenwood & Kelly, 2019).

Adults who provide restorative practices to children need knowledge of trauma-

informed practices, have smaller group sizes of students, and professional development in

creating a stable environment (Sandilos, Goble, Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2018).

Military families also need interpersonal processes to maintain a stable environment and

a sense of belonging in children (Greenwood & Kelly, 2019). Interpersonal processes

may look like a strong daily routine, family support, consistent and effective

communication, or effective discipline (Alesech & Nayar, 2019). In addition, having

personal resources establishes the means to access any additional resources it may take to

mitigate challenging behavior (Alesech & Nayar, 2019). Military families and supportive adults who create a sense of belonging, implement restoratives practices, and have interpersonal resources can mitigate the effects challenging behavior in children (Rahn, Coogle, Hanna, & Lewellen, 2017).

The Role of Adults in Supporting Children with Challenging Behavior

Adults who support children who exhibit challenging behavior at home and at school begin by knowing the reason for the behavior (Rahn et al., 2017). In addition, teachers and parents need knowledge of restorative practices and how to respond in developmentally appropriate ways to challenging behaviors (Costales & Anderson, 2018). For example, using words to talk about things that make the child sad or angry is one approach that works (Chai & Lieberman-Betz, 2018). Chai and Lieberman-Betz (2018) discussed the value of taking time to talk with the child about things that they enjoy and do well. Having an inclusive environment is another approach that helps support children with challenging behavior (Ng & Kwan, 2019). Parents can incorporate inclusivity at home by knowing which parenting approaches are working and exploring different parenting styles if those chosen are not successful. Parents can also welcoming differences and not oppose one view over the other by discussing ideas in developmentally appropriate ways (Björck-Åkesson, Kyriazopoulou, Giné, & Bartolo, 2017).

Rahn et al. (2017) stated that supporting children cannot be done by one person alone, but that a network of support is needed to decrease the child's challenging

behavior. Collaborative effort between the child's family and the school has proved successful (Chai & Lieberman-Betz, 2018). The role of parents and teachers in supporting children with challenging behavior includes maintaining a positive relationship with children, partnership with other adults in the life of the child, offering support in times of trouble, and using of positive guidance techniques (Costales & Anderson, 2018). The behavior of parents and teachers should be intentional and target the behavior the child is displaying at the time (Sandilos et al., 2018). When children feel abandoned or insecure, they benefit from support of the adults around them (Chai & Lieberman-Betz, 2018). When adults focus on the support children need for the challenging behavior, they reduce the barriers they face when resolving challenging behaviors.

Barriers for Preschool Teachers in Resolving Challenging Behavior

Even with the knowledge of early intervention strategies, teachers have many barriers they face in resolving challenging behaviors in young children (Sood et al., 2018). Sood et al. (2018) suggested teachers encounter barriers to supporting children's emotional needs when they are alone in the classroom without a co-teacher, when the child to teacher ratios are high, and when they lack support for their intervention strategies from parents and school administration. Co-teaching by two fully qualified teachers working in the same room with the same children permits collaborative planning for instruction and assessment students, enabling individualized education and attention to each child's needs (Miller, Smith-Bonahue, & Kemple, 2017). When child to teacher

ratios are low, teachers have more time to focus on the needs of individual children in the classroom (Miller et al., 2017). Intervention strategies that support the child's feelings of security and well-being should be supported by all the adults who care for the child, provide consistency and to limit challenging behavior across different settings (Sood et al., 2018). When parents and administrators insist on using other methods that have not been successful or methods that are inappropriate for the teacher to use at school may cause the teacher to feel hindered in their efforts to ensure the child's behavior is resolved (Miller et al., 2017).

Williams, Sheridan, and Pramling Samuelsson (2019) explained that another barrier in resolving challenging behavior is that it takes the teacher away from other students' needs. Students who do not display concerning challenging behavior are forced to wait while the teacher deals with challenging behavior, and may not receive the attention or education they need due (Williams et al., 2019). This is especially true when the teacher is alone in the classroom, without the support of a co-teacher (Miller et al., 2017). When the teacher must direct attention to a child's challenging behavior, it reduces instructional time and supportive interactions for other children who generally do not display challenging behavior (Haydon, Alter, Hawkins, & Kendall Theado, 2019). Although challenging behavior is important to address, it should not be at the expense of other students' education (Haydon et al., 2019). It also presents a challenge because the teacher is not teacher the child who is displaying challenging behavior either (Blewitt et al., 2020). The teacher is implementing methods intended to mitigate the child's behavior

instead of educating the child based on the content on the lesson plan, creating another

barrier (Blewitt et al., 2020). If the child's behavior is not under control this barrier can

cause the child to be severely delayed in their education (Blewitt et al., 2020).

Another barrier is having too few teachers available to assist with challenging

behavior. All too often, assistance from other teachers is unavailable, and one teacher is

left to battle with the behavior alone (Williams et al., 2019). This causes stress in the

teacher who must constantly deal the challenging behavior (Zinsser, Zulauf, Das, &

Silver, 2019). Teachers who are under stress at work and feel they are unsupported may

seek other employment or experience teacher burn-out (Zinsser et al., 2019). Dealing

with exceptionally challenging behaviors takes repetition (Sood et al., 2018). Teachers

and parents need the support from all adults involved with the child in order to have an

effective intervention that works (Haydon et al., 2019). Because children respond to

consistent use of repetitive strategies is important that parents, teachers, and

administrators use the same strategies (Sood et al., 2018). It takes time to explain the

strategies that will be used to all adults and how to implement them, and it also requires

that the same adults be involved in helping the child (Haydon et al., 2019). When

teachers are supported only by assistants who float among multiple classrooms and when

different adults step into the caregiving role at home, it is difficult to achieve the

consistency and repetitiveness that is helpful in supporting the child (Haydon et al.,

2019). Feelings of burn-out in parents and lead teachers, and the temporary nature of the

involvement of assistant teachers and part-time home caregivers, may lead to ignoring challenging behavior and causing it to increase (Zinsser et al., 2019).

Another barrier is getting parents to buy-in. Family engagement is crucial to the success of any early intervention method (Sood et al., 2018). Without this collaboration, teachers will not see any improvement in the child's behavior because of the inconsistency in response between home and school (Zulauf & Zinsser, 2019). Buy-in from other adults, teachers, and parents has been successful with even the toughest behaviors (Garbacz et al., 2018). Parental buy-in starts with building a relationship from the first day of class, before the behavior escalates, causing stress for everyone (Jeon et al., 2019). A collaborative, positive partnership between teachers and parents is important to effectively resolve the behavior (Jeon et al., 2019). However, building a relationship is not easy when parents are dealing with deployment and both parents and teachers are confronted by challenging behaviors (Strong & Lee, 2017).

Jeon et al. (2019) explained that a teacher's ability to manage their stress is crucial for children's success. If teachers interact with children with impatience and tension children's challenging behavior will not decrease and may become worse (Jeon et al., 2019). Having assistance from other professionals, consistency of response to child behavior by all adults, and buy-in from parents can help avoid an unhealthy emotional state in a teacher who must respond to behaviors (Garbacz et al., 2018). Teachers' emotional state while implementing effective intervention strategies is a precursor for how well the child will respond to the strategy (Garbacz et al., 2018).

A final barrier for teachers dealing with exceptionally challenging behaviors is lack of teacher training and experience (Manning, Wong, Fleming, Garvis, 2019). The qualifications of teachers are crucial to the success of students (Lin & Magnuson, 2018). Due to the increased need of child care across America the qualifications preschool teachers must meet are often minimal, causing a disconnect between approaches to challenging behavior and successful outcomes for students (Lin & Magnuson, 2018). Bayat (2019) explained that teachers who meet only the minimum requirements lack the training and knowledge needed to respond to challenging behavior. This training and knowledge is essential to the success of students (Lin & Magnuson, 2018). Bayat (2019) listed advanced knowledge of applied behavior analysis, child development, or other classroom approaches can increase the child's ability to gain self-control and limit the challenging behavior.

Barriers for Military Parents in Resolving Challenging Behavior

One barrier military parents face when dealing with challenging behavior is having the time and ability to deal with them (Firmin, 2019). More than 50% of military families are dual military, meaning both parents are military members (US DOD, 2018). Parents find responding to challenging behaviors of their children is difficult when they are working 12 hour shifts or are on deployment (Giff, Renshaw, & Allen, 2019). Even the employment of a stay at home spouse may affect a parent's ability to focus the needed attention to challenging behavior (Strong & Lee, 2017). When parents who work outside the home are with their children, it is easier to allow the child's behavior to pass rather

than respond with strategies needed to decrease it (Firmin, 2019). Ignoring the behavior is easier than dealing with it, causing the behaviors to continue (Cozza et al., 2018).

Another barrier is the different variations of military families (Giff et al., 2019). Military families are comprised of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other caregivers who take on mother and father roles when the active-duty parent is away (Giff et al., 2019). Without having the relationship with the school and knowing the approaches to respond to challenging behaviors, these interim caregivers may not respond to behaviors appropriately and the behaviors may go untreated (Strong & Lee, 2017). The amount and variation of persons who may be caring for the child while the active duty parent is away, can lead to insecurity of the child and create a barrier for resolving challenging behaviors (Giff et al., 2019). The inconsistency of care and the lack of relationship between an interim caregiver and the teacher may impede success in mitigating challenging behaviors (Strong & Lee, 2017).

Another barrier military parents encounter in working with their child's challenging behavior is the multiple loyalties military parents feel that may interfere with parenting (Irak, Kalkışım, & Yıldırım, 2020). Being in the military takes priority to being a parent and spouse, in many cases, because parents feel their position and responsibilities to the country are more significant than their responsibility to manage behaviors of their child (Flittner O'Grady, Whiteman, Cardin, & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2018). Children with challenging behavior whose parents spend more time at work than they do at home have an increased chance of their behavior worsening, of developing

aggressive behavior, and of becoming withdrawn (Smith & Granja, 2018). Children's challenging behavior, if not addressed, can rapidly increase in intensity and cause a decline in social-emotional development and pro-social behavior (Rönkä et al., 2017).

       Another barrier military parents encounter is spousal separation, with affects them as much as parental separation affects the child (Julian et al., 2018). The child inwardly and outwardly displays challenging behaviors while many spouses deal with the separation inwardly, sometimes resulting in self-harming behaviors or unintentional avoidance of the child's challenging behavior (Firmin, 2019). The roles of a two-parent household are not easier to manage than when all the responsibility of the home is on one parent (Firmin, 2019). Focusing on the needs of the child when other issues are present makes it hard to determine what approach is best (Strong & Lee, 2017). In addition, feelings of resentment in the stay at home parent can result from the active duty member being deployed, and may cause the parent to focus more attention on their internal feelings than on the child's (Julian et al., 2018). Spouses who work outside the home rather than stay at home may be protected from falling into a depressive state or internalizing the separation more than are stay at home spouses (Flittner et al., 2018). In working outside of the home, spouses interact with other adults and have a distraction while stay at home parents may feel isolated and disruptions to their emotional state may go unnoticed (Julian et al., 2018). As a result, the children of stay at home spouses are less likely to receive help for their behaviors than are children whose non-deployed parent works outside the home (Giff et al., 2019). However, both parents who work

outside the home and those who stay at home may face a barrier in a lack of resources to support their transition into being single parents while their spouse is away during deployment (Strong & Lee, 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

Challenging behavior in preschool children who are affected by military deployment is important to study. Challenging behaviors in preschoolers can cause a series of problems for the duration of their life if not controlled early (Bufferd et al., 2019). Social-emotional development, aggressive behavior, and withdrawn behavior in preschoolers should be studied because it would help parents and teachers create supportive environments for children (Bracken & Nagle, 2017). The perceptions of challenging behavior can vary, and the approaches used to decrease challenging behavior can help them reduce the effects of it for young children, teachers, and parents (Bufferd et al., 2019). This research may be significant because teachers and parents may use the suggestions to respond to challenging behavior exhibited by preschool children following the deployment of a parent. Creating secure attachment with supportive adults, stable environments, and a sense of belonging is what the role of adults is in supporting children with challenging behavior. The themes in this chapter highlight challenging behavior, the perceptions, the needs of insecure children as well as the roles of adults. What is known in this discipline is children who have insecure attachment have a difficult time emotionally and socially and if left untreated can affect them later in life. The present study may fill the gap in the practice to contribute to what the roles of adults are in

supporting children with challenging behavior. In Chapter 3 I will discuss the research

method, explaining the phenomenon, tradition, and why the tradition was chosen. I will

describe my role as researcher, and I will explain assumptions, limitations, and ethical

procedures relevant to my study. I will explain how the participants will be chosen,

instrumentation, data collection, and my data analysis plan.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. In this chapter I will explain the research methods that are used, research strategy and justification for the design. I will examine my role in the current research, and describe the methodology, including how I selected the sample and how I gathered and analyzed the data. In this chapter, I will discuss how I designed the instrument and my procedure for conducting the study. I will present limitations specific to this study.

Research Design and Rationale

Three RQs guide this study. These questions reflect the requirements for developing secure attachment, described by Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979).

RQ1: How do teachers and parents describe the reasons for challenging behavior in preschool children following deployment?

RQ2: How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in social bonds between child and others following a deployment?

RQ3: How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in trust between child and others following a deployment?

The problem I addressed in this basic qualitative study was understanding the underlying reasons for challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children who experience disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. In this

research, I used a basic qualitative study to interview 14 participants, including seven

parents or other primary caregivers of military preschoolers who had at least one spouse

deployed in the previous 6 months, and seven teachers of preschoolers in whose class at

least one parent of at least one student deployed in the previous 6 months. I selected a

basic qualitative study with interviews to investigate teachers' and parents' perspectives

on challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing a disruption in

social bonds and trust following a parent's deployment. I chose this approach because it

allowed me to describe the experience of the participants. According to Mertens (2015),

researchers should use a qualitative approach to describe the participants' experiences.

I used a qualitative approach through interviews to understand teachers' and

parents' perceptions to answer the research questions. I considered other traditions, such

as an ethnography, a narrative, and grounded theory. According to Mertens (2015), an

ethnography requires the researcher to study the participants in their real-life environment

over a long period. This approach would not have been appropriate. Mertens (2015)

suggested that a narrative would require the researcher to narrate the participants' stories

while focusing on their lives. A narrative approach would not have been appropriate

because, in using that, I would have needed to connect a series of events, which would

not have been useful in answering the research questions. Lastly, the grounded theory

approach, would explain why the event occurred (Mertens, 2015), which would not have

applied to this research. A quantitative method, such as a survey, would not have served

my purpose of understanding teacher and parent perspectives about challenging behavior exhibited by preschoolers following a parent's deployment.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, I was an insider researcher. An insider is defined as having access to the population, the ability to gain a deeper understanding of the community, and the opportunity to evoke knowledge (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). My position as an insider allowed the participants to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with me as I was able to relate to their responses. According to Dwyer and Buckle (2009), an insider is a researcher within the same community the research is being conducted. In addition to that, the researchers role as an insider should be harmonious (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). My insider perspective permitted me to reach deep understanding of the problem under student, which I annotated in my reflective journal.

Any role a researcher engages in has its disadvantages and advantages. One advantage was my participants felt safe to share openly and honestly with me about their experiences because of my dual roles. The disadvantages were the possibility that I was too close to the problem and unable to provide an unbiased data analysis of the sample (see Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Beuving and De Vries (2015) described an insider as having the ability to the understand the participants on a deeper level about what participants are recounting. Beuving and De Vries (2015) also explained that as an insider, the researcher has objectivity of the participants behaviors and interactions due to the familiarity with the situation. Because I am an insider, I have the ability to use myself

as a connection between my target population and other researchers. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that with any role where credibility is questioned boundaries should be set between the researcher and each participant to create a relational style and ensure credibility. Ravitch and Carl (2016) also stated that the insider role does not establish a rigid or flexible relationship but only an unquestionable desire to exchange information accurately.

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explained that the role of an insider can present challenges when asking about experiences and as a result the researcher can receive an overwhelming response in the participant sharing their views. The data and reflective journaling gave me an interpretive and naturalistic view of the problem and also allowed me to gather meaning from the interviews. As an insider in research the researcher should complete self-reflection (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This ensures that the research is unbiased and trustworthy (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Self-reflection can be annotated in a journal to recognize and avoid biases. A reflective journal, self-awareness, and detailed bracketing can prevent any personal biases from skewing the research findings (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

I am a military spouse and mother of four military dependents living on a military installation. In my many previous roles in the local professional community, I worked as a child development center director, assistant director, school age coordinator, and youth center director for the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Army. I did not have a professional or personal association with any teacher or parent participants. When people I knew

volunteered to participate in this study, I thanked them for their interest in the study but informed them that due to our previous relationship I was unable to include them in the study.

In addition, my current professional role as an executive assistant for the Office of Student Support Services for the department of education in the target location may lead some parents or teachers with whom I have no prior relationship to nonetheless perceive me as having some influence over how they are regarded in the target child care centers. To mitigate this perception, I reassured participants by explaining that they will not be identified in documents related to the study, and their responses will be used to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives about challenging behavior exhibited by preschoolers following the deployment of a parent and nothing else. During the interviews I made sure participants felt comfortable answering the questions by answering each question in the same way with all participants, respecting their confidentiality and privacy, and being cognizant of my roles as a researcher.

I managed researcher bias by annotating my thoughts in a reflective journal. In addition, I managed my biases by asking indirect questions, maintaining a neutral stance, and avoiding an implication that there is a right answer. Beuving and De Vries (2015) stated seeking out familiarity with the issues from those who have gone through the phenomenon under study is a great approach to use in qualitative studies. As the researcher, I conducted myself ethically and ensured participant confidentiality.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population in this study consisted of adults associated with military families, including classroom teachers and parents who serve or whose spouses serve in the Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, Navy, and Army garrisons on an island that is part of the United States. The primary sampling strategy was purposive sampling due to the specifics of the problem and the purpose, and the need to query participants who had experience with the phenomenon under study. Sampling criteria for teachers included serving in the role of lead or assistant teacher in a preschool classroom of children ages 3 to 5, at a preschool center for at least 1year. Sampling criteria for parents included that their preschooler attended a preschool on the target military base and they or their spouse was or is currently deployed for at least six months. Nonparental caregivers, like grandmothers or uncles, were permitted to participate, but none did. Only one caregiver per household was allowed to participate in the interview. I confirmed that teachers and parents met these criteria by asking them when I scheduled each interview.

There were 14 participants, evenly divided between parents and teachers. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that for qualitative studies, 5 to 25 participants are sufficient. The rationale for choosing 14 participants was to obtain data saturation. Using 14 participants allowed me to gain enough data to answer the research questions. Data saturation refers to the point where the interviews offer no new pertinent information occurring in the data (Mertens, 2015). When no new data emerged or there was no

additional data forthcoming, I assumed I had reached data saturation. This occurred prior to the conclusion of my interviews, so the number of participants was sufficient for this study.

I gained approval to recruit parents and teachers via social media platforms that have a large population of active duty spouses from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval # 05-22-20-0165268). I informed teachers and parents of the study by posting a flyer on multiple social media pages. When participants volunteered to participate, I contacted each one individually with next steps. Each participant volunteered by sending their contact information to the email on the flyer posted on the social media page. Some participants heard of the study by word of mouth.

Once parent participants indicated they wanted to participate, I asked these questions in the same order: Are you a parent or teacher of a child aged 3 to 5 who attends preschool on base? Do you have at least one active duty parent or spouse deployed in the last 6 months for at least 6 months? I asked teacher participants if they taught preschool children ages 3 to 5 at a military-base childcare center. If prospective participants answered yes to these questions, I emailed them a consent form for their review and suggest a day and time to conduct interviews that is most convenient for them. All participants had the option of interviewing using Google Chat or Facetime to interview remotely via telephone.

Instrumentation

The data collection instruments that I used included the interview questions that I created are presented in Appendix A (questions for parents) and Appendix B (questions for teachers). The two versions are similar, with differences only in the focus on one child in a family situation, or on multiple children in a child care situation. Each set of interview questions includes six main questions, and six follow-up questions, for a total of 12 questions. I derived these questions from the framework.

To help me in answering RQ1, about how teachers and parents described the reasons for the challenging behavior, I relied on Interview Question 1, that addressed this question from a personal perspective. To answer RQ2, about how teachers and parents described the disruption in social bonds between the child and others that might have occurred during deployment, I relied on responses to Interview Question 2 and its two follow-up questions, and also on Interview Question 4 and its follow-up question, that put this issue in the context of social supports for creating a strong bond with a child. To answer RQ3, about how teachers and parents described the disruption in trust between the child and others following the deployment, I asked Interview Question 3 and its two follow-up questions, that addressed this issue from a personal perspective, and also Interview Question 5 and its follow-up question, that addressed the issue of trust in the context of social supports. Finally, I asked participants in Interview Question 6 to describe the effect they believed a strong bond and feelings of trust might have for a child and for preschoolers in general, but particularly for preschoolers who exhibited

challenging behavior. Responses to this question applied to RQ1, but also informed RQ2 and RQ3.

To establish content validity of the interview questions, I asked an affiliate in the Department of Education in the state that is the location of this study, and who holds a doctorate in education, to review my interview questions in light of my research questions and my study's problem and purpose. I used an expert in my field to confirm that my interview questions aligned with and could answer my research questions, and he suggested no changes.

I was used an instrument in my qualitative study because I was responsible for selecting participants, conducting the interviews, and organizing and analyzing data, so my biases and preconceived ideas served as a filter for the data. To limit the influence of my biases and preconceptions, I annotated my thoughts in a reflective journal and was careful to isolate my ideas from the interview process and data analysis. In addition, I managed my biases by asking open-ended questions, maintaining a neutral stance, and avoiding an implication that there was a right answer. I audio recorded the interviews and used a dictation application called Otter (Otter Voice Meeting Notes, 2020) while listening intently and carefully to each participant while taking scrupulous notes.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I posted one flyer to social media sites used by preschool teachers and parents in the target community. Participants were recruited after seeing the flyer or hearing from someone who had seen the flyer. I invited them to contact me by email. I provided

participants with the informed consent form after I confirmed they met the criteria to participate. I sent the consent form via email after scheduling the interview.

I conducted 14 interviews of both teachers and parents within a period of three weeks via telephone using audio recording. Each interview was semi-structured, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, at a time chosen by the participants. I contacted each participant by phone the day before the interview and briefly described the purpose of the study, and reminded them that they may exit the study at any time or choose to not answer any particular question. I also thanked them for volunteering to help me with my study. I asked each participant if they had questions about the consent form and asked them to reply with 'I consent' before the interview began.

I reminded participants that our conversation is being recorded, so I could be certain of getting an accurate record of their thoughts. I conducted the interview, asking questions presented in Appendix A or B, depending on the participant's status in the study as a parent or teacher. As needed, to fully understand what participants said, I added probing or extending questions. In addition, I made field notes during the interview, to keep in mind my own thoughts and questions, and observations I made of the participant's vocal tone, and other aspects not captured by words alone. Once the interview was over, I thanked them for their time and explained that a copy of the draft findings would be emailed to them to confirm the accuracy of my interpretations of the data.

Data Analysis Plan

 After each interview, I submitted the digital file to the Otter application for transcription. The Otter application is a free artificial intelligence dictation application that transcribes while someone is speaking (Otter Voice Meeting Notes, 2020). Once the application was downloaded, the user selects "begin recording" and the application begins transcribing until the user selects "stop." The application checked the transcription for accuracy. Once the accuracy check was complete, and all corrections were made by the software, I then compared each transcription to the audio recording to ensure accuracy. The transcription was stored on an encrypted connection with both digital and physical security measures (Otter Voice Meeting Notes, 2020). I inserted the transcriptions into the center column of a three-column table in a Word document, then inserted field notes gathered during each interview into the left-hand column, at the appropriate point in each interview. I reserved the right-hand column for coding. LaPelle (2004) recommended using three columns and Microsoft Word for coding and retrieving.

 I completed a thematic analysis in three cycles of a priori coding, open coding, and then axial coding. A priori codes, based on the value, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), included *stress, environment, separation, caregiver, teacher, challenges, support, suggestions, families, relationship, community, attachment, safe, bond, security, trust, responsive, dependable, resources, and links to the conceptual framework*. In the first coding cycle, I focused on phrases or words that pertained to these predetermined codes. I highlighted them in the text, and made a code

notation in the right column. I completed a priori coding of all transcripts before moving on to open coding.

Open coding allowed me to find the overall sense of the data through concepts linked across multiple participants (Saldaña, 2015), which might not be revealed during a priori coding. I read through each transcript, highlighting words and phrases that recurred but that were not part of the predetermined codes identified previously. My familiarity with all the transcripts, following the a priori coding cycle, assisted me in recognizing ideas that recurred within a transcript and across transcripts, so I flagged them quickly. Again, I completed open coding of all transcripts before continuing with axial coding.

Axial coding described how codes were related and assisted me in establishing categories in which to group codes (Saldaña, 2015). I re-read the interviews and determined how codes and the concepts represented were related by asking myself open ended questions (see Saldaña, 2015). I analyzed the information for similarities and differences (see Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this way, I grouped different codes derived from interview responses into categories. Finally, I grouped similar categories together that created themes that ran through the data and helped to establish answers to the research questions.

Trustworthiness

I established credibility by using parent and teacher perspectives of challenging behavior of preschoolers who have had a deployed parent. Credibility is the most important part of establishing trustworthiness (Lewis, 2015). Credibility was defined as

the connection between the research conducted and reality to ensure the findings were accurate (Lewis, 2015). One way I ensured credibility was by recruiting participants who were affiliated with military social media pages. I confirmed that each parent who participated fulfilled the criterion of having a preschooler enrolled in one of the target centers, and that each teacher who participated was an active employee. I achieved triangulation of data, another method of establishing credibility, by using participants who filled different roles in the lives of preschool children, and by inviting participants from multiple locations. Lastly, I used a reflective journal to help limit the influence on the study of my own biases and point of view.

Transferability refers to the usefulness of research findings when applied to a different set of circumstances. Transferability was established by allowing the teacher and parent perspectives to be understood in other contexts, populations, and age groups by using thick description (Denzin, 2011). I used thick description of my process and events in this study, and I provided interview data verbatim, so readers may interpret the data and decide on the transferability of findings to their own contexts. According to Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017), transferability is determined by each reader, after considering the applicability of information the researcher provides.

Dependability is created by providing enough information about the study to permit another researcher to repeat the study using similar methods, and also by establishing processes that, if repeated over time, will deliver the same results (Joppe, 2000). An audit trail establishes dependability by detailing the process by which a study

was conducted and offering for external analysis all data collected (Anney, 2014). As part

of an audit trail, I described faithfully what I did in conducting my study in a reflective

journal, any deviations from my expected plan that occurred in the course of the study,

and the data I gathered (Anney, 2014). I described how data were analyzed. I will keep

data for five years following this study, so they may be examined as needed to verify the

authenticity of the results and conclusions I reported.

Confirmability is established when the results of the study can be corroborated by

other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). I enabled confirmability by completing the

research in the manner described (Lewis, 2015). According to Anney (2014),

confirmability is supported by use of a reflective journal. To that end, I kept a journal as a

record of events and to annotated my thinking at each step in the research process. I also

used the reflective journal to track my biases and opinions, so they did not intrude in the

conduct of my study.

Ethical Procedures

To ensure ethical treatment of participants and data, I began by securing approval

by the University's IRB (approval #05-22-20-0165268). Once participants were

identified, I shared with them an informed consent form that detailed the study and

provided information about protections for them included as part of this study. Before

beginning an interview, I answered any questions each participant had about the study

and the informed consent, and asked them to provide verbal consent. I made certain every

participant had a copy of the form to keep for future reference.

The identity of all participants was kept confidential. Their names will not be shared with anyone and they each were given a number to identify them when I reported their comments made in the interviews. The data are stored on my personal computer and locked with a passcode to which only I have access. The Otter application stores the data in an encrypted cloud server that has physical and digital security (Otter Voice Meeting Notes, 2020). The application does not share any information with any outside authorities unless they have permission from the user. All files were electronic and no paper files have been made. All files and data will be kept for five years after the conclusion of my study and will be destroyed one day after the five-year mark, by wiping electronic devices, using a program such as Eraser.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I discussed the research method, explaining the phenomenon, tradition, and why the tradition was chosen. The role of the researcher was discussed explaining biases and ethical issues. The methodology was discussed explaining how the participants will be chosen and the procedures for selection. Instrumentation was discussed along with procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and the data analysis plan. In the trustworthiness section I discussed the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical procedures described the use and treatment of the participants and University rules. Chapter 4 includes a description of the setting of the research, and how the data collection is conducted. Chapter 4 has a

detailed data analysis procedures, as well as the results of the research with a transition to

the last chapter of this research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing disruption in social bonds and trust following deployment of a parent. Three RQs guided this study. These questions reflect the basic requirements for developing secure attachment, described by Bowlby (1978).

RQ 1: How do teachers and parents describe the reasons for challenging behavior in preschool children following deployment?

RQ2: How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in social bonds between child and others following a deployment?

RQ3: How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in trust between child and others following a deployment?

In this chapter I will discuss the setting in which the study takes place, data collection information that measures variables of interest, data analysis that extracted information for the study, the results, as well as the evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Setting

This study included participants who worked or lived on a military base on an island that is part of the United States. A recent, unexpected 12-month deployment to Turkey of more than 5,000 airmen, soldiers, and seamen, may have affected many participants and may have affected participation in this study. One participant stated, "I

apologize, but we were just notified that my husband will be deploying in 2 weeks and we need to start preparing, I will not be able to participate." Another possible participant stated he "would not be able to participate due to a forthcoming remote assignment." Also, 12-month tours to Turkey and Korea affected more than 10,000 families of airmen and soldiers on the focus military base, which caused canceled or postponed interviews. One parent cancelled their interview due to preparing for their tour. Loss of a service member is a life-changing experience for not only the family but the whole unit, whether on or off duty, and may have affected retention of participants who once agreed to be interviewed. For example, one interested participant noted that "with so many things going on, we just lost one of our own, I won't be able to participate, I apologize for the late notice." In addition, one prospective participant stated in private message that she will be "leaving the island due to her divorce becoming final," she also mentioned that she had "been through a lot the in the last few months since her husband was demoted and did not think the divorce would go through so quickly."

I also collected data during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most businesses, including childcare facilities, were closed to limit the spread of the virus. One teacher stated they had extra time since their "facility was currently closed due to the virus." In addition, because the other child development center was only open for children of essential personnel, this shift may have affected children's behavior that teachers and parents reported. One parent mentioned that her son's behavior had changed at school and at home, possibly due to the change in classmates in his classroom.

Data Collection

Fourteen teacher and parent participants provided data for this study. During the first interview, I received a telephone call while recording with the device. I apologized to my participant and ignored the call and started using the voice memo application instead of the phone. Two participants, after agreeing to interview, withdrew due to moving on short notice and other personal issues, and a third withdrew due to a loss of another service member in their squadron. In general, interviews proceeded as described in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

After each interview, I submitted the digital file to the Otter application for transcription. I compared each transcription to the audio recording to ensure accuracy and to cleaned up any errors. I used the dictation application Otter while listening intensively and carefully to each participant while taking scrupulous notes. I inserted the transcriptions into the center column of a three-column table in a Word document, then inserted any field notes gathered during each interview into the left-hand column, at the appropriate point in each interview. I reserved the right-hand column for coding. Completing a priori, open, and axial coding on an Excel spreadsheet proved to be more straightforward and reliable than on a Word document. The document only provided a small glimpse of the data in multiple segments, while the spreadsheet provided a complete panoramic view of all the data at once making it easier to access and report the findings. In the Excel spreadsheet I created six sheets, one for each interview question,

and each interview question separated by participant, one for teachers and one for parents for a total of six pages. Within each sheet I created five columns containing the research questions, participant responses and a priori coding, open coding, axial coding, and participant alias used to be able to match to the transcription for accuracy.

I completed thematic analysis in three cycles of a priori coding, open coding, and then axial coding. A priori codes, based on the value, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), included *stress, environment, separation, caregiver, teacher, challenges, support, suggestions, families, relationship, community, attachment, safe, bond, security, trust, responsive, dependable*, *resources, and links to the conceptual framework*. In the first coding cycle, I focused on phrases or words that pertain to these predetermined codes, highlighting them in the text, and making a code notation in the right column. I completed a priori coding of all transcripts before moving on to open coding.

Open coding allowed me to find the overall view through concepts that may be linked across multiple studies (Saldaña, 2015), but that may not be revealed during a priori coding. I read through each transcript, highlighting words and phrases that recurred but that were not part of the predetermined codes identified previously. My familiarity with all the transcripts, following the a priori coding cycle, assisted me in recognizing ideas that recurred and across transcripts, so I can flag them quickly. Again, I completed open coding of all transcripts before continuing with axial coding.

I re-read the interviews and determined how codes and the concepts they represent are related by asking myself open ended questions (Saldaña, 2015). I analyzed the information for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). In this way, I grouped different codes derived from interview responses into categories. The categories were: Teacher supportive factors, Parental supportive factors, Teachers description of bond, Parent description of bond, Parent supportive factors to bonding and building trust, Teachers supportive factors to bonding and building trust, Parental barriers to bonding, Teachers barriers to bonding, Teachers barriers to bonding, Parents barriers to build trust, and Teachers barriers to build trust. Codes and categories are presented in Figures 1 through 5.

Teacher-reported factors	Parent-reported factors
• I like help from professionals • We [Teachers in the classroom] work out solutions together • They [supervisors and trainers of teachers with preschoolers with challenging behavior] are serious about professional development and new ways to get children and families engaged. • I collaborate w/ other teachers • Communicating with each parent and getting them involved • Ensuring that each parent is involved in some way • Offering opportunities for parent involvement • We [Child Care Center] have monthly parent involvement activities • All key stakeholders will meet	• I always communicate with other parents • Advice from his [preschooler] teachers • Communicating w/ Teachers • Making sure that I know what is going on at school, my involvement. • My involvement within the classroom is key to his success • She is very comfortable expressing herself. In school, she has perfect behavior and she is always helping everyone else. To me, I take it as she's comfortable around me to express how she is feeling

Figure 1. Child-supportive factors reported by teachers and parents

Teacher-reported description	Parent-reported description
• A really strong bond. • I feel very bonded with them because we spend so much time together. • When it comes to bonding with preschoolers in my classroom, I feel like it [strong bond] is imperative. • My preschoolers have been with me since the pre-toddler room, so I feel very bonded and close with them. • In my new center it's too soon for bonds yet, but in my old center. I feel that we had a strong bond. • Very bonded, too bonded. My kids love me, and I love them. • My bond is very strong. • The strength of the bond that I feel with my preschooler gets stronger when the parent returns. My bond is very strong. We have the opportunity to make up for the time we have lost. I get to learn some of the things he learned without me. That strengthens our bond. • I have a strong relationship with my parents and I think that makes my relationship with their kids stronger.	• I have had a few trainers who have helped me cultivate strong relationships with my preschoolers who have challenging behaviors by providing me with materials and trainings that apply directly to my classroom. • The strength of the bond that I feel with my preschooler is strong, is undeniable, is relentless. • The strength of the bond I feel with my preschooler is super strong, he depends on me, and I want to make sure his needs are met. So very, very, strong. • The strength of the bond with my preschooler is undeniable. She is my little broke best friend. We are inseparable. • It's very good, pretty strong.

Figure 2. Adult-child bond described by teachers and parents

Teacher-reported supportive factors	Parent-reported supportive factors
• Routine is important [in the classroom] • We make sure we have consistency [within the environment] • Make sure we have a stable environment • For me personally, I don't have a ton of boundaries outside of school. • My supervisors make sure the school environment is developmentally appropriate • My friends and family have supported our trust with our kids, our faith supports us as well. • So that children know what to expect, we all try to communicate stay on the same page and support each other. • They [Parent and supervisors] were supportive and tried to work around my schedule. • Even though my family is not close by, they definitely support us and build trust with myself as a parent • They [supervisors] work well with the trainer; when they [supervisors] support the trainers also and share that we [Teachers & Supervisors] are all one team trying to help this child. • Supervisors who allow me to take them [preschoolers] on walks support my bond with them. • My supervisors have mentored me	• Validating them [my child] is paramount • A lot of 1 on 1 time [with preschooler] • Give her [Preschooler] independence • Maybe redirect them [preschooler] • Keep them [preschooler] engaged to ensure the classroom • [Classroom] is a safe environment • I enjoy watching him develop as a person

Figure 3. Bonding and trust-building factors reported by teachers and parents

Teacher-reported barriers to bonding	Parent-reported barriers to bonding
• Military and school environment • Teacher] Lack of communication between coworkers and lack of support from managers • Outside stimuli has a strong effect on the ability to bond with students in my classroom) • Last minute TDYs and deployments • Students may get overwhelmed • Some [Preschoolers] trust us at all times • We have influx caregivers	• Inconsistency at home • Untrustworthiness, there have been weekends we have told the kids Dad is able to come home this weekend, but the then the Marine Corps changes its mind • Military & deployment • My husband's deployments

Figure 4. Barriers to bonding reported by teachers and parents

Teacher-reported barriers to building trust	Parent-reported barriers to building trust
• Some preschoolers have separation anxiety • With community, our circle was small • Students will lose trust if the routine is off • Staff that weren't engaged • If a teacher is unprepared • Deployment is a barrier	• Being inconsistent w/ rules • Consistent routine • Military & school environment • Military & deployment

Figure 5. Barriers to building trust reported by teachers and parents

Finally, I grouped similar categories together to create themes that run through the data and established answers to the research questions. The themes that were present were: supportive factors, barriers to bonding, barriers to trust. These data are presented in Figure 6.

Theme: Supportive factors	Theme: Barriers to bonding	Theme: Barriers to trust
• Teacher supportive factors • Parental supportive Factors • Teachers description of bond • Parent description of bond • Parent supportive factors to bonding and building trust • Teachers supportive factors to bonding and building trust	• Teachers' barriers to bonding • Parents' barriers to bonding	• Teachers' barriers to building trust • Parents' barriers to building trust

Figure 6. Themes created from categories emergent from data

There were no discrepant cases found during the coding process. Participants were consistent in their responses throughout their interviews. In general, participants were confident of their bond with their preschool children, and described a high level of trust. They did suggest barriers, though, which may have affected children's behavior.

Results

In this basic qualitative study, I explored teacher and parent perspectives regarding the challenging behavior preschoolers exhibit following the deployment of their parent. I answered three research questions highlighting the reasons teachers and parents ascribe to this behavior, how teachers and parents described the disruption of social bonds between children and others, and how teachers and parents described disruption in trust between children and others. Results associated with each research question are described in this section.

Results for RQ1

RQ1 was, "How do teachers and parents describe the reasons for challenging behavior in preschool children following deployment?" The key insights that emerged were that teachers and parents recognized significant behavior challenges following deployment and again once the service member returned. Few parents agreed that their preschooler was accustomed to the support received from a two-parent household, when one parent is absent the needs either go unfulfilled or ignored which attribute to the challenging behavior. P1 stated, after being asked what gets in the way, "Of course Daddy's work schedule." P2 agreed with this statement and expressed, "The military and deployments get in the way of creating a strong bond." P3 added to this by saying, "Deployments get in the way of creating a strong bond because my husband is not here."

Many parents ascribed challenging behavior in preschoolers to an inconsistent home environment and constant fluctuations with military work schedules. P1 described, "The things that get in the way, are when a spouse is deployed having to solo parent two small children, one child naturally gets neglected when it comes to attention and effort put in on day to day activities." Likewise, P2 agreed and shared that, "The military and deployment. There is no such thing as making plans when you or your husband is active duty. We just have to be spontaneous and go with the flow." P3 contributed to this by adding, "The military. There were so many times that we thought we had something figured out and then all of a sudden his supervisor would change those thoughts." Additionally, P4 stated,

Of course Daddy's work schedule. Then my work schedule. Mine is easier to

work with but not so much for my husband. Deployments definitely get in the

way because time away means that he is missing out on his milestones

P5 shared, "That would be not having a dad in living in the home. It is that constant

coming and going of a parent and not sure when that other parent is going to be in the

home." P5 went on to say, "When the other parent is there, our preschooler, he

overcompensates with one parent, he doesn't have that balance."

Conversely, while the majority of parents agreed that inconsistent home

environment or deployment was a cause for challenging behaviors, two parents shared

the different experiences. For instance, P6 said, "These days electronics play a big part in

the bond we can potentially establish." While P7 shared "My son has been diagnosed

with ADHD, as new parents it's not the ADHD, it's just us not knowing as new parents."

What is clear from each parent is that they recognize the effect of disruptions in the home

environment or the work schedule on their child's challenging behavior and how they

influence it.

Some teachers agreed that challenging behavior in the school environment is

caused by disruption at home but also at school. T4 said, "The inconsistency of the

military and teacher changes" was to blame for children's challenging behavior. T5

shared that, "Definitely last-minute deployments or TDY's [Temporary Duty Travel]"

were reasons teachers attributed to challenging behavior. Similarly, T6 said, "The

deployments have forced some kids to stay away from the classroom for a few days out

of the week causing them to miss out on their daily routine with us." T7 noted, "Outside stimuli has a strong effect on the ability to bond with students in my classroom."

Although most teachers and parents agreed that disruptions at home trigger children's disruptive behavior, teachers also focused on their own lack of time to plan for and deal with challenging behavior. For example, T2 said, "If a teacher is unprepared for work, students may cause them to get overwhelmed." T3 added, "I collaborate with other teachers and staff to create a fun learning environment for preschool." T4 said, "That's the biggest restriction, the biggest limitation, is not having enough time." She also shared that, "I think the main thing is being consistent with the rules and procedures throughout the day." This teacher felt that having little time and consistency contributed to a pattern of challenging behavior in the classroom. No parent raised issues of lack of time, planning, or collaboration with others as a factor in children's challenging behavior.

Most participants, both parents and teachers, thought that the reason for challenging behavior was due to deployments. Many teachers and parents also cited the lack of time, work schedule, and inconsistent work environments as contributing factors. A few parents believed that behavior concerns were already existing before any deployment and also cited children's use of electronics as reasons for challenging behavior. A few teachers believed that a significant contributor to children's challenging behavior in the classroom was teachers' lack of consistency and inexperience in dealing with children going through stressful times at home. Although parents and teachers in this

study cited many possible factors influencing children's behavior, the stress of parental deployment was cited most often.

Results for RQ2

RQ2 was, "How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in social bonds between the child and others following a deployment?" I relied on responses to IQ 2, about the level of bonding felt for preschoolers, particularly those who exhibit challenging behavior, and IQ 4, on the context of social supports for creating a strong bond with a child. The key insights that emerged are that most teachers and parents believe they have a strong and trusting relationship with their preschooler. Most parents and teachers believed their bond with the child was not disrupted at all when the child's parent was deployed. Both teachers and parents shared that the child actually relied on them most during deployment. T1 shared, "I feel as though the preschoolers who exhibit challenging behavior trust me completely." In like manner, T2 stated, "They trust me so much their parents hire me after work, so very strong. I think babysitting after hours helps reduce parental stress."

Parents specifically characterized their bond with their preschooler as strong, despite the disruptions at home, explaining that their relationship with their preschooler was trusting and received support from staff at their child care center. For instance, P1 stated, "I believe there's trust." P2 added to this, specifying, "He [my child] trusts me because he depends on it." In the same way, P3 explained, "She trusts me a lot, I trust her with things she can handle." In addition, P4 said, "The CDC does an amazing job with

bonding and trust." P5 added to this by saying, "His classroom promotes his independence and doing things for himself."

Participants in this study believed that parental deployment increases school absences and disrupts social bonds for preschoolers and their teachers. When parents were asked what gets in the way of maintaining trust with their child, P4 shared, "The military." P5 said, "There were so many times that we thought we had something figured out and then all of a sudden his supervisor would change those thoughts." Likewise, P6 said, "Military and deployment." In contrast to these statements, P7 stated, "Inconsistency at home." Two teachers shared that "deployments and TDY's" affected preschoolers' ability to bond with caring adults.

A few teachers felt their bond with their preschoolers was strong. T4 characterized the bond with children in the class as, "A really strong bond" with her preschoolers. T3 stated when asked about trust, "We trust each other a lot." T4 described trust within the school environment by adding,

> I haven't encountered anything in a school environment that has gotten in the way of creating feelings of trust between myself and the preschoolers. When my parents are stressed, there is a shift in the child's behavior and the parents' attitude

T5 shared that, "They trust me for everything, like I said earlier, getting their needs met." T6 said, "If I had to put it on a scale, I say ten." Similarly, T7 said, "My kids don't cry when they are dropped off because they trust me." Teachers felt the bond was reciprocal,

so that they were as bonded to the children as the children were to them. T5 explained, "I

feel very bonded with them because we spend so much time together." T6 said, "Very

bonded, too bonded. My kids love me, and I love them." Most teachers believed that a

strong bond helps children cope following deployment. One teacher felt that social bonds

within the school environment is supported by teacher response to challenging behavior.

She shared,

> I think the first thing is being consistent with the rules and procedures throughout
>
> the day. There are some things that just aren't acceptable. In every classroom, we
>
> must have the same schedule. So that children know what to expect, we all try to
>
> communicate stay on the same page and support each other. Usually, we have
>
> another teacher in the classroom, if you feel like there is a child acting out and
>
> you're not getting through to them, another teacher will step in and be your back
>
> up or even take over. I think that the child will see that the two adults getting
>
> along working together as a team. I don't think at that moment that they're
>
> thinking they must not trust me. They definitely see that the adults in the room are
>
> approaching it as a team versus just being against each other and not helping each
>
> other.

Teachers in this study expressed that they provide a sense of belonging to children

by maintaining consistency, ensuring the environment is developmentally appropriate,

and creating a routine that enables fun and enriching activities. T1 shared, "My

supervisors make sure the school environment is developmentally appropriate." T2 said,

"We make sure we have a stable environment," while with the child. T4 said, "We make sure we have consistency."

Several teachers described what they do within the environment to decrease disruptions in social bonds following a deployment. T6 described ways she creates a welcoming atmosphere in her environment for preschoolers, "Start from the very beginning of the day greet each child by name and smiling at them, ask them how they're doing. Also, in the classroom, having activities for the children, each child is interested in it. Giving every child a chance to have their time." T3 described mitigating the disruption caused by deployment by including "a lot of 1 on 1 time."

Both parents and teachers believed that a strong bond with loving adults creates a secure base for the child to grow, develop, and feel secure. T5 shared that, "I make it a point to help them learn safe ways to express themselves and their feelings, no matter what they are." In particular, T1 said, "She is very comfortable expressing herself. In school, she has perfect behavior and she's always helping everyone else. To me, I take that as she's comfortable around me to express how she is feeling." P1 shared, "Validating them is paramount."

The results for RQ2 indicated that most teachers and parents believe they have a strong bond with their preschooler. Many parents and teachers believed their bond with the child was not disrupted at all when the child's parent was deployed. Participants in this study believed that parental deployment increases school absences and disrupts social bonds for preschoolers and their teachers and that the child relied on them most during

deployment. A few teachers shared that "deployments and TDY's" contribute to preschoolers' ability to bond with caring adults. Many teachers in this study expressed that they provide a sense of belonging to children by maintaining consistency. While parents felt that a strong bond with loving adults can create a secure base for the child to feel secure, the majority of them cited deployment as the cause for challenging behavior. Although parents and teachers in this study cited many possible factors influencing disruption in social bonds between the child and others following a deployment, many participants agreed their bond was strong and undisrupted.

Results for RQ3

RQ3 was, "How do teachers and parents describe the disruption in trust between the child and others following a deployment?" To answer RQ3, on how teachers and parents describe the disruption in trust following the deployment, I asked IQ3, about their level of trust with preschoolers, especially those who exhibit challenging behavior. Most participants, both teachers and parents, felt that a strong bond with the child creates a sense of security for the child and develops trust. T2 said, "I think our trust we have together allow preschoolers to feel safe and secure." Adding to this, T3 shared,

> It is so important for preschoolers, especially those with challenging behaviors, to be able to express themselves completely in healthy ways. I constantly remind children that it is okay to feel what they're feeling and help them adjust how they express it.

Teachers shared that collaboration and training are essential when working with children experiencing challenging behavior. T2 said, "my supervisors have supported feelings of trust by giving us planning time, asking us about the children's development, and gaining our input on the environment." T3 shared, "We work out solutions together" with teachers and parents. T4 described the usefulness of training, saying, "They [supervisors and trainers of teachers with preschoolers with challenging behavior] are serious about professional development and new ways to get children and families engaged." Teachers also agreed that having more understanding about the child and their behavior helps too. T5 said, "I became more flexible." T6 shared, "Keeping track of their [parents'] schedules," to plan for the needed changes in the environment or focus on the child, assists with trust. Teachers agreed that supporting each other and having flexibility supports trust between the child, themselves, and the school.

Parents shared several different types of factors that support trust with their child or themselves and the teacher. One parent shared the "child psychologist and a small circle of friends and family" supported them. A few other parents shared that the center the child attends supports feelings of trust. P3 said, "The daycare is amazing in their communication with us" that builds trust. Another parent agreed and when asked what factors support trust she shared, "Her learning academy" supports feelings of trust. In addition to this, parents also shared that communication and experience are important factors when building trust. P5 said, "Her first one, whew, just got in the way of me trusting them, so much so, I asked them to move her to another room with caregivers with

more experience not just education but communication as well." After being placed in the new room, communication and trust improved dramatically. P7 shared, "All three of his teachers have education in early childhood." Parent participants recalled several different elements that support trust between the child, themselves, and the school. Each factor played a role in building and sustaining trust and made an improvement in the child's challenging behavior.

After being asked what things participant teachers and other teachers, supervisors, or teacher assistants in the school environment do to create feelings of trust between themselves and each preschooler, T2 shared, "We work out solutions together" to create trust with our preschoolers. T3 said, "They [supervisors and trainers of teachers with preschoolers with challenging behavior] are serious about professional development and new ways to get children and families engaged." T4 shared, "I collaborate with other teachers." T5 said, "Ensuring that each parent is involved in some way, we have monthly parent involvement activities." T6 added, "Communicating with each parent and getting them involved." T7 said that "Collaborating with each other and working closely with parents" is what teachers do within the school environment to create feelings of trust.

After being asked what sorts of things in the school environment get in the way of creating feelings of trust between themselves and the preschoolers, most parents and teachers expressed that military deployment was a factor. T4 stated, "The inconsistency of the military and school environment." In a similar fashion, T5 shared, "When my parents deploy, the children come in and they need an extra of everything, extra love,

extra hug, extra one on one time." P3 added that, "Deployments get in the way of creating a trusting relationship." Most teachers felt that not having consistency, staff engagement, and routine within the classroom was a barrier to trust. T2 said, "Students will lose trust if the routine is off." Factors that create mistrust include, according to T3, "Staff that weren't engaged" and, according to T4, "If a teacher is unprepared."

I also asked participants to address the issue of trust in the context of social supports. The key insights that emerged were strong relationships with friends, family, and the child development center support building trust with preschoolers. As illustration, T1 shared, "Routine is important" in the classroom. Adding to this, T3 and T4 talked about consistency and stability within the environment is important for building trust with preschoolers. T3 said, "We make sure we have consistency" within the environment. Accordingly, T4 shared, "We make sure we have a stable environment." T6 shared, "My supervisors make sure the school environment is developmentally appropriate." Contrary to this, one teacher shared that her students and parents can come to her for things that are unrelated to classroom. T5 said, "For me, personally, I don't have a ton of boundaries outside of school, so parents and my students can come to me for anything."

The key insights that emerged that can be applied to this research question are participants described the disruption in trust between the child and others as a result of lack of experience, insufficient communication, and the absence of collaboration between teachers and parents. Although they described having a strong relationship with their child, many of the parents had different but effective ways to create feelings of trust. As

an example, P6 shared that, "We do things together as much as we can. We read books, tuck her in at night, give hugs and show affection." P7 added to this by saying, "We talk and give them the ability to express their feelings and let us know what's going on with them and it is from the youngest to the oldest." Participants in this study received support from friends, family, and the school the preschooler attends. P1 stated, "My friends and family have supported our trust with our kids. Our faith supports us as well." Similarly, P2 shared, "Even though my family is not close by, they definitely support us and build trust with myself as a parent."

Participants in this study believed that having a stable environment for preschoolers is important to supporting children's ability to regulate their own behavior. Parent comments were centered around what they could do or were doing within the environment to make it stable. P5 stated, "Providing them with what they need. A stable environment." Equally important, P6 said, "It is affected by everything we do. I need to be consistent in order for this bond and trust to stay strong and flourish."

The results for RQ3 are teachers believe that their relationship with the child and family makes the child feel safe and secure following a deployment. Six parents believed that a supportive environment with the family and friends or within the child development center made a positive difference following deployment. One parent shared that their faith supported them. All in all, the participants' responses indicate that supportive environments can lead to positive outcomes in creating trust between adults and children. Secure relationships between the parent and child and a supportive

environment are needed for the development of secure children. During the participant interviews, there were no discrepant cases found, therefore no need for alternative explanations.

Additional Finding

Although no interview question asked about it, parents and teachers in this study cited the support they feel from each other as helping them assist children cope with deployment. For example, one teacher insisted that working with other colleagues helps limit the disruption children feel. T3 shared, "I collaborate with other teachers" in managing children's challenging behavior. T7 shared ways to get parents involved, saying, "We have monthly parent involvement activities." In addition, T2 shared, "I communicate with each parent and get them involved." Parents agreed. P1 said, "My involvement within the classroom is key to [my child's] success." P2 shared, "Making sure that I know what is going on at school, my involvement," is important. Likewise, P3 cited getting "advice from teachers" that was helpful and P4 and P5 said that, "Communicating with teachers." The connection among adults was described by these participants as an important part of their support for the preschool children in their care.

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Evidence of Trustworthiness

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I established credibility by using parent and teacher perspectives of challenging behavior of preschoolers who have had a deployed parent. Credibility is the most important part of establishing trustworthiness (Lewis, 2015). Credibility is defined as the connection between the research conducted and reality to ensure the findings are accurate

(Lewis, 2015). One way that I confirmed that each parent who participated fulfilled the criterion of having a preschooler was by asking them how old their child was. For each teacher I asked which age group they taught. I achieved triangulation of data, another method of establishing credibility, by using participants who filled different roles in the lives of preschool children, and I invited participants from multiple locations. Lastly, I used a reflective journal to help limit the influence on the study of my own biases and point of view.

Transferability was established by allowing the teacher and parent perspectives to be understood in other contexts, populations, and age groups by using thick description (Denzin, 1989). I used thick description of my process and events in this study, and I provided interview data verbatim, allowing the readers to interpret the data and decide on the transferability of the findings. According to Nowell et al. (2017), transferability is determined by each reader, after considering the applicability of information the researcher provides.

Dependability was created by providing enough information about the study to permit another researcher to repeat the study using similar methods, and also by establishing processes that, if repeated over time, will deliver the same results (Joppe, 2000). An audit trail was established by detailing the process by which this study was conducted and offered external analysis of all data collected (Anney, 2014). As part of my audit trail, I described what I did in conducting my study in a reflective journal, deviations from my expected plan that occurred in the course of the study, and the data I

gathered (Anney, 2014). I clearly wrote how the data was analyzed. I made simply how the data was analyzed. I plan to keep data for five years following this study, so they may be examined as needed to verify the authenticity of the results and conclusions I report.

I enabled confirmability by completing the study in the manner as described. There was no deviation from the study whatsoever. I also used a reflective journal to record, and annotate my thinking during each interview in each step of the research process. I took care to prevent the intrusion in this study of my biases and opinions.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the results of my study, following interviews with parents and teachers of preschool children on military bases in the western United States. The results of this study indicate challenging behavior in preschool children following deployment is affected by the strength of the bond and amount of trust a preschooler has for the caring adult. Most teachers and parents described the cause of disruption in social bonds as deployment for the reason for challenging behavior. Many participants indicated they had a trusting relationship with their preschooler as well as a supportive environment. In addition, most teachers believed that their strong relationship makes preschoolers feel safe and secure following a deployment. In contrast, most parents believe that a supportive environment with the family and friends or within the Child Development Center makes a positive difference when the disruption of trust between the child and others occurs following deployment.

In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings of the research, describing ways the findings confirm, disconfirm, and extend knowledge in the discipline by comparing them with what has been found in the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. In the limitations section, I described the limitations to the trustworthiness that arose from the execution of the study—followed by the recommendations, where I recommend further research and implications. In the next section, I describe the potential impact of positive social change, followed by a conclusion that captures the study's essence.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to increase understanding of teacher and parent perspectives of challenging behavior exhibited in preschool children experiencing a disruption in social bonds and trust following the deployment of a parent. In this study, I expanded knowledge of the teacher and parent understanding of stress experienced by children during parental deployment, how this stress may affect children's behavior and learning, and how they might support those preschool children whose parents have been deployed. Burland and Lundquist (2012) stated that a basic qualitative design is appropriate for studies that describes the human experience with the phenomenon under investigation

Interpretation of the Findings

The finding of RQ1 of this study indicated challenging behavior in preschool children following deployment is affected by the strength of the bond and amount of trust a preschooler has for the caring adult. Teachers and parents described the cause of disruption in social bonds as deployment for a reason for challenging behavior. Participants indicated they had a trusting relationship with their preschoolers as well as a supportive environment. These findings confirm that the causes of challenging behavior of concern in preschool children include inconsistent routines and military deployment. The results corroborate that the needs of insecure children are supportive adults, stable and supportive environments, and a sense of belonging, as described by Kim et al. (2018) and Son & Peterson (2017). This is also in agreement with the conceptual framework of

Bowlby (1978), who attested that children require a nurturing relationship with a primary parent to have other secure relationships. Bowlby (1978) and Ainsworth (1979) supported the idea that a secure emotional and physical attachment to a parent is critical to a child's overall development. Ainsworth and Bell (1969) confirmed the relationship with the parent as a key influence of the relationship the child has with the world around him. The finding regarding RQ1 supports the relationship between parent and child provides a secure base for the child to grow and develop.

The finding from RQ2 indicated that most teachers and parents believe they have a strong bond with their preschoolers. Parents and teachers believed their bond with the child was not disrupted when the child's parent was deployed. Participants in this study believed that parental deployment increases school absences and disrupts social bonds for preschoolers and their teachers and that the child most relied on them during deployment. My findings support previous research into the importance of emotional bonds with another supportive person for healthy development, as described by Bowlby (1978). These findings are also in line with Cramm et al. (2019) and Hughes et al. (2017), who explained that having trusting adults around to help provide reassurance and guidance helps mitigate children's challenging behavior.

The finding from RQ3 is that teachers believe their relationship with the child and family makes the child feel safe and secure following a deployment. Parents believed that a supportive environment with the family and friends or within the child development center made a positive difference following deployment. Participants' responses indicated

that supportive environments could lead to positive outcomes in creating trust between adults and children. These findings reflect those of Slentz (2017), who found that a limited understanding of the world causes challenging behavior in preschool children. Prior studies have noted the importance of the connection between the child's ability to develop secure attachment to the parent through trust of the parent to meet the child's needs, and the child's healthy social emotional development (Bowlby, 1978; Ainsworth, 1979). My findings confirm the quality of attachment is based on circumstances that encourage development of trust and security or undermine them, and are consistent with Bretherton (1992), who stated insecure attachment leads to poor relationships or difficulty in establishing trusting relationships. Bowlby (1978) explained that a secure relationship between the parent and child, trust between the parent and child, and an environment that supports both are needed for development of the whole child. Ainsworth (1979) indicated consistent incidents of mistrust, insecurity, and instability interrupt a person's feelings of trust and security which can lead to behavior that mirrors insecure attachment. These ideas from the literature were echoed in the responses of parents and teachers in my study.

One unanticipated finding was that parents and teachers in this study felt supported by each other, and this helped them assist children in coping with deployment. This finding confirmed that of Leskin et al. (2018), who believed that challenging behavior was a direct result of the child's environment. The findings confirm that adults' role in supporting children with challenging behavior includes knowing the reason for the

behavior and knowing the appropriate way to respond to the behavior, as suggested by Rahn et al. (2017) and Costales and Anderson (2018). Slentz (2017) believed that children's limited understanding of the world perpetuates their challenging behavior. The findings from this research confirm that challenging behavior in preschool children may be exacerbated by a limited understanding of the world around them. Essential social-emotional skills needed for children include decision making, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and self-awareness (Bierman et al., 2019). To resolve the barriers in supporting children who exhibit challenging behavior, teachers require support from school administration and parents in order for strategies to be effective (Sood et al., 2018). Parents require positive guidance techniques, flexibility within their work environment, and collaboration with the child's school to effectively respond to children's challenging behavior (Chai & Lieberman-Betz, 2018). The findings from this study extend knowledge in the discipline by providing insights into teacher and parent perspectives regarding children affected by parental deployment and factors that might improve support strategies and positive outcomes for children

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that as interviews were scheduled, a pandemic occurred, preventing in-person interviews. All participants chose to conduct their interviews over the phone and not via video methods, which prevented observation of their facial expressions and body language, limiting the range of data. Additional limitations were unexpected deployments and last-minute permanent changes of station

or relocation. One parent canceled due to a deployment that she had to plan for even though she was not the active duty member, demonstrating that deployment affects the whole family when the member deploys. Another parent declined after consenting because she had to move from one state to another with no time to prepare. Adding to these limitations was the specific location of the study, isolated from the rest of the United States. The geographic isolation of the target location may have limited participants' access to extended family and other resources, which may have compounded the problems experienced by children during parental deployment.

Recommendations

Despite the promising results of this study, there are many unanswered questions. One recommendation for future studies is expanding the age range of the study from preschoolers only to include all children in military families through adolescence. Social and emotional development continues throughout childhood (Collie et al., 2019), and the importance of peers increases as children grow older (Bierman et al., 2019). Continuing research on how deployment affects school-age and adolescent children would be beneficial to the field of education generally.

Another recommendation for future research is to replicate my study with parents and teachers of preschool children who are not military-affiliated. Children may experience extended absences of a parent that are not associated with deployment, including parents' employment travel, incarceration, and or hospitalization, and these may contribute to children's challenging behavior. How parents and teachers regard their

social bond and trust relationship with children who exhibit challenging behavior, outside the experience of military deployment, may lead to positive outcomes for children across many different contexts.

Lastly, future research might be replicated on a military base in another location in the United States with less geographic isolation than was the case in the current study location. Such a study might explore the effect of extended family and options for out-of-state travel on the experience of parental deployment on social bonds and trust relationships. Similarly, this study could be replicated on a military base outside the United States, in which off-base experiences might be affected by language and cultural barriers, and so might affect the experience of children surrounding parental deployment or similarly disrupting parental absences.

Implications

The present study raised the possibility that preschool children's challenging behavior was caused by the absence of a parent following deployment, leading to a disruption in social bonds and trust. This possibility was supported by the data, and that inconsistency in home or school environments also contributes to children's challenging behavior. Several implications for practice can be derived from this study, affecting parents, teachers, and military policy. I will suggest possible actions based on these implications for each of these groups.

Implications for parents suggested by the results included providing children with as much stability as possible, by maintaining a routine and by providing as much

consistency as possible in everyday processes and expectations for behavior. Parents in this study cited support from family and friends, and visiting a place of worship, as factors that mitigated children's challenging behavior and supported their ability to respond appropriately to such behavior during a deployment. In addition to this, parents suggested a developmentally appropriate school environment as a supportive factor. To the extent possible, parents should seek out these support mechanisms. The child care center and base authorities might also encourage parents to use these supports and provide resources, like parent book clubs, child-and-parent outings, and community get-togethers as a way to help parents create support networks that can be a source of stability during deployment. Because the transient nature of military life was a factor discussed by participants in this study, child care centers and base leadership should take action to welcome and provide a support system for parents recently assigned to the base.

The results also suggested that at the time of deployment support for the remaining parent should come from multiple sources. For example, a parent's work supervisor should initiate a conversation about the remaining parent's work schedule and make adjustments as necessary to support the family. In addition, support from preschool teachers was cited in my study as a valuable addition to family stability. Teachers should be alerted to the deployment of a child's parent, so they can provide support to the child and to the remaining parent. In addition, childcare teachers might be provided training in supporting parents during stressful times.

Preschool teachers need support in maintaining a secure bond and a trusting relationship with children whose parent has been deployed, and who may exhibit challenging behavior. One implication to this end is for preschool teachers to have time and support for providing one on one support to the preschooler who is experiencing distress. This may require additional staffing, so teachers can take time with a child who needs extra support, without depriving other children of teacher interaction. Because a secure bond and trusting relationship require child-centered interactions on the part of teachers, training in how to provide supportive guidance, redirection, and other child-centered guidance techniques would be helpful to teachers and help children feel secure in the classroom. Participants in this study noted that children experiencing disruption need a sense of personal agency, so teachers should allow them to have independence during play and offer activities that support children's feelings of competence and environmental control. Teachers who employ teacher-directed activities and techniques may need training in child-centered curriculum methods and be encouraged to engage children in large segments of independent play. Finally, because parents in this study valued the support of their child's teacher, teachers should be encouraged to conduct home visits with each parent, especially with parents remaining after a parental deployment, so they can work as a team in supporting the child.

The results of this study also created implications for military practice. The military should consider limiting the frequency of moves and deployments, especially of service members with preschool children. If families were provided more stability in a

location and more time with their family, that could help maintain social bonds and trust with their child. Similarly, to the extent possible, deployments and reassignments should be made with sufficient notice so families can plan for this and create support mechanisms for the child and for the parent who remains. Another implication for military leadership is to provide parents, especially parents who remain behind when a spouse is deployed, with flexibility in work and duty schedules. Doing this would provide parents with more time to maintain the child's sense of trust and secure bond, and may reduce children's challenging behavior. Because these steps might reduce parental anxiety about their child, they will contribute to military readiness and focus, and will enhance the satisfaction parents feel with military life.

The results of this study have implications for positive social change by providing insights into teacher and parent perspectives regarding children affected by parental deployment and may lead to improved support strategies and positive outcomes for children. In addition, by describing problems at home that affect military personnel, this study may suggest positive social change in base policies and structure that could improve morale and reduce anxiety. If children of military-affiliated parents feel more secure and exhibit less challenging behavior, they, their parents, their teachers, and their parents' supervisors and commanders will benefit from this study.

Conclusion

In this study, I explored the perspectives of teachers and parents regarding children of deployed parents. The results described teacher and parent perspectives of the

stressors experienced by children during parental deployment, how this stress may affect children's behavior and learning, and how teachers and parents might support preschool children whose parents have been deployed. This study demonstrated that adults should be supported in working with children of deployed parents and that community support, involving teachers, parents, and employers, can contribute to children's maintenance of social bonds and feelings of trust. In this study I found that the social bond and trust a child develops with supportive teachers and caregivers help the child distinguish between good and bad decisions, manage their behavior, and achieve positive self-identity. Parents and preschool teachers support the child and each other when a family is disrupted by military deployment to reduce stress and strengthen interpersonal bonds and feelings of trust. My study demonstrated the importance of policies, resources, and interactions that help preschool children feel secure even when a parent is deployed. The future emotional stability and behavior regulation of young children, and the satisfaction of adults with military life, depend on building a supportive, responsive environment that strengthens social bonds and trust relationships for preschool children.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Parents

1. What do you think are the reasons why your child might display challenging behavior?

2. Tell me about the strength of the bond you feel with your preschooler?

   a. What sorts of things do you and others in the home and family environment do to create a strong bond between you and your child?

   b. What sorts of things in the home and family environment get in the way of creating a strong bond with the child?

3. Describe how much you think you and your preschooler trust each other.

   a. What sorts of things do you and others in the home and family environment do to create feelings of trust between you and your child?

   b. What sorts of things in the home and family environment get in the way of creating feelings of truest between you and the child?

4. Tell me about factors outside the family – things like the preschool center, a parent group, your church community, your friends and family, your boss - that have supported your creation of a strong bond with your preschooler?

   a. What sorts of factors outside the family have got in the way of creating a strong bond with your preschooler?

5. Tell me about factors outside the family – things like the preschool center, a parent group, your church community, your friends and family, your boss - that have supported feelings of trust between you and your preschooler?

a. What sorts of factors outside the family have got in the way of creating feelings of trust between you and your preschooler?

6. How is your preschooler's behavior affected, do you think by the strength of the bond and feelings of trust you and your child have together?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What do you think are the reasons why preschoolers in your classroom might display challenging behavior?

2. Tell me about how bonded you feel with preschoolers in your classroom, particularly the preschoolers who exhibit the most challenging behavior?

   a. What sorts of things do you and other teachers, supervisors, or teacher assistants in the school environment do to create a strong bond between preschoolers?

   b. What sorts of things in the school environment get in the way of creating a strong bond with the children?

3. Describe how much you think you and your preschoolers trust each other, particularly the preschoolers who exhibit the most challenging behavior.

   a. What sorts of things do you and other teachers, supervisors, or teacher assistants in the school environment do to create feelings of trust between you and each preschooler?

   b. What sorts of things in the school environment get in the way of creating feelings of truest between you and the preschoolers?

4. Tell me about factors outside the school – things the community, in the military, teacher professional development, other teachers, your boss - that have supported your creation of a strong bond with preschoolers, particularly the preschoolers who exhibit the most challenging behavior?

a. What sorts of factors outside the school have got in the way of creating a strong bond with your preschoolers?

5. Tell me about factors outside the school – things in the community, in the military, teacher professional development, other teachers, your boss - that have supported feelings of trust between you and your preschoolers?

a. What sorts of factors outside the school have got in the way of creating feelings of trust between you and your preschoolers?

6. How are preschoolers' behavior affected, do you think, by the strength of the bond and feelings of trust you and your preschoolers have together, particularly the preschoolers who exhibit the most challenging behavior?