

2020

# Psychological Consequences of Mandated School Security Response Training

Shelise Tillman  
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# Walden University

College of Education

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Shelise Renee Tillman

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Walden University

2020

Abstract

Psychological Consequences of Mandated School Security Response Training

by

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MA, University of Las Vegas, Nevada, 2012

BS, Central State University, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

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## Abstract

Mandated active shooter drills are necessary for students, especially in high school districts, where active shooter events are more prevalent. As a result, high school administrators and teachers face numerous implementation challenges and consequences that may threaten the student learning environment's psychological balance. Guided by DeVos's theory of school safety integration and crisis preparedness and three aspects of policy recommendations, this qualitative case study was designed to explore the challenges and perceptions of a high school administrator and teachers' regarding implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting the student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. Through semi-structured interviews, one administrator and ten teachers and the utilization of document analysis of participants' responses, the study's findings indicated that an effective shooting drill should be an informed, collaborative, and regular implementation, leading to new improvements, delivering adequate preparation, minimizing fears and anxieties and restoring psychological normalcy after an active shooter drill. Furthermore, this study's results could inform programs and initiatives based on the participants' responses to promote social changes and strengthen the collaborative training efforts, safety partnerships, and community professionals while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical well-being. Further study into future research on the perceptions of the effectiveness of implementing mandated Safety Response Protocols relative to emergency operations plans and policies within public schools can help guide administrators and teachers to develop an approach that minimizes harmful effects and improves preparedness.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother, Jo Anne Davis, for her guidance and words of wisdom along this journey; my daughter, Andrea Grayson, for her support throughout this process; and my grandmother, Dolores Davis. Your influence and love have given me the strength to pursue all my dreams. In the loving memory of my Aunt “Cookie,” who passed away suddenly during COVID-19; yet, she will always hold a special place in my heart. This dedication is to my Dad, and my brothers, Eddie, Aaron, and Alex, for so many wonderful childhood memories.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Active shooter lockdown drills have become commonplace in American school security response training. Mandated active shooter lockdown drills are deemed necessary by federal, state, and local authorities. These are essential for protecting and preparing faculty and students, especially those in high schools, where active shooter attacks are more prevalent (Cox & Rich, 2018). Administrators and teachers implement these mandated active shooter lockdown drills, are often unannounced, and can cause more harm than good to education's overall objective. With student diversity, a significant component of modern educational environments, one must account for different adjustment levels that impact learning, language, and social and behavioral barriers during lockdown drills. Empirical research on the consequential psychological harm among active shooter lockdown drill participants related to supporting positive students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical outcomes is non-existent. This lack of research minimizes the understanding and support that these drill participants are receiving and can have a devastating impact on positive teaching and student learning.

For many high schools in southwestern school districts, addressing challenges when implementing mandated shooter drills and establishing secure alternatives to connect campus security may mitigate psychological consequences and promote a safer school environment (Deputy Superintendent of Support Services, personal communication, March 5, 2019). This study explored the challenges and perceptions of a high school administrator and teachers that arise before, during, and after an active shooter lockdown drill and the various types of initiatives implemented for this purpose.

This section defines the key factors that guided the core of this study.

### **Background**

The 1999 Columbine High School mass shooting attack sparked the implementation of newly created federal, state, and local security mandates purposefully designated to prevent active shooter campus attacks across Texas (Cox & Rich, 2018; Hutchinson, 2019). Authoritative agencies scrambled to re-evaluate, expand, and upgrade crisis security response training to protect schools better. In response to these demands, school district leaders, administrators, teachers, and local law enforcement must be extensively trained on active shooter attacks alertness and effective implementation of active shooter lockdown drills.

The School Safety Drill Act, School Law Enforcement Drill, Active Shooter Preparedness Enhancement Act of 2016, Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, Every Student Succeeds Act. Federal, state, and local mandates created various other state and local school safety efforts to enforce highly administrated active shooter drills (Cox & Rich, 2018; Hutchinson, 2019). These mandates were intended to protect the school community; however, many constituents view them as more harmful than beneficial. More specifically, district leadership, administrators, and teachers are directed to physically engage in actual combative practices that included hand-to-hand combat, assimilation of prison-like techniques, escaping from buildings, and preserving the lives of others, if needed to prevent physical harm (National Association of School Psychologist, 2017; NASP, 2019a). Under the School Safety Drill Act, School Law Enforcement Drill, and/or Active Shooter Preparedness Enhancement Act of 2016, many

vital components must be present in active shooter drills and initiatives which can mitigate psychological consequences in schools where these active shooter drills are implemented (DOE, 2013). First, as requested, the school district must comply with the required active shooter mandates. Secondly, compliances must prove to be conducive for its participants' safety and well-being and in alignment with promoting overall academic growth. Finally, school districts, administrators, and teachers must conjointly create an internal crisis plan that defines or outlines how each participant of the active shooter drills will share the responsibilities that would create a safer campus and improve student academic success while mitigating fears and anxieties. The collaboration of all involved during active shooter drills can build a lasting partnership where everyone can successfully thrive and build unity (NASP, 2019b).

Presently, active shooter drills are being over-used as a measure to prepare and protect school campuses (NASP, 2019b). Despite the lack of empirical research on the effectiveness and consequential psychological harm of active shooter drills, legislative mandates, policymakers, and educational leaders have failed to implement security response training and procedures that help to minimize fears and anxieties and restore psychological normalcy after an active shooter drill (NASP, 2019b). This neglect has been a significant educational detriment on public high school students' academic performance (NASP, 2019b). District, school leaders, and teachers have disregarded the impactful consequences, barriers, and perceptions from active shooter drill participants. The psychological impact of active shooter drills is evident; yet, it has minimal attributes within high school districts when closing the achievement gap and promoting a safer

learning environment as mandated by law (DeVos, 2018).

The following articles reference violent school shootings and the consequential implementation of active shooter lockdown drills as they relate to the adverse psychological and emotional impact on academic achievements. Beland and Kim (2016) explore high school shootings and their relationship to student academic outcomes using the Common Core Data Report as their conceptual framework aligned with difference-in-differences strategies when comparing other school districts. Williams, Schneider, Wornell, and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (2018) completed a quantitative study consisting of 600 high school students' perceptions derived from multiple demographics and predictor variables used to promote safer schools for better student academic outcomes. Abbinante (2017) examined current public schools' safety options-based responses related to active shooters lockdown drills and determined that the best implementation involved adequately trained responsive lockdown drill teams. National Education Association (2018) explored the importance of maintaining qualified and collaborative team members during the implementation of active shooter lockdown drills to ensure student safety under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) guidelines. Additionally, the NEA's School Crisis Guide specifically examined the crisis response team's collaborative implementation requirements to assure response and recovery effectiveness by early identification and counseling for staff and students with psychological care needs.

Aldridge and McChesney's (2018) research study evaluated the relationship between the psychological school climate and students' mental health; thus, the study's



findings revealed the need for a collaborative understanding of the school climate as it relates to mental health, and that demographic variables influenced student's individual academic experiences. Adamowitsch, Gugglberger, and Dür (2017) used a multiple-case study approach to examine a mixture of three K-12 schools. Using the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) approach to education, they demonstrated how this approach benefited school districts engaged in promoting students' and teachers' physical activity and/or psychosocial well-being, whereby the traditional regional Service Providers (SPs) topic-based approach had fewer benefits. The only drawback to the (HPS) approach was that more teachers are required earlier during implementation. Perkins (2018) completed a mixed-method explanatory study that analyzed the school crisis preparedness perceptions of 307 teachers in the state of Rhode Island that exposed barriers that diminished their confidence in crisis plans. The study suggested new school district safety implementation strategies and improved active shooter lockdown drills to build teachers' confidence and psychological well-being. NASP (2019) focused on the correlation between the low probability of school shootings to the perceived school shooting potentially and the high associated mental health risks relative to the more frequent and extensive active shooter lockdown drills' preparation, anticipation, and participation and consequential responses as an effective effort to prevent the possibility of active shooter events. The author of the study questioned the effectiveness of school safety lockdown drills and compared it with consequential student performance, increased administrative and student psychological effects, and the millions spent in taxpayers' dollars. National Threat Assessment Center, US Secret Services, and the US Department of Homeland Security (2018) guide outlines

collected data on threat assessment within public schools and proper threat management techniques to prevent school shootings (p. 1). The guide surmises that students generally display observable adverse behaviors before committing violent school attacks, which have been observed long before the planned action is committed. Consequentially, creating profiles to identify, assess, and manage students at-risk for potential acts of school violence is being done.

Konold, Datta, Malone, and Meyer (2017) conducted a systematic analysis of mandated student threat assessments as a safe practice for schools in America. They used the Virginia Statewide Student Threat Assessment Data (2013) and over 1,865 Pre-K to Grade 12 students to identify and compare serious and non-serious threats and its association with student demographics as the conceptual framework. Konold suggested the greater levels of serious school threats above elementary grade level and the characteristics of violence threats toward others shifted and that further threat assessment implementation research was needed. Philpott-Jones (2018) explored current federal gun laws within the United States as a solution to minimize the rise of violent mass shootings, especially school shootings, as they are considered serious public health crises that result in 2 to 3 percent of 33,000 annual deaths. According to the study, federal agencies have congressionally-imposed limits on conducting gun violence research related to mental illness, preventing new healthcare policies, and further research. Allison, Adlaf, Irving, Schoueri-Mychasiw, and Rehm (2016) conducted a 48-school study identifying certain schools as having “healthy or unhealthy school types” relative to the quality of student’s well-being; especially, schools with a higher distribution of students with more

psychological distress indicators based on their individual experiences. The study concluded that distressed schools are a common school type that consequently is difficult to transform into healthy schools simply by promoting healthy behavior policies.

Ahonen, Loeber, and Brent (2017) examine the association between psychological well-being and violent shootings based on research from expert publications and interviews, concluding that most mental health disorders are not related to violence involving guns. That screening method would identify a mental illness that should be researched. Fisher, Viano, Curran, Pearman, and Gardella (2017) data obtained from two nationally representative databases helped compare students' relationship between feeling unsafe at school and those with authoritative school climates. The study explained excessive violence and bullying in schools where inconsistent and unfair authoritative school climates existed. The study supported an increase in school violence and unsafe students in an authoritative climate. King and Bracy (2019) explored national administrative strategies and consequences relative to the expansion of school security policies from 1990 through the present using the US Department of Education and other research studies as conceptual frameworks to examine the effectiveness of reactionary active shooter lockdown drills.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem explored in this study focuses on the challenges of a public-school administrator and teachers to implement federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. Since the attack on students at Columbine High School in 1999, active shooter attacks and active

shooter lockdown drills have become commonplace in American's school security response training (Cox & Rich, 2018; Hutchinson, 2019). In response to these incidents, a southwestern state school district's administrators are mandated to implement frequent active shooter lockdown drills per House Bill No. 2655 of the Education Code Section 37.108. Consequently, some administrators ask whether active shooter drills are causing more harm than good (Deputy Superintendent of Support Services, personal communication, March 5, 2019). Active shooter drills have both benefits and concerns and may cause physical and/or psychological harm to students, staff, and overall learning (NASP, 2017).

The greatest challenge for school administrators and teachers in protecting students and staff while mitigating fears and anxieties (Jonson, Moon, & Hendry, 2018). A potential violent threat can inadvertently heighten the psychological consequences of fears and anxieties to all, especially at the high school level, where the repercussions of active shooter lockdown drills are understudied (Hamblin, 2019; Hutchinson, 2019). School health professionals should be involved in all active shooter drill preparations to help determine the training's efficacy (NASP, 2017).

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this qualitative study, I explored the challenges of a public-school administrator and teachers implementing federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), the foremost premise for using a basic qualitative research study methodology is to create a foundation that can measure how humans can construct the

meaning of their existence as it relates to the world. To date, there is little research that focuses on the psychological consequences of student development and academic performance while supporting student safety (Hutchinson, 2019). Consequentially, the study will broaden the knowledge base of administrators and teachers with regard to the challenges of implementing lockdown drills while supporting student health.

### **Research Questions**

To create alignment with the purpose stated, I selected the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the administrator's perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting the student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?

Research Question 2: What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?

### **Conceptual Framework**

This qualitative study's focus explored the challenges of a public-school administrator and teachers to implement federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. The conceptual framework for this study is based on DeVos's (2018) integration of school safety and crisis preparedness framework of the collaborative national efforts of school districts, principals, teachers, counselors, and local communities partnerships to develop a memorandum of understanding on how well they know their school, students, and

classrooms when developing and implementing safety policy decisions and attributes toward school discipline without unnecessary worry about undue federal repercussions. In this report's framework foundation, DeVos (2018) offers three aspects of policy recommendations that focus on preventing potential tragedies and identifying various states and communities that can help prevent violent school attacks and improve crisis recovery.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study's nature is qualitative, using an exploratory case study methodology incorporated feasible methods of data collection to include semi-structured interviews, observations, and relevant perceptions of safety documentation provided by a public high school administrator and teachers to track communications. The decision to select an exploratory study in nature is, as Swedberg (2018) posited that this creates an attempt to discover something new and exciting by working your way through the research topic.

A qualitative research methodology ensured problem alignment between the data collection method and the design while considering risks and burdens placed on research participants in a single unit of analysis. Additionally, Mills, Harrison, Birks, and Franklin (2017) posited that a qualitative research methodology is an effective and comprehensive way to explore complicated issues and world views.

For this qualitative research study, comprehensive data analysis procedures were incorporated from an administrator's and teachers' participatory perspectives within a selected southwestern Texas public high school that will accommodate large data sets from the single source evidence. This study incorporated a feasible data collection

method from the collection of semi-structured interviews provided by a public high school administrator and teachers to track communications in accordance with DeVos's report (2018).

These participatory interviews' objectives provided an understanding of the perceptions of an administrator and teachers' when implementing active shooter lockdown drills and identifying strategies to mitigate participants' anxieties. Interviews provided rich data needed to identify common themes in the school's administrator and teachers' perceptions regarding active shooter drills. Interviews are beneficial for obtaining detailed information on one's perceptions, opinions, and feelings in one's own words, which achieves a higher response rate. During this study, follow-up interviews were conducted to gain further knowledge, re-verify information to alleviate misinformation and revise responses, if needed.

### **Definitions**

The following terms and definitions will be used in this study.

***1999 Columbine High School Mass Shooting Attack:*** The deadliest mass school shooting in the United States' history took place on April 20, 1999, at the Columbine High School in Colorado. The twelfth-grade shooter's initial bombing attempt failed and was turned into a shooting spree, killing 12 students and one teacher and injuring 21 others (History.com Editors, 2020; Schultz et al., 2013). The shooter was fatally wounded by police and died on campus. This criminal event produced several copycats (see Columbine effect), and "Columbine" became synonymous with mass shootings.

***School Safety Bill 11:*** This school safety bill was passed by Texas policymakers to address the increase of school shootings following the Santa Fe High School attack. Elements of the bill included the comprehensive school safety action plan recommendations of Governor Abbott. This resulted in improving school infrastructure, strengthening physical barriers, installing security cameras and technology, increasing collaborative activities with law enforcement, and implementing school safety training. The initiative addressed significant threat assessment changes, parental involvement, mental health support, safety planning, and security personnel development.

***Active Shooter:*** Active shooter is defined by law enforcement as a shooting in progress. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) further defines “active shooter” as “one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area” (International Association of Emergency Medical Services Chiefs (IAEMSC), 2017). The term ‘active shooter,’ as agreed-upon by various US governmental authorities, including the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security, refers to “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area with the use of a firearm” (IAEMSC, 2017, FBI, 2014b, p. 5).

***Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):*** Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed on December 10, 2015, by President Obama. It clarified the nation’s commitment to providing safe and equal opportunities for all students. This initiative reauthorized the existing 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation’s primary educational law (ESSA, 2020).



***Active School Shooter Drills:*** Active school shooter drills represent various physical drills where participants engage in full-scale school lockdown, shooter attack exercises, and other options-based active assailant drills. These drills vary in nature and are a continuum of safety protocols that school districts implement to assure preparedness in the event of an active shooter (DOE, 2013).

***Student Well-being:*** Student well-being exists when a school campus has achieved a sustainable environment of positive attitude, which supports student self-esteem, mutual respect, and academic outcomes (TEA, 2018).

### **Assumptions**

This qualitative case study consisted of several methodological assumptions based on my own experience during the data collection and analysis. First, I assumed that the selected high school administrator and teachers understood the basic documented guidelines of an active shooter drill and have participated in an active shooter drill no less than 90 days before the appointed interviews. Secondly, I assumed that the administrator and teachers were aware of the consequences of active shooter drills having psychological and educational outcomes from such events. Finally, I assumed that research participants were forthcoming with accurate and unbiased responses regarding their experiences and perceptions, as this information is crucial to the study's credibility.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

For this study, an administrator and teachers within a southwestern Texas public high school were used as a potential source to reach saturation for collective data. A flexible data collection process was used in this study, whereby the administrator and

teachers participated in semi-structured interviews and different observational methods wherein they were asked to provide any relevant insights pertaining to the implementation of active shooter drills. Specifically, I designed questions that addressed the challenges and perceptions to extract valuable data from 10 teachers and one administrator within the selected study district. The decision to use structured, unstructured, and/or semi-structured combinations was determined on the needs of the sampling group's persona (Martic, 2018). These safety interviews served as a roadmap to help expose the onset of these participants' psychological consequences. The assimilation of this data was used to prepare, manage, and support the study's alignment, accuracy, and integrity. Each participant received a copy of their interview transcript and verified that responses were accurate. Additionally, all received pertinent safety interview information for the current school year. This was used to establish future trends in active shooter drill initiatives for improvement purposes.

### **Limitations**

This study was confined to a selected public high school district within the southwestern part of the state of Texas. Due to the limitation in the research of other schools within the same district, this study's findings provide a singular high school's perspective; however, it establishes similar administrators and teachers' challenges and perceptions on the implementation of active shooter drills. I used only the selected high school district's collected data as my sole provider of information for this study. My main objective was to assess and analyze all collected qualitative data from this source as the primary foundation of evidence.

### **Significance**

Through this study, I gained insight into the challenges of a public-school administrator and teachers regarding the implementation of federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, physical, and intellectual health. Public school administrators, especially at the high school level, must enforce intense lockdown drills without grounded research (Hamblin, 2019). The majority of past research excludes this phenomenon and lacks evidence-based on administrative and teacher perspectives. According to Malafronte (2018), lockdown drills can cause grave psychological damage for all students irrespective of their age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

A comprehensive study on the adverse psychological effects of intense safety procedures can provide vital information for developing leadership safety directives, strategies, and choices (Fisher et al., 2017). The study's findings have the potential to support a positive social change, which will help guide administrators and teachers to develop an approach that minimizes harmful effects and improves preparedness (Jonson et al., 2018; NASP, 2017). There is no empirical research assessing school-based active shooter drills on teachers' and students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health or subsequent legal ramifications within school districts (NASP, 2017, p. 4).

### **Summary**

Mandated active shooter drills are deemed by policymakers as a necessity for students, especially in high school districts where active shooter events are more likely to occur. For this reason, high school administrators and teachers face numerous challenges

in implementing active shooter drills that potentially pose harmful psychological effects to the student learning environment. These potential challenges and consequences must be addressed, and subsequent healthier alternatives must be established for protecting and promoting a prosperous learning environment. Such a public high school environment would heavily rely on the collaborative of the campus leadership team, administrators, teachers, parents, and the local community (DeVos, 2018). This chapter provided an introductory background for the study and stated a need for further research. In the subsequent literature review, I support the concern that school district leadership, administrators, and teachers face when implementing active shooter drills.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The problem explored in this study focuses on the challenges of a public-school administrator and teachers to implement federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. Since the attack on students at Columbine High School in 1999, active shooter attacks and active shooter lockdown drills have become commonplace in American's school security response training (Cox & Rich, 2018; Hutchinson, 2019). In response to these incidents, a southwestern state school district's administrator and teachers are mandated to implement frequent active shooter lockdown drills per House Bill No. 2655 of the Education Code Section 37.108. Consequently, some administrators ask whether active shooter drills are causing more harm than good (Deputy Superintendent of Support Services, personal communication, March 5, 2019). Active shooter drills have both benefits and concerns associated with their implementation and may cause physical and/or psychological harm to students, staff, and overall learning (National Association of School Psychologist (NASP), 2017).

The greatest challenge for school administrators and teachers in protecting students and staff while mitigating fears and anxieties (Jonson et al., 2018). A potential violent threat can inadvertently heighten the psychological consequences of fears and anxieties to all, especially at the high school level, where the repercussions of active shooter lockdown drills are understudied (Hamblin, 2019; Hutchinson, 2019).

Active shooter attacks and active shooter drills represent a significant concern for public high school district leaders and administrators in Texas (Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2018). The challenge to safely prepare and protect the school student body from potential active shooter attacks continues to be prevalent in the midst of providing quality student learning environments (TEA, 2018). Our nation's school districts struggle yearly with countless regular debates on improving current active shooter drill initiatives (TEA, 2018). In addition to providing quality education, administrators and teachers now have the responsibility of providing student protection and preparedness for potential real-life threats in an environment that should be deemed safe for learning. Williams, Schneider, Wornell, and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (2018) emphasize the significance of the relationship between high school students' perceptions of safety and belongingness to improved academic performance. This confirms previous studies conducted by Beland and Kim (2016) on high school shootings and their relationship to educational outcomes, as reported in the Common Core Data Report.

The literature review's content expresses a common trend for administrators' and teachers' need to collaborate and understand the relationship between the psychological school climate and student mental health as it relates to successful academic performance. Quality active shooter lockdown drills training for staff and team are caveats according to the National Education Association's School Crisis Guide (NEA) (2018), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to assure the effect active shooter drill response and recovery procedures (NEA, 2018; ESSA, 2020). Each review suggested that further empirical research studies are needed, especially on the topic of active shooter

drills and their potential harm based upon multiple demographics and predictor variables for safer schools (NEA, 2018; ESSA, 2020).

Accordingly, this study explored an administrator's and teachers' challenges and perceptions from a selected southwestern high school using the aforementioned studies and reports. Multiple demographics and predictor variables aimed to promote safer schools were considered to help understand and mitigate fears and anxieties resulting from lockdown drills. This chapter will provide an understanding of the research related to active shooter lockdown drills in high schools, as well as developing information about the study's conceptual framework (DeVos, 2018). The literature review section will address the following themes:

1. Historical background
2. Definition of active shooter lockdown drills
3. The effect of active shooter lockdown drills on student academic outcomes
4. Initiatives on active shooter lockdown drills
5. Challenges and perceptions of administrators and teachers
6. Suggestions for improved active shooter lockdown drills based on the study's findings and evidence.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the challenges of a public-school administrator and teachers to implement federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), the foremost premise for using a basic

qualitative research study methodology is to create a foundation that can measure how humans can construct the meaning of their existence as it relates to the world. To date, there is little research that focuses on the psychological consequences of student development and academic performance (Hutchinson, 2019). Consequentially, this study will broaden the knowledge base regarding the challenges of implementing lockdown drills while supporting student health.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The collected data from an administrator and teachers were used to manage and support the study's alignment, accuracy, and integrity. After each interview, the participants received a copy of their interview transcript and were requested to verify their statements' validity. Additionally, participant perceptions about current safety documentation were used to establish future trends for improving active shooter drill initiatives.

Each step for compiling data was evaluated using specific cycles of coding within the NVivo software for qualitative analysis. Various other software programs, such as CDV's EZ text (i.e., Thoreau, ProQuest, ERIC, Sage Publications) and Atlas.ti, were considered. CAQDAS, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis for identifying recurring themes and patterns, was anticipated as an additional research database for quick search of topic-relevant keywords; such as active shooter drills, Columbine, acts/laws/reports/guides, well-being, consequences, safety, crisis plans, well-being, consequences, school, history, and legislation. These keywords have originated from the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and my research questions. Various



databases, internet articles, and book references were obtained using authors and sources from some of their reviewed literature. To help achieve data saturation in this study, I incorporated television and newspaper articles on mass school shootings. From various sources, I have noted emergent themes, expected trends, and theoretical concepts relating to active shooter drills, implementation challenges, and potentially harmful consequences, and ways to identify and improve procedures based on historical references as it relates to successful student learning. This study provides pro and con perspectives on active shooter drills and a conclusion based on these perspectives.

### **Conceptual Framework**

DeVos's (2018) report proposed that the integration of school safety and crisis preparedness must be supported by the collaborative national efforts of school districts, principals, teachers, counselors, and local community partnerships. This report is the conceptual framework and literary foundation for this study. DeVos theorized a collaborative effort of school leadership and staff should be developed as a memorandum of understanding related to how well educational leadership knows their school, students, and classrooms when developing and implementing safety policy decisions and attributes toward school discipline without unnecessary apprehension from undue federal repercussions. Each segment of these partnerships possesses (a) sole responsibilities and tasks and (b) collective responsibilities which may overlap and yet, are crucial to the overall effectiveness of school campus preparedness and protection. A failed opportunity to carry out these responsibilities as prescribed can have devastating effects on student safety and learning.

DeVos offers three aspects of policy recommendations that focus on preventing potential tragedies and identifying various communities that can help prevent violent school attacks and improve crisis recovery procedures. DeVos later added that specific discipline alternatives, such as Positive Behavior Intervention Supports, can enhance positive school climates and improve social and emotional learning environments. Based on this information, DeVos theorized that the relationship between the absences of consistency in fair student discipline is a significant factor in the frequency of active shooter attacks.

DeVos's conceptual framework is primarily based upon collaborative leadership efforts amidst other researchers to explore various components of the basic standardized crisis preparedness plans, including addressing numerous concerns pertaining to active shooter lockdown drills. Further collected research data for this study was obtained from participants to help guide the framework's analysis builds upon the reports' previously published findings. My main focuses were the challenges and feelings of the administrator and teachers' relative to the effects of mandated lockdown drills in a suburban public high school; its consequential implementation and operative intense safety lockdowns drills; the subsequent adverse student psychological; and the emotional impact on academic achievements.

### **Policy Recommendation 1: Responsibilities are Related to Prevention of School Violence**

For middle schools and high schools, preventing school violence begins with character development education, establishing and maintaining a positive school culture

that helps students comfortably connect to teachers and classmates. Student-led efforts build a core of self-esteem and help secure a non-threatening campus environment, which allows students to stand up to bullying. The objective to keep schools safe requires consistent, prompt, and firm disciplinary responses to disorderly conduct coupled with reliable reporting systems. The need for early student assessment and identification of individual mental health concerns, medications, and addictive behaviors is required to support students effectively. Other supportive local services within the community should be made available to students. Telepsychiatry is a significant resource for supporting students beyond the school campus. State-specific anonymous outreach campaigns encourage reporting suspicious student behaviors and activities. DeVos asserts that parenting is a significant component of child development and should eliminate violent entertainment programming. Current research indicates that most school shooters obtain illegal firearms from someone they know. Extreme Risk Protection Orders require states to offer training to safety store firearms to prevent those from harming themselves or others.

**Policy Recommendation 2: Responsibilities are Related to Protect and Mitigate**

These responsibilities consist of all qualified personnel who should be part of and received practical training to protect students and teachers while reducing the effects of violence. When responding to an active shooter attack, these specially trained school resource officers (SROs), which generally consisting of law enforcement officers, are equipped to handle their own school's unique set of conditions. Emergency and crisis training resources are made available through various federal, state, and local law

enforcement agencies designed to prevent, plan, and effectively respond to active shooter drills. Every school is different; therefore, each school must develop appropriate protective measures that address its own uniqueness, identify vulnerabilities, risks, security gaps, and effectively apply available resources.

### **Policy Recommendation 3: Responsibilities are Related to Response and Recovery**

The objective here is to provide proper preparedness, appropriate response, and significant recovery from an active shooter attack. The minimization of loss of life depends heavily on prior collaborative staff training, planning, and other safety strategies.

Student safety and performance are DeVos's (2018) central objectives. Her primary premise is to provide district administrators and teachers constructive guidance for safer schools with successful outcomes. Administrators, teachers, and community professionals can work collaboratively to strengthen relationships, promote a safer school, and improve student performance.

### **Historical Background**

Historically, school safety has been a significant concern and a problematic issue of district school leaders, administrators, teachers, parents, and students for decades. Federal and state policymakers have created and revamped hundreds of educational safety guidelines and standards. This chapter summarizes various early disasters and the subsequent impact on school-based crisis intervention and safety plans. Children's mental health services are deemed to be the critical foundation for first crisis intervention and prevention. The State Department of Education (TEA), which governs schools, has established a summary of its school crisis planning's current status to consist of federal

legislation and mandates supporting safe schools nationwide. This political support promotes a paradigm shift in crisis response training from solely addressing students' physical needs to ongoing mental and emotional health needs (Abbott, 2018a). From this perspective, this study's purpose provides a historical synopsis of school-based crisis intervention, response training, and the evolution of safe school planning. The increased number of school tragedies and/or potential threats has laid the foundation for a heightened concern and development of innovative school-based crisis intervention and prevention. The study purports a list of international, national, community, and school-related disasters and events summarized in Chapter 2.

If one is to fully understand school-based crisis intervention's historical groundwork and expound on areas of improvement, one must examine previous school tragedies. History affords us valuable information from previous school events, past leadership, and coordinated responses, both triumphant and faulty decisions, the latter, which severely impeded student education and/or restoration of campus normality. Each school touched by a crisis has struggled to restore campus normality and leaves behind memories of its tragedies, challenges, consequences, and heroism. The following accounts of modern history school disaster are but a small sample of the schools impacted. These schools demonstrate the overwhelming need for safety crisis planning and preparation to meet their individual school's needs. These drills' effectiveness is being questioned by public school districts, educators, and even law enforcement as causing more harm than good with the risk potentiality to undermine effective school safety planning and student learning.

## **Active Shooter Events Impacting Children's Mental Health Care**

### **Before Columbine (21st Century)**

In 1937 Rusk County, Texas, New London Consolidated School Aoghs.org Editors (2020) posited a gas leak ripped through the school (Aoghs.org Editors, 2020), killing nearly 300 students and teachers. During a 2001 interview, Molly Ward, one of the survivors, shares her experience (Aoghs.org Editors, 2020; Oxford University Press, 2008). She was ten years old at the time of the explosion and recalled many staying in their homes for days, weeping uncontrollable and could be heard from nearby homes. No mental health services or counselors available to help surviving children or adults cope, so they suffered in silence without comfort for weeks. The tragedy was “never addressed once resumed until the day we graduated” (Aoghs.org Editors, 2020). In response to this event, the Texas legislature proposed placing an odor with natural gas to alert people of a gas leak. This promoted expeditious national legislation passed mandating gas companies to conform as a precautionary measure to prevent future occurrences (Aoghs.org Editors, 2020).

In the 1950s, the United States Department of Education Civil Defense's Duck and Cover Campaign Initiative protected the student from nuclear attacks and established protocol for earthquakes and tornado drills (Oxford University Press, 2008). There were increasing United States concerns that Russia was planning a nuclear war attack filtered into the public-school system (Oxford University Press, 2008). Consequently, the US Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) initiated an atomic attack threat prevention campaign to educate schools on nuclear attack safety procedures. This

campaign sparked the development of fallout shelters and the Emergency Broadcast System. The FCDA corroborated with the DOE to prepare schools and students for the possibility of a nuclear attack (US Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. 8). Many of these efforts were criticized (Oxford University Press, 2008; US Department of Homeland Security, 2006) and constituted a move beyond school-based crisis prevention programs' infancy. A children's animated movie, "Bert the Turtle," was created to illustrate how students can help protect themselves against a nuclear explosion, which taught them to "duck and cover" their faces as they drop to the ground to protect them against falling debris, radiation burns, and flash burns.

Many schools within large cities began "cover" or "sneak attack" air raid tactic drills during this decade. During these drills, the students were instructed to use their desks as shields to protect themselves when the teacher yelled, "Drop" (Pruitt, 2019; US Department of Homeland Security, 2006). Today, schools no longer utilize "duck and cover" drills; however, the development of similar safety practices have been implemented and performed to protect students from threatening tornadoes and earthquakes threats (TEA, 2018). Subsequently, major controversy remains as to whether the benefits of students participating in specific security drills outweigh the increasing psychological and emotional aftermath of students involved (Pruitt, 2019). In Austin, Texas, on August 1, 1966, a former US Marine killed his mother and wife before taking the lives of 16 people, wounding approximately 30 others on the University of Texas, Austin campus, and was killed during the incident (History.com Editors, 2019).

On July 15, 1976, in Chowchilla, CA, a Chowchilla School Bus Hijacking involved 26 young students and bus drivers abducted by three gunmen, and yet, the victims all survived the incident. At the time of the rescue, the primary focus was on the children's physical condition, and no crisis healthcare was given to support their emotional state (Oxford University Press, 2008). The television news program "48 Hours" conducted a follow-up report on the children involved in this devastating event (CBSNEWS.com, 2020; Oxford University Press, 2008) and concluded that these children were still highly traumatized from their experience because they had not received any immediate or ongoing mental health care or emotional support.

CBSNEWS.com (2020) followed the children's post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, emphasizing the need for emotional first aid following such trauma. This incident, and its similarities to the 1942 Coconut Grove Fire, which occurred in a popular nightclub and the second deadliest fire in American history (CBSNEWS.com, 2017), drew attention to the immediate emotional needs of survivors, ongoing psychological adjustments, and the promotion of mental health support services for children in crisis.

Crisis intervention proponents emphasize the importance of long-term recovery protocols for victims as a response to prompt mental and emotional first aid (NASP, 2019a). In March 1994, Clinton's administration promoted the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Oxford University Press, 2008; US DOE, 1995). One goal specifically focused on a school safety commission in the year 2000 whereby America's schools would be ridden with violence, drugs and provided a safe and disciplined environment conducive for learning (Oxford University Press, 2008; US DOE, 1995). Additional



supportive school safety federal legislation, such as the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 (SDFSCA), was added to strengthen its core foundation. The previous SDFSCA of 1986 was now extended to provide extra funding for crisis prevention, educational resources to discourage substance abuse, school security enhancements, advanced training, and technological assistance (Oxford University Press, 2008). This improved act created “safe zones” beyond the physical school campus that added increase daily safety protection for students traveling back and forth to school. Additional legislation, such as the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA), addressed severe disciplinary repercussions for students possessing firearms on the school campus (Oxford University Press, 2008). Students were expelled from school for one year with allowances made on an individual basis. School districts that were not in compliance with this initiative risked the loss of federal funding from sources such as grants from Improving America’s Schools Act and/or the Gun-Free Schools Act, which were contingent on one another. These federal legislative initiatives demanded the creation and implementation of increased school safety measures (Oxford University Press, 2008).

*October 16, 1991 - Killeen, Texas, Luby’s Cafeteria* - A disgruntle gunman crashes his truck through the wall of a Luby’s Cafeteria and shoots and kills 23 people before turning the gun on himself (Payne, 2018).

*May 21, 1998, Springfield, OR Thurston High School shooting* – involved an expelled student opening fire in the school’s cafeteria, killing two and wounding 25 others after taking the lives of his parents. Shortly after the Thurston High School in May 1998 and to prevent potential school tragedies, President Clinton instructed the DOE on

June 13, 1998, to establish guidelines that would help parents and schools identify and effectively respond to troubled students who displayed aberrant behaviors. This action sparked the publication of “Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools” issued by the Department of Education in August 1998 (Oxford University Press, 2008; US DOE, 1998-08).

To broaden the national focus on school crisis intervention protocol, US Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, introduced the governmental publication, “Practical Information on Crisis Planning,” a guide developed to offer crises planning and implementation information to schools and communities that covered school violence, terrorist attacks, and other school natural disasters (DOE, 2003). Schools were issued federal funding to support and strengthen crisis planning collaboration. One of the guide’s suggestions on crisis school planning entailed that each school district must outline crisis planning in four sections, including preparation, crisis responses, preventative and mitigation, and post-recovery. Paige introduced significant federal school funding of \$30 million for 2003 and 2004 to strengthen school crisis plans.

*April 20, 1999, Littleton, Colorado, Columbine High School Massacre* - Eighteen-year-old Eric Harris and 17-year-old Dylan Klebold kill 12 classmates and one teacher before dying by suicide in the school library (History.com Editor, 2020). Death toll: 15 Injured: 24, Galvanizes federal and state support for safe schools, Clinton initiated national conferences on school safety (History.com Editor, 2020).

**After Columbine (2<sup>1st</sup> Century)**

*May 16, 2003 - Rod Paige, U.S. Secretary of Education* - published the *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools & Communities* (Oxford University Press, 2008). The DOE designed Model School Crisis Plans, which expanded beyond school violence to include school crises (Oxford University Press, 2008).

*November 5, 2009, Fort Hood, Texas* - A military major kills 14 and injures 32 others on a campus shooting rampage and was taken into custody Vogel, Horwitz & Fahrenthold, 2012). In 2011, President Obama signed Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8 (Brown, 2011; FEMA 2013, p. 2), which was designed to strengthen the security and resilience of the United States of America through organized prevention and preparation for potential threats that pose a high risk to the safety of the Nation (Brown, 2011; FEMA 2013).

*December 14, 2012, Newtown, Connecticut, Sandy Hook Elementary School* - The lives of 20 elementary students and staff members were taken during this incident before the gunman took his life just hours before killing his mother (Vogel, Horwitz, & Fahrenthold, 2012). The existing Elementary and Secondary Education Act, amended in 2001 by President Obama, dealt with school safety issues about these schools (DOE, 2020). Elementary and secondary school safety was significantly addressed in ESEA Title IV, Part A, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and Communities Act (Addington & Gardella, 2018; DOE, 2020; King & Bracy, 2019). A special provision on students attending unsafe schools was clearly defined in the legislation entitled: 65 Unsafe School

Choice Option that was later amended and is known as the Clery Act (McCallion & Skinner, 2012).

As a result, the Columbine shooting in 1999 sparked the development and introduction of thousands of new legislation about gun control, regulatory sales, civil, criminal justice, and mental health concerns; yet, only a few were passed into law (Addington & Gardella, 2018; King & Bracy, 2019, p. 281). The Committee on Education and the Workforce of the US House of Representatives in 2013 conducted hearings on protecting students and teachers following the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012 (Scott, 2018). School safety experts attended these roundtable hearings to contribute knowledge and solutions on school security equipment, mental health, emergency 66 operations plan, school climate, and resource officers. Consequently, they failed to discuss the options-based response, lockdown response, Zero-tolerance policies, and/or high school police presence that would have made meaningful improvements to active shooter events as specified in the initiative Protecting Students and Teachers: A Discussion on School Safety in 2013 (King & Bracy, 2019). “Despite more than 230 school shootings since the December 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the committee has not held a hearing to address this public health crisis since February 2013. As a result, Democrats are urging the Chairwoman to show leadership on the issue and schedule hearings” (Scott, 2018, p. 1). The pursuit of this initiative, efforts to build trust between students and teachers, is the best way to prevent school violence and promote safe schools for practical.

The School and Campus Enhancement Act of 2013 provided all public-school campuses resources to improve security procedures, emergency equipment, safety plans, and response training (Congress.gov, 2013). With assistance from many federal authorities, the Department of Education developed the 2013 Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans to be audited for its grant recipients (DOE, 2013). This act was initially developed in response to Obama's Presidential Directive Number Eight, with the Sandy Hook shooting event profoundly influenced the guide's recommendations on active shooter responses. This section pertains to 67 active school shooter response recommendations as an options-based solution which relies on four main subsets which include; School emergency management planning; development, implementation, and collaboration of the school Emergency Operations Plan (EOP); form, function, and content of the school EOP; and specific topics such as active shooter, school climate, psychological first aid, and communication (FEMA, 2013). This school planning guide focused on protecting, mitigating, first-response, recovery, and resources to assist schools with developing high-quality EOPs, and newly created technical assistance center known as Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) under the directives of the Department of Education.

Columbine's mass shooting influenced states to delve deeper into legislation on school emergency operations plans to pass bills on how and when emergency operations plans should be written. Texas Education Code Sec. 37.108 mandated schools to develop an EOP to be reviewed annually by representatives from the local school board, the principal, teachers' union representative, fire, police, and emergency medical

departments to be filed with the regional superintendent each year (FEMA, 2013; Texas.Public.Law, 2020). The law mandated that each school conduct five-yearly drills with three crises-natured drills, one of which consists of an active shooter event initiated by law enforcement to be staged with students and the fire department attendance. The Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans was explicitly designed for many districts to adhere to; yet, only Ohio 69 specifically mandated their schools to adhere to active shooters' options-based response (FEMA, 2013). Following the Sandy Hooks event in 2012, Texas policymakers were met with severe opposition, proposing that teachers and principals be equipped with classroom firearms (Abbott, 2018a). By 2013, more than 80 bills from 33 state legislatures favored school personnel carrying firearms on campuses (Heim, 2018). Consequentially, Texas passed state-wide legislation that allows school personnel to carry guns on school campuses (TASB, 2019, p. 1).

In response to the deadly Columbine shooting of 1999 and support of student mental health, federal policies were developed by The U. S. Department of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice, now referred to as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2020). This five interconnected part initiative targeted mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally challenged students was designed to help them learn and feel safe in their schools; addressed promoting a safe school environment and policies; substance use, violence prevention, and early intervention; school and community mental health services; early childhood social and emotional development; and collaboratively support schools and districts. As a result, a study reported fewer students witnessing violence and/or involved in a violent incident. It

further concluded that the student body and staff did not feel safer within their school; however, they felt safer in the surrounding community. As a result of the Sandy Hook tragedy, the National Association of School Psychologists discussed best practices for creating safe and successful schools in their publication, “A Framework for Safe and Successful School Environments” (NASP, 2019b). The first best practice mentioned involves integrating services through collaboration, suggested that when community-based service providers and school staff collaborate, safe and successful learning environments are evident. Integrated services lead to sustainable and comprehensive school performance outcomes that include safety planning, among many other collaborative efforts (NASP, 2019b).

*November 5, 2017, Sutherland Springs, Texas, First Baptist Church - An Air Force gunman opens fire on a small church claiming the lives of 26 and wounding 20 others before turning the gun on him (Cai & Fernandez, 2020). Despite having a domestic violence conviction against him, he could purchase firearms before the shooting.*

*May 18, 2018, Santa Fe, Texas, Santa Fe High School - A student opens fire inside the high school, killing ten students and teachers with a gun owned by his father (Cai & Fernandez, 2020). At the time of the incident, the school had an active shooter plan and installed police officers on the campus. The school district had intended to arm teachers and staff during a marshal program but never implemented it. The attacker was charged with capital murder.*

*August 3, 2019 - In El Paso, Texas, Wal-Mart Store - A gunman opens fire inside a Wal-Mart store killing 22 people, and the case was treated as domestic terrorism and hate crimes (Cai & Fernandez, 2020).*

### **Mandated Active Shooter Drills Laws and Legislations**

As early as 2013, and in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in December 2012, many US schools added active shooter drills, referred to as “intruder drills,” to supplement the existing fire drills tornado training (Shah, 2013). States began to adopt new school safety laws requiring expeditious development to implement simulated annual active shooter safety drills to improve upon state agency reporting, safety planning, and effectuated school security audits (Shah, 2013). Many legislative proposals imposed the arming teachers, adding armed school police and thicker school walls and steel doors, and/or the implementation of law enforcement lockdown drills were severely met with national opposition. State Sen. Missy Irvin, a Republican, expressed, “After the Sandy Hook’s shooting, there is no reason in the world we should not be practicing mandated active shooter drills.” Consequently, the evidence of irregularities in mandated active shooter drills compliances indicated that two out of three schools skipped practice sessions, conducted too many or too fewer drills as mandated by the state, conducted drills too close to the end of the school year, and/or submitted incomplete or reports missing pertinent documents which could impede the school’s accreditation, and solidified that more training and resources were needed (Shah, May 2013).



**Response ACT Introduction**

The Response Act was created by Texas Senator John Cornyn on October 23, 2019, and approved as a direct means to minimize mass shootings nationwide. It gained media attention, especially in Texas and other cities that had been targeted; especially, El Paso, Midland-Odessa, Orlando, Las Vegas, Santa Fe, Sutherland Springs, and Newton. This act was designed to restore, enhance, strengthen, and expand our nation's former efforts against massive violent acts. Additional improvements were aimed to revamp nationwide outpatient mental health services, staff training, patient treatment, and mental health intervention that included the criminal justice system. Upon further investigation of the Midland-Odessa shooting incident, the shooter had failed his background check. Under the Response Act, unlicensed gun dealers' sales are thoroughly investigated, and those found guilty of selling firearms without legitimate background checks were prosecuted (Cornyn, 2019).

**The “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB)**

Currently known today as ESSA, this comprehensive educational reform initiative was enacted to respond to an increased focus on school reform and accountability and reauthorized the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was the first federal law affecting education all students K–12. President George W. Bush penned this initiative on January 23, 2001, which included school safety initiatives requiring all schools to improve upon existing safety plans by states defining, tracking, and reporting the most “persistently dangerous schools,” to ensure a safe learning environment for all students (DOE, 2020). Apart from focusing on achieving safe school environments from

violent attacks, school fires presented school districts' primary safety concern in protecting school campuses (Oxford University Press, 2008).

President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015, which was beneficial for the nation's schools as it reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (DOE, 2020). This 50-year old standard governed national education laws and equal opportunity for all students. The new law enhanced key educational areas, such as significantly improved graduation rates and decreased dropout rates with more students going to college based solely upon the collaborative efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country. These accomplishments provided a solid foundation for further expanding learning opportunities and using ESSA to improve student outcomes. In 2002, the new and improved version of "No Child Left Behind" was enacted. The NCLB's significance provided focus on where students were improving academically and where additional unbiased support was needed (DOE, 2020). In turn, Congress enacted the Every Student Succeeds Act to reflect the educational priorities of this administration.

Following the 2016 attack on Sunderland Springs Church mass shooting spree, the Weapons in Places of Worship law was passed. This law made it legal for licensed handgun owners to carry firearms in places of worship. This sparked Governor Greg Abbott on May 30, 2018, to devise a School Safety Plan that provided mental health screenings, expanded school safety protection, restrictions on gun usage, and recommendations were incorporated to enhance schools marshal program (Abbott; 2018a); many of which were passed as bills during the 2019 legislative session. On June

8, 2018, Governor Greg Abbott created a reporting system that would give Texans the ability to report potential community and school threats (Abbott, 2018a). The implementation of this reporting software application was underway before the Santa Fe shooting. In 2014, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released its first series of reports covering active shooter incidents in the United States, following the signing of the Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012 (FBI, 2014a). These reports focused on active shooter events from 2000 to 2013 in various settings. The spotlight focused on all educational sector levels as it is the second most common environment for active shooter events behind those committed in commerce settings. On August 22, 2019, Governor Greg Abbott held several roundtable discussions to address active shooter legislative initiatives (Cai & Fernandez, 2020). These discussions sparked the Texas Safety Commission's development, which consisted of various state leaders, state leaders, legislators' and law enforcement agencies. The Commission expanded background checks, banning assault weapons, and implemented "red flag" laws that allow courts to seize the guns from those deemed dangerous legally. Abbott's Eight Executive Orders on September 5, 2019, were issued in response to the El Paso and Odessa, Texas mass shooting in August 2019 (Cai & Fernandez, 2020). The orders were designed to strengthen law enforcement's ability to prevent future mass shootings by improving reporting channels.

### **Mandated Active Shooter Drills**

House Bill 2655 "BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS: SECTION 1. Section 37.108, Education Code, as amended by adding

Subsections (f) and (g) to read as follows: (f) a school district shall include in its multi-hazard emergency operations plan protocol for responding to an active shooter emergency in a district facility. The protocol requirements allow for school drills and exercises to prepare for an active shooter emergency as part of the mandatory school drills and exercises under Subsection (a) (2). (g) The commissioner shall adopt rules providing the number and content of mandatory school drills required under subsection (f). In conjunction with this bill, it is required that the Commissioner seek consultation from a scholarly university proactively committed to active shooter response training (Keys to Safer Schools.com, 2020).”

Following the Santa Fe High School shooting event, school safety plans initiated by Governor Greg Abbott in 2018 offered recommendations that were included in the School Safety Plan Bill, which required Texas schools’ districts to implement emergency crisis plans within the schools. Additionally, he initiated the removal of the School Marshal Firearms Cap within the School Safety Plan Bill, which restricted the number of school marshals who could carry firearms at school (Abbott, 2018a; 2018b). Under the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, each state that receives federal funding must have in effect a law which grants educational districts the authority to expel a student for one year or longer if determined that the student brought or found in possession of a firearm on the school campus (McCallion, 2008). This law authorized the school’s community’s chief administering officer the ability to modify the firearm’s penalty regarding written expulsion on a case-by-case basis. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 (SDFSCA) authorized additions to the 1994 Elementary and Secondary

Education Act (ESEA) (Title IV, §§ 41114116, 20 USC 71117116) and is a significant part of the government's ongoing efforts to establish and promote a safe, disciplined, and drug-free school learning environments which help students combat challenging academic requirements (McCallion, 2008). The SDFSCA is a youth violence prevention program with activities primarily designed to provide school and local support against violence, substance abuse, and other misguided behaviors. It is various State-wide developmental, intervention, and preventive programs supported by federal grants for local schools' districts and community-based organizations (McCallion, 2008).

Former Texas State Representative Jason Villalba, R-Dallas, created a school marshal program entitled "*The School Marshal Program,*" which allowed school workers to carry firearms following the Sandy Hook School shooting (Cai & Fernandez, 2020).

The *Campus Carry* law was signed on April 1, 2016, requiring all 50 states to permit public universities license-holders to carry a concealed firearm in classrooms, dorms, and other campus buildings (Cai & Fernandez, 2020). The 2015 *Open Carry* bill designed by Rep. James White, R-Hillister, was implemented to permit license-holders to openly carry handguns within a hip or shoulder holster in public. Many law enforcers opposed this bill, stating that it would identify the innocent from those committing a crime. In response, Rep. White charged that this change would not significantly impact the existing concealed carry law (Cai & Fernandez, 2020).

According to *The National Education Association*, the development of crisis guides to assist school district leadership, administrators, and state and local businesses

with options to improve their safety crisis plans. The guide provides our nation's schools and school districts an opportunity to develop comprehensive preparedness, prevention, and recovery crisis plans beyond the standardized state and district mandates to meet their schools' unique needs to handle any disaster. According to NEA (2018), many states and school districts have passed legislation that requires schools to have crisis plans readiness available and must be reviewed annually by schools' administrative leadership.

*The School Law Enforcement Drill ACT* was passed to amend the School Safety Drill Act, which states that within the first ninety days of each school year must have at least one on-campus law enforcement active threat and/or active shooter drill conducted during regular school hours while students are present. This mandate required that the appropriate local law enforcement agency be required to observe the drill's administration.

*The Active Shooter Preparedness Enhancement Act of 2016* in General: "Subtitle H of title VIII of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 USC 451 et seq.) was amended include the following new section: SEC. 890B. ACTIVE SHOOTER AND MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT RESPONSE ASSISTANCE: (a) In General: The Secretary, in consultation with the Attorney General and the heads of other Federal agencies as appropriate, shall develop and make available to state, local, tribal, territorial, private sector, and non-governmental partners guidance to assist in the development of emergency action and response plans for active shooter and mass casualty events in public and private locations, including facilities that have been identified by the

Department as potentially vulnerable targets” (Congress.gov, 2016). Within the *Comprehensive School Safety Initiative*, this school safety initiative provided over \$75,000,000 in continued grant awards for further implementation research and evaluation on school safety interventions that would support local school districts and educational partnerships within the existing comprehensive school safety initiative fiscal year 2014. As an extension of this committee, the NIJ must submit an audit of the appropriation of these funds with 120 days of funds implementation and provide a strategic development plan and model on the progress of the comprehensive school safety as required by Public Law 113–76.

### **The Transformation of Crisis Plan in Schools**

The standard problematic evolution of school crisis plans commenced with implementing fire drills and has continued today as schools nationwide struggle with crisis plans. The main challenge is defining and executing well-thought-out crisis prevention, intervention, and post-intervention preparedness plans tailored to meet each school’s needs to ensure significant results from paper to action. During the interim, school-based crisis planners face opposition when complying with state and federal mandates; establishing effective crisis plans and alternatives which adequately meet the challenging demands of each school (Oxford University Press, 2008); immediate response to ever-evolving crises plans as new crises develop, recruiting the best-qualified talent for designated responsibilities in all aspects of the crisis; especially supporting the emotional needs of the students after a crisis (Oxford University Press, 2008).

The funding of federal and state initiatives is critical and needed to assist in a school implementing the mandates; otherwise, complications arise; such as NCLB that initially created soft money for competitive Safe School grants used to hire federal and state staff positions and to further safety training and development of crisis plans. Such efforts quickly dry up as national budgets tightened, leaving an initially flourishing system with insufficient resources to effectuate school-based crisis intervention programs. Additionally, federal funds for school safety support have been weaned from the initial driving force resulting in meager resources for local school districts.

School-based administrative crisis intervention leadership questioned the extent of professional knowledge and resources to protect schools and their students. It is paramount that educators focus their existing expertise and resources at the grassroots level to ensure adequate crisis intervention. Subsequently, prompt mental health services must exist within a school-based crisis intervention plan to support all emotionally traumatized individuals on campus (Abbott, 2018a; NASP, 2017; NEA, 2018), especially in cities within Texas; such as El Paso, Odessa, Sutherland Springs, and Santa Fe, where it is considered to be a persistent potential threat for mass school attacks.

### **National Security Domestic Violence**

Unlike any time in America's history, the United States is indubitably facing extraordinary, unprecedented national domestic threats and violence on her soil, buildings, and schools. Mass school shootings appear to be leading this phenomenon across the country sparked by a political, hate crime, and/or a terrorist component, which has resulted in hundreds of lives, mostly school-aged children. Policymakers, school



officials, teachers, parents, and communities have been scrambling to make sense of this type of violent devastation. They are actively developing and implementing active shooter drills' initiatives and safety programs to resourcefully prepare our nation's school campuses for potential domestic violence threats. Under stably, there are no quick fixes, and "one plan does not fit all." The complexity of this issue centers mostly upon youth's secure accessibility firearms, and the nation's unaddressed mental health issues, fair student discipline, and adverse peer influences (Hoffman, 2019). Social media platforms and heightened television exposure are vastly responsible for notorious replicas or "copycats" occurring far too frequently. Our society is inundated with left-winged political groups of racists, conspiracy theorists, anti-Semites, xenophobes, and others that prey on a broad audience appealing to and target like-minded individuals are more susceptible and influenced to repeat the same behaviors (Hoffman, 2019). As a country, we need to understand that domestic threats and/or violence upon our nation should not be tolerated, and all segments of this form of criminality must cease. President Trump's reorganization of the National Counterterrorism Center and the Department of Homeland Security has leveled the playing field on our national intelligence since the following national threats effectively combat this menace (Hoffman, 2019).

In the Michigan school bombing at Bath School, Bath County, on May 18, 1927, a school bombing occurred in Bath County, Michigan, killing 45 adults and children and injuring 58 others, nearly triple the death count during the 1999 Columbine High School Massacre (Oxford University Press, 2008). This incident is among the worst school disasters in US history but only remember by those communities where it occurred. The

disgruntled school board member riddled with financial farm tax problems became upset with the district's decision to build a new school with the newly approved taxes. In response, the assailant targeted both his farm and a nearby school resulting in the murders of 38 children before taking his own life, never knowing the extent of his malicious devastation to a community.

Before the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the most destructive domestic terrorist act upon America's soil was the Bath County massacre (Oxford University Press, 2008). In response to this disaster, Michigan's Governor Fred Green directed the Bath Relief Fund, whereby citizens could donate money to assist the community. At the same time, Michigan's Senator James Couzens contributed to building a new schoolhouse. The University of Michigan constructed a plaque in memory of the victims as schoolchildren throughout Michigan contributed pennies to fund this lasting memorial (Oxford University Press, 2008).

On April 19, 1995, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building located in Oklahoma City, OK, suffered a death toll of 168 that included 19 children and over 500 injured (McAndrew, 2020). This disaster precipitates the National Association of School Psychologists National Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT) development in alignment with the National Association of School Psychologists designed to support children and schools. At the time, the Oklahoma City bombing was considered the worst terrorist attack on United States soil. The explosion destroyed a massive portion of Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah federal building uncovering further casualties in May when the

building was demolished (Oxford University Press, 2008). This federal building housed an employee daycare center, which increased public sensitivity on domestic terrorism.

The Clinton Administration was in office during this time and appeared to have the nation's traumatized children in mind (Oxford University Press, 2008). A mass memorial was constructed to honor those who lost their lives in the Oklahoma bombing.

### **National Emergency Assistance Team**

In response to the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995, the National Association of School Psychologists National Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT) was founded (Oxford University Press, 2008). The purpose of the organization was to respond to crises involving schools and children and facilitate school-based crisis teams that respond to children's and adolescents' emergencies (Oxford University Press, 2008: US Department of Homeland Security, 2006).

### **Red Cross Disaster Mental Health**

Crisis intervention plans once focused primarily on grouping the physical needs of the individuals that have been injured in the calamity. During the early 1900s, the Disaster Mental Health Services (DMHS) was added to the Red Cross to broaden its national and international crises support efforts. In 2005, the Red Cross expanded DMHS training to add a child/family division named Meeting the Needs of Children and Families (Oxford University Press, 2008). This training was specifically designed to address children's emotional needs, strengthen and expand the existing Disaster mental Health Services (DMHS) (Oxford University Press, 2008).

In 2005, large scale disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 26, 2004, have all strengthened the organization's relief efforts nationally and internationally (Oxford University Press, 2008). The emotional needs of children affected by disasters have increasingly become a primary target of relief efforts (Oxford University Press, 2008).

### **World Trade Center 911 Attack**

Americans received the shock of a lifetime on September 11, 2001, watching the repeated viewing of the American Airlines Boeing 767 crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City, which left a burning hole near the 80th floor of the skyscraper. Within minutes, another United Airlines Boeing 767 rammed into the south twin tower nearing the 60th floor. The impact of both planes instantly killed hundreds of people and trapping hundreds more in the building. The planes' collisions caused a significant explosion showering the lower streets and buildings with burning debris below. A third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, DC, and the fourth plane crashed in a field somewhere in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Under a domestic terrorist attack, Americans were believed to have been initiated by an Islamic extremist group known as Al Qaeda. Almost 3,000 people were killed during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which sparked President Bush's major U.S. initiatives to combat terrorism, both domestic and foreign.

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### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable**

This study's literature review aims to examine and build critical ideas, concepts, and operations. It transforms them into different kinds of variables, each with roles to play within the research (Hoy, 2010). The selected articles within my literature review are relevant to the study's topic and questions. Each scholarly perspective creates a deeper comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, affording me the development of a robust theoretical framework within my research methodology to establish an academic position relative to the subject in alignment with other theorists and researchers. This process will demonstrate how my research can effectively address a gap or contribute more research study subject knowledge. During the development of this research study, I can observe trends, patterns, themes, conflicts/contradictions, and

differences or weaknesses that will add validity, integrity, or hypotheses that have not been considered. The literature review consists of the following articles;

### **FBI Jurisdiction in Active Shooter Incidents**

The tragic shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December 2012 sparked the FBI to implement two initiatives that would equip its personnel to assist law enforcement partners better (FBI, 2014b). The Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012 was signed into law, which permitted the US attorney general to delegate the FBI responsibility to provide federal assistance during active shooter incidents and mass killings occurring in public places (GovTrack.us, 2020). With other cabinet agencies' support, the FBI created ways to help prevent and respond to potential active shooter incidents. Various other federal agencies consisting of the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Homeland Security, Department of Education, and Department of Health and Human Services was influenced as a broader initiative entitled, "Now is the Time" the tipping point as a direct response to the Sandy Hook shootings (Shultz, Muschert, Dingwall, & Cohen, 2013). Directed by the FBI, the DOJ was tasked with the further training and development of law enforcement and other first responders nationally to ensure proper procedures for active shooter situations were implemented effectively (FBI, 2014b).

### **ALERRT/Other Training Initiatives**

The (ALERRT) program, which stands for Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, was initiated in Texas as a response to the Newtown, Connecticut Sandy Hook school shootings situated within Texas State University. The FBI and the

Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance collaborated with ALERRT to train over 114,000 law enforcement first responders regulated by the FBI as the national standard protocol for the tactical training of more than 225 exceptional agent instructors; and later, to be adopted by many state and local police departments.

Additionally, FBI field offices coordinated law enforcement command staff roundtable discussions to discern best-learned practices, lessons, and instructions from mass shooting incidents; to include conferences on specific aspects of active shooter incidents, pre-event indicators (i.e., behavioral analysis), intricate crime scene management and evidence collection, crisis management, victim assistance, and media matters. Improvised explosive device exercises involving over 64,000 law enforcement, legal, emergency medical, and fire executives from across the country participated in ongoing preparation of future threats.

## **ALICE**

ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate and provides comprehensive, hands-on instruction solutions for active shooter preparedness and other safety and emergency measures for schools, workplaces, and other communities where a safety threat is imminent. Now part of Navigate 360 solutions of school safety programs, ALICE Training Institute initially developed from a security agency in 2000 (Navigate 360, 2020). There are over 55 million public and non-public K-12 students in the United States, and educators, families, and communities expect schools to keep their children safe from all threats, including human-caused emergencies such as crimes of violence. In collaboration with local government and community stakeholders, schools can take steps



to plan and prepare to mitigate these threats. It is believed that every school Emergency Operating Procedure (EOP) should include school shooter training describing how students and staff can most effectively minimize loss of life during an event. In response to the 2009 Virginia Tech massacre where campus safety protocol had failed (Navigate 360, 2020), improved civilian preparedness training for active shooter lockdown drills within the school system was of central interest, and procedures were developed in detail and have been widely adopted in various institutions as an effective method of active shooter response training.

### **Dallas Police Shooting**

This Dallas, Texas police shooting was centered upon a protest conducted by an organization known as Black Lives Matter, where a gunman targeted and killed five and injured many civilians. President Barack Obama and Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings recently added an open carry law causing significant confusion at the scene as police had difficulty distinguishing those legally permitted to carrying guns as oppose to those with criminal intent (Cai & Fernandez, 2020).

### **Response Act (In-Depth)**

The Response Act was fully endorsed by numerous federal governing agencies and law enforcement as a measure to help prevent future attacks as follows (Cornyn, 2019):

- Encouraging Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to Better Collaborate with Law Enforcement to Prevent Mass Shootings: This provision clarifies the intent that internet service providers and online platforms are authorized to share information

with law enforcement pertaining to incidents of mass violence, hate crimes, or domestic terrorism.

- **Prosecuting Illegal Unlicensed Firearms Dealers:** This provision created nation, state, and local law enforcement task forces designed to investigate and prosecute criminals who are engaged in selling firearms without a license or have provided false information during a background check. It also provides grants and reimbursement federally to state and local law enforcement agencies that participate in these task forces, modeled after the Project Exile.

**Expediting the Death Penalty for Terrorist Mass Violence:** This provision enacted limiting the scope of federal appeals by expeditious administration of the state's death penalties for the criminal participation in mass murder for international and domestic terrorism.

### **Expanding Resources for Mental Health Treatment**

- **Increasing Access to Mental Health Treatment and Crisis Intervention Teams:** Requires HHS to develop and disseminate guidance for each state to provide funding under the Medicaid Program for mental health programs and crisis intervention teams.
- **Expanding Assisted Outpatient Treatment:** This initiative aims to develop each state's ability to receive federal assistance that would provide mental health outpatient treatment programs to help families handle loved ones with mental illness accept treatment apart from the criminal justice system and before their condition escalated.

- **Bolstering Mental Health Funding in the Criminal Justice System:** This initiative provides \$10 million of existing DOJ state and local law enforcement in available funds to assist the collaboration of law enforcement profession partnering with mental health providers to better serve those with mental illness that complies with the use of long-acting medically assisted treatment.
- **Expanding the Mental Health Workforce:** This provision mandated the HHS to report to Congress on going best practices needed to increase mental health practitioners and better access to care.

#### **Bolstering School Safety for Students and Teachers**

- **Incentivizing School Internet Safety to Prevent Mass Violence:** To prevent potential abuse of the internet, this initiative incentivizes schools to enforce internet safety guidelines that could detect minors' malicious online activities that may lead to self-harm or violence against others.
- **Increasing Access to Active Shooter Training:** This initiative increased first responders and law enforcement access to active shooter training funds provided by both the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security.
- **Assisting School Behavioral Intervention Teams:** This provision gave the Department of Health and Human Services the authority to determine best practices on how to assist elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges when operating behavioral intervention teams that would allow them to identify students with potentially threatening violent behaviors and ensure that these individuals receive the assistance and services needed.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The meaningful and complicated aspects of the fore-mentioned literature significantly emphasize the tumultuous task of discerning the best practices and development of useful guideline from a multitude of industry professionals for attacking this phenomenon regarding school safety and the psychological consequences for the stable well-being of our nation's student against active shooter incidents and active shooter drills. We need constructive gun safety guidelines and protocols and hold criminals accountable for their participation in increasing gun violence in America's schools. Hence, educational leadership must collectively engage within a multi-faceted approach to immediately equip our nation's school communities with the required resources and assets aimed at preventing school-based gun violence.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

Active shooter lockdown drills have become commonplace in American's school security response training (Abbinante, 2017; Beland & Kim, 2016; Cox & Rich, 2018; DeVos, 2018; Hamblin, 2019; Hutchinson, 2019; King & Bracy, 2019; and Learning Liff, 2018). Mandated active shooter lockdown drills are deemed necessary by federal, state, and local authorities for protecting and preparing faculty and students, especially in high schools where active shooter attacks are more prevalent in the student learning environment (Beland & Kim, 2016; Cox & Rich, 2018). Mandated active shooter drills are frequently unannounced and can cause more harm than good to the overall instructional objective, as demonstrated in decreased positive behaviors, student attendance, self-esteem, and overall well-being (Beland & Kim, 2016). With student diversity as a significant component of modern educational environments, differences in adjustment levels can impact academia, language, social, and behavioral challenges that are not being addressed within active shooter drills. Empirical research on the consequential psychological harm among active shooter drill participants as it relates to supporting positive students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical outcomes are non-existent. This critical lack of research minimizes the understanding of lockdown drill participants and can have a devastating impact on teaching and learning.

DeVos (2018) offers three safety policy recommendations that provided an understanding of the positive impact that collaborative national support of educational policymakers, school district leadership, administrators, teachers, parents, and local

communities can have on the progress of effective active shooter lockdown drills as it relates to sustaining a positive balance within the student learning and teaching domain. The absence of national collaborative support among these constituents prevents the further development of realistic active shooter drills that enhance effective student performance across the country. Additionally, empirical research simply identifies administrators' and teachers' challenges, therefore neglecting the consequential student harmful effects. This has had a negative impact on overall student performance outcomes, student belongingness, and well-being (Husky & Connell, 2020).

Educators review active shooter drills as causing more harm than good and posing a significant negative impact on student performance. This study identifies the challenges and consequences of student behavior, attendance, and self-esteem as they relate to overall academics and other well-being concerns. The significance of this study is founded on the potentially harmful impact active shooter drills may have on student learning and teaching environments in public high schools as part of an on-going effort to improve upon the prevention, protection, and mitigation of psychological consequences.

This study centered on a selected public high school within the state of Texas. A minimum of 11 administrator and teacher participants supported the study's research and helped to reach data saturation. This high school and the participants have had on-going active shooter drill involvement and official reporting experiences. I provide first-hand active shooter drill experience within the selected high school.

To date, there is little research on active shooter drills that focuses on the psychological consequences of student development and academic performance while

supporting student safety (Hutchinson, 2019). Future research and policy initiatives regarding active shooter drills to increase transparency, standardize drills, and address effective methods of implementing drills in schools are needed (Husky & Connell, 2020). Consequentially, the study will broaden the knowledge base of administrators and teachers when faced with the challenges of implementing lockdown drills while trying to support student health.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

An exploration into a high school administrator and teachers' perceptions of the challenges of active shooter drills and the consequential effects on its participants within the state of Texas was the basis of this single qualitative case study research approach. There are four main types of case studies, including Exploratory (or pilot) Case Studies, Illustrative Case Studies, Cumulative Case Studies, and Critical Instance Case Studies. Exploratory (or pilot) case studies such as this one investigate the what, when, and how of a distinct phenomenon that is oftentimes characterized by the unsupported demonstrative details within the preliminary study without formulated and tested hypotheses leaving insufficient detailed preliminary research and/or limitation in the choice of the methodology of a specific research environment. This study explored the proposed phenomenon in context using the data collection methods to describe the case and obtain a deeper understanding of the challenges and consequences of an administrator's and teachers' perceptions of active shooter drills.

The study's anticipated findings have the potential to support a positive social change, which will help guide administrators and teachers to develop an approach that

minimizes harmful effects and improve preparedness (Jonson et al., 2018; Learning Liftoff, 2018; NASP, 2017). Mills, Harrison, Birks, and Franklin (2017) posited that case study research has grown in reputation as an active, comprehensive methodology to investigate and understand complex issues in real-world settings, events, organizations, and world views not driven by a larger population.

The single qualitative case study research approach complemented this study as the methodology focuses on the distinctive experiences of the administrator and each of the teachers from one high school district. The objective established a pattern of rationale from the participants that produced a narrative that provides an understanding of this phenomenon for the implementation of active shooter drills in a high school district in the state of Texas. As a researcher with public school administrators and teaching experience, I have first-hand knowledge of the study's phenomenon.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: What are the administrator's perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting the student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?

Research Question 2: What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?

### **Central Concepts and Chosen Tradition**

Qualitative research methods typically include interviews and observations but may also include case studies, surveys, and historical and document analyses, making



qualitative research an umbrella term used to refer to the theoretical perspective's designs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mohajan (2018) described eight qualitative research methods predominately use in the social sciences: Narrative Research, Phenomenological Research, Grounded Theory, Action Research, Case Study, Ethnographical Research, Historical Research, and Content Analysis. Each of these research methods is designed to present an understanding described by the experience of others with a contextual circumference based on their environment with subtle differences and purposes to each method. Narrative Research includes the analysis of the characteristics of the narrative text, and recently of the meaning of inter-human relations in social, historical, and cultural contexts about themselves or a set of events (Mohajan, 2018). Phenomenological Research explores the conceptualized interior awareness of individuals based on their everyday life experiences. The researcher will use this method to investigate the subjective phenomena through the life experiences of a concept or phenomenon experienced by one or more individuals. Grounded Theory is an approach to theory development rooted in the data rather than empirical testing; that is, data are collected and analyzed, and then a theory is developed, which is grounded in the data. An Action Research method is a complex emergent inquiry process that integrates theory and action to a couple of scientific knowledge with existing organizational knowledge and to address real organizational problems together with the people of the system under inquiry emerging over time within a broader range of fields. A Case Study method, as Creswell and Creswell (2018) posited, is when a researcher explores in-depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals with the structure of a case study should

be the problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The Ethnographical Research method of observation is the most intensive observational qualitative approach. It represents an approach in which the researcher engages in prolonged observations from the group's everyday life. In this type of research, behaviors, values, and interactions among the members of the group are deeply studied, described, and interpreted by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The historical Research method describes how and where the study started, how it is developed during the time, and where it stands at present, and the Content Analysis method describes the analysis of written verbal or visual communication messages. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) define it as a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of materials to identify patterns, themes, or biases.

Each phase of qualitative research typically unfolds through social interaction, and oftentimes from valuable input from experienced users in a sequence of social experiences during which the person acquires a conception of the meaning of the behavior, and perceptions and judgments of objects and situations, all of which make the activity possible and desirable (Becker, 1963). Understanding is the result of research and is due to an iterative process in which data, concepts, and evidence are connected (Becker, 2017).

My professional experience as a public high school administrator, teacher, and participant in high school active shooter drills helped my understanding of this phenomenon relative to the central concepts, validity, and chosen traditions of overall school protection by getting closer to the phenomenon through observation, participation,

and obtaining feedback from active shooter drill participants. After considering the various research methods, I believe that the case study method was the most desirable to achieve study alignment as it facilitates maximum understanding of the magnitude of human experiences and perceptions and requires a higher degree of researcher involvement within their natural environment.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative study such as this, the role of the researcher is undertaking the process of collecting concrete data that reflects the current perceptions, challenges, and experiences of the administrator and teachers that are participating in this study. I needed to be diligent in keeping an accurate, confidential account of my participants' data. During my exploration, I obtained an understanding of this phenomenon by remaining objective and unbiased to the collected data to assure the research's integrity, contextual quality, and validity. Each participant was well-informed about the study's purpose, data collection, evaluation, and findings process and understood that all communication must be open, truthful, and confidential. My objective was to make each participant feel as if they were sharing their confidential professional perceptions, challenges, experiences, and consequential feelings relative to active shooter drills with a respectful friend. Yin (2018) describes the goal of reliability is to minimize errors and biases in a study.

My previous employment as an assistant principal afforded me an opportunity to oversee the Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) of my school, and I had been fully involved in the implementation of our mandated emergency drills. I have assisted in preparing administrative safety documentation and protocol working with other

educational leaders, teachers, school health professionals, and law enforcement. For the data collection process to be effective, transparency and objectivity were significant because I had an existing relationship with the selected school's leadership, teachers, and the local community. I maintained a daily reflection journal to note any discrepancies to address these issues.

On a local level, the school district leadership is primarily responsible for spearheading all active shooter drills throughout the district, which involves the administrators and teachers among the school campus. The entire data collection process was based on the highest level of trustworthiness, which consists of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability that rendered the robustness of the study (Forero, Shizar, De Costa, Moshin, Fitzgerald, Gibson, McCarthy, & Aboagye-Sarfo, 2018). As quality researchers, we have an obligatory role in studying to mitigate false reporting to assure that the collected data accurately replicates the participants' perceptions, which will increase the reliability of the study's collected data.

### **Methodology**

The chosen methodology for this study is the qualitative single case research study with a single unit of analysis. The study's single unit of analysis consisted of the collected perceptions from administrators and teachers' participants within the selected public high school. To date, there is little research that focuses on the psychological consequences of student development and academic performance while supporting student safety (Hutchinson, 2019). According to Yin (2018), case study research offers an expanded empirical investigative viewpoint into a modern phenomenon as it occurs

within its natural environment while using evidence from multiple sources.

Consequentially, this exploratory case study helped to broaden the knowledge base of administrators' and teachers' when faced with the challenges of implementing lockdown drills while promoting student academia and well-being; thus, creating a need for relative further research studies.

Algozzine and Hancock's (2016) seven-step guideline was used to understanding the case study research process and was incorporated in this study, which entails: Selecting a worthy topic, setting the stages, selecting a case study design, selecting methods of data collection, analyzing, interpreting and summarizing data, reporting findings, and confirming case study findings. This process was followed in my case study to ensure the validity and reliability of the data and reporting of data.

### **Participation Selection**

The meaningful sampling of voluntary educators within the chosen Texas public high school for this study was achieved through a stratified purposive sampling, criterion-based, and variation of systematic recruitment sampling strategies. Since qualitative research is often context-specific, this allows for synthesizing and systematically shares findings, shared understandings, experiences, and lessons. Participants were invited from two management levels of high school groups: Campus Administrators and Teachers. Participants will engage in the one-to-one semi-structured interviews and asked specifically designed questions prepared in advance to extract the richest, most relevant, and accurate data available. The semi-structured interview process is preferred by researchers because questions can be prepared ahead of time, it allows informants the

freedom to express their views in their terms, and it can provide reliable and comparable qualitative data (Johnson, 2008), which facilitates follow-up questions.

I created an organized, clear set of open-ended interview questions and provided participants with a specific interview guide uniquely formatted for this study; however, an internet search for previously published interview questions that would enlighten the relevance of this study was non-existing. Semi-structured interviews can be informal and unstructured interviewing in order to allow the researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest required for developing relevant and meaningful questions beneficial for further responses and/or repeated interviews that are tape-recorded and later transcribed for analysis is highly recommended (Johnson, 2008). The objective for the overall interviewing process was to ascertain the perceptions of the administrator and teachers' challenging experiences and the potential consequences of active shooter drills as it relates to a positive student learning environment. The researcher selected DeVos's (2018) three policies of recommendations, the requirements of current active shooter drill mandates, literature background, and conceptual theories to formulate a solid foundation as the basis for the interview questions. The researcher will be mindful of the diverse school's culture, language barriers, and gender of the selected participants when creating specific questions. Each question will be designed to extract in-depth data that is comprehensive and in alignment with this study's research questions to safeguard integrity.

In order to gain a broad understanding of the study's data, a purposeful determination of viable administrators and teachers was ascertained to ensure the quality

acquisition of the richest data to be used for further research studies. The researcher's findings were ungeneralizable to a larger population. Shetty (2018) posited that sample size should be large enough to minimize discovery failure to sufficiently describe the phenomenon of an interest which addresses the research questions at hand and achieve attainment data saturation of valuable perceptions within the sampling. For this study, I have developed a sampling of a minimum of 11 high school administrator and teachers with active shooter lockdown drill experiences to help reach quality data saturation.

In order to commence school campus research for this study, the researcher received an official letter of confirmation from the Office of Accountability and Research to conduct interviews with school administrators and teachers; and subsequently obtained an approval letter from the selected school district presenting the study's findings and conclusion. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that the selection of the participant group requires a clear understanding of the goals of the research questions about the context and populations at the center of the inquiry.

The selected high school participates in the interviewing process with IRB approval from Walden University, and administrators and teachers will be able to contribute to this study via electronic communication. Upon receipt of each participant's confirmation, an initial one-on-one meeting will be scheduled to discuss the study's purpose, obtain participatory consent forms, and schedule a personal one-to-one Zoom interview.

### **Instrumentation**

For the data collection process, the researcher has designed a custom interview

methodology to extract pertinent and significant responses and perceptions from the selected public high school administrators and teachers on the challenges and consequences of active shooter drills (Appendix A). The researcher has created specifically formatted interview questions within a uniquely designed approach for this study; as a recent internet search for previously published interview questions that provoked the relevance of this study was non-existence. The objective for the overall interviewing process is to ascertain the perceptions of administrators' and teachers' challenging experiences and the potential consequences of active shooter drills as it relates to a positive student learning environment. The researcher selected DeVos's (2018) three policies of recommendations, the requirements of current active shooter drill mandates, and literature background theories to formulate a solid foundation as the basis for the interview questions. The researcher was mindful of the diverse school's culture, language barriers, and gender of the selected participants when creating specific questions. Each question was designed to extract in-depth data that is comprehensive and in alignment with this study's research questions to safeguard integrity.

For this study, I have incorporated an interviewing format that consists of semi-structured interviews that adhere to a follow-up question setup for further explanations/additions, corrections and provides clarity for previous participant responses. This interviewing process attempted to extract a richer, more meaningful accumulation of data responses. At the beginning of each interview, I provided the participant with a brief visual overview of the study, a copy of the interview protocol, my contact and email information, along with a further response addition card. The study's



content was derived from feasible methods of data collection from semi-structured interviews.

### **Procedures and Data Collection**

The procedures for data collection were handled strategically and systematically to assure maximum infiltration of this phenomenon and to enrich the saturation of the data. The initial phases of this study consisted of developing a structure for the entire interviewing and observation process, followed by obtaining various documented sources that will facilitate the construction of pertinent open-ended interview questions that will enrich the participants' responses. Based upon the interview format and questions, each participant was selected governed by their personal experiences with active shooter drill procedures and its effect on administration, teaching, and the student learning environment.

Each scheduled face-to-face interview was held for less than one-hour in length utilizing a semi-structured interviewing process that was conducted in a private setting at the selected participants own discretion outside regular school hours and at the convenience of the participants. This interview format facilitated communication between the interviewer and the participants allowing for an in-depth discussion of their experiences and perceptions on their involvement with active shooter drills. During each interview, the interviewer utilized various facilitation strategies as it relates to time management, maintaining subject alignment, remaining impartial, non-contributory or reactive to information, and was always respectful to build the relationship. An audio only recording application, Zoom, was used to record each interview for later

transcription. Additionally, each recorded and transcribed interview will be protected with password access on a hard drive and stored onto Google Drive as my primary source of journal entry storage. During the entire interview process, I maintained a journal to take notes from the observation of my participants' emotions, and moods to enrich the context of their experiences (Yin, 2018).

As the interviewer, I devised an easy interviewing process that has allowed each participant an opportunity to speak openly about the purpose of the study, their experiences, and will be given a brief overview of the research guideline will ample time to review their responses and/or retract any misinformation. Each participant will receive both an electronic and hard copy of the study's research findings for sharing their experiences and advised that their responses will be held in strict confidence.

### **Data Analysis**

The study's collected data was primarily obtained from a public high school campus utilizing semi-structured, Zoom interviews with an administrator and teachers. The selected school's participants' perceptions on active shooter drill plans and protocol helped to establish the study's triangulation and/or baseline from the various interviews obtained. Management of the researcher's data system involves the organization of smaller units (ex. P1 will be for participant #1) resulting from various types of data, defining the data, establishing tools for acting on data (coding/categorizing), data analysis and synthesizing, and accessibility of data which creates and maintains continuity (Balow, 2017). Each interview was recorded and transcribed immediately and checked for accuracy before data analysis can begin. Data analysis commenced with attempting to

establish trends and patterns through a process known as coding. There are two coding methods, and the researcher determined the best application for data collection based on the type of research study, which both; deductive and inductive to helped to streamline the data reporting to be discussed later in this study. The initial analysis began upon reviewing each interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data collected. Throughout this observational process, my objective was to familiarize myself with similar patterns/themes and trends within the transcribed margins of the data. Upon completing this process, I entered all transcribed documents into the NVivo software application along with the initial codes generated. This created a conceptual coded guideline that groups all data collected based on similarities, differences, and variances to identify the common denominators.

This process allowed for richer and more significant accumulation of data, which adds validity to the study. At the beginning of each interview, I provided the participant with a brief visual overview of the study, a copy of the interview protocol, my contact, and email information, along with a further response card.

### **Trustworthiness**

As qualitative research has become increasingly recognized and valued, data must be accepted trustworthy, it must be conducted rigorously and methodically to yield meaningful and useful results demonstrating that the data analysis has been conducted utilizing guideline and tools that support a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Nowell, Norris,

White & Moules, 2017). Qualitative research is referred to as validity and reliability and is critical as it calculates components which numbers are likely unable to define; as qualitative methods sometimes identify trends before they show up in the quantitative data (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000). To assist the researcher with the arduous task of maintaining qualitative research study's trustworthiness, the implementation of the four-dimension criteria or quantitative parallels that encompasses many dimensions are: (credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability) and needed to establish and analyze/assess the robustness of the study; whereby the use of different variations of these categories consists in three stages: conceptual framework, comparison and contrast and hypothesis development to reach saturation of data (Forero, et al., 2018). Credibility is the first aspect or criterion, that was established because it is seen as the most crucial aspect or criterion in establishing trustworthiness and demonstrate its truth value; secondly, it provides the basis for applying it, and finally, it allows for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions (Dye, et al., 2000) as follows:

**Credibility** (internal validity) is concerned with how congruent the findings are with reality (Nyirenda, Kumar, Theobald, Sarker, Simwinga, Kumwenda, Johnson, Hatzold, Corbett, Sibanda, & Taegtmeyer, M., 2020). Approaches to enhance credibility include prolonged engagement, triangulation, saturation, rapport building, iterative questioning, member checking, and an inclusive coding approach where all themes are coded iteratively rather than reduced to fit predetermined criteria and reflexivity.

**Dependability** (reliability) is the degree to which a study can be replicated, and whether, when there is more than one observer, members of the research team agree about what they see and hear (Nyirenda, et al., 2020).

**Confirmability** (objectivity) is the neutrality of researchers in interpreting findings; findings being free from bias, including social-desirability bias, which can be inherent since researchers' design and execute tools (Nyirenda, et al., 2020). Maintaining reflexivity is essential to managing such bias. *Reflexivity* is the consideration and acknowledgment of how one's beliefs and experiences can influence the research process, including participant responses, and how data are collected, interpreted, analyzed, and presented. However, regardless of the reflexivity involved, biases cannot be completely ruled out.

**Transferability** (generalizability) is the applicability of findings to other contexts and achieved through a thorough description of the study context and assumptions (Nyirenda, et al., 2020). This is somewhat contentious in qualitative research as it has been argued this may belittle the importance of context; and hence is an area of debate in qualitative research with a different type of generalization.

Each of the above criteria was implemented within this qualitative case study utilizing an integrated mixed-methodology framework to help identify the selected high school administrators' and teachers' perceptions and challenging of their active shooter drill experiences. The sampling and recruitment of this study's participants were achieved through a series of stratified purposive sampling, criterion-based, and maximum variation of systematic sampling strategies to recruit desired participants. Participants volunteered

from a selected high school consisting of an administrator and teachers. Since qualitative research is often context-specific, this allows for the synthesizing and systematically shares findings, shared understandings, experiences and lessons. The challenges of qualitative research are in actively managing and clarifying the logistical and conceptual validity of the study across collected data from multiple partners, various concepts and contexts within common methods at the onset of the study. This method will ensure the study's alignment offering focused analytical procedures that compliments a collective commitment supportive for "joint learning" by each partner (Nyirenda, et al., 2020).

Based on Nyirenda, et al. (2020) findings, the essentiality of establishing solid, collaborative relationships among your network of participants will significantly produce quality qualitative research outcomes by fundamentally interactive, exploratory, and comprehension of their perceptions and experiences. To ensure the study's trustworthiness, I affirmed the understanding of the local context to ensure rigorousness in the qualitative analysis without losing its value and/or solidifying my position to develop multiple rounds of joint discussions. As a researcher, I gained significant insight pertaining to the perceptions and challenges of the administrator and teachers who have participated in active shooter drill implementations to be used in future research studies.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The sheer essence of qualitative research inherently produces the submergence of personal biases, ideas, and thoughts to unethically slant the data collected to alter information when reporting data findings beneficially. The "code of ethics" is a standardized guideline that as a researcher I must be familiar with and adhere to in my

research. The purpose of the code is to protect others from being physically or psychologically harmed; to include loss of self-confidence and self-respect; it protects from intellectual property thieves and deceptive malicious practices. Each study participant and/or guardians of minors under seven years of age (each state age requirement may vary) voluntarily provided consent before engaging themselves within the research. Siegle (2020) posited that a qualitative study could not be valid unless it is reliable and transferable and cannot be credible unless it is dependable.

To assure ethical standards, all research participants provided a typed email consent to participate in the research study project and was given pertinent information needed to make an informed decision to participate (Siegle, 2020). Each research participant had the right to refuse to participate in the research study without penalty. Those universities which received federal grant funding must have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that is authorized to review all research studies conducted at the university and required researchers associated with the university to obtain IRB approval before beginning their research.

### **Summary**

The use of a single exploratory case study approach was most effective in this study for exploring a high school's administrator's and teachers' perceptions of the challenges and consequences of implementing active shooter drills while supporting the student learning environment creates an attempt to discover something new and exciting by working your way through the research topic (Swedberg, 2018).

The objective of the overall interviewing process is to ascertain credible data

collected to broaden the knowledge base on this phenomenon, improve upon the implementation of active shooter lockdown drills, enhance the student learning environment and provide valuable data for further research studies. The researcher selected DeVos's (2018) three policies of recommendations, the requirements of current active shooter drill mandates/initiatives, and literature review background and theories to formulate a solid foundation as the basis for the interview questions that are unique to the participatory school campus. The compilations of these interviews, various types of active shooter drill initiatives, and the perceptions of safety documentation and procedures created a benchmark/baseline of data that will expose the true nature of the present challenges and consequences of an administrator and teachers relative to active shooter drills.



## Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

For this qualitative case research study, I analyzed data from an administrator and teachers' perspectives within a selected southwestern Texas public high school related to federally mandated active shooter drills and supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. Data saturation was obtained from a single source of evidence. I designed the following research questions to specially address the study's purpose:

Research Question 1: What are the administrator's perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?

Research Question 2: What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?

Chapter 4 will define the setting, data collection procedures, data analysis, evidence/results, and trustworthiness of my findings. The study's summary will expose patterns and themes that arose as the collected data was extracted.

### **Settings**

This study's location was a southwestern Texas public high school whereby a meaningful sampling of participants consisting of one administrator and 10 teachers were invited to participate voluntarily in scheduled interviews consisting of a 1-hour format using a semi-structured interviewing process. Each interview was privately and

conveniently conducted via Zoom conference software outside of regular school hours. The interview facilitated communication between the participants and I, allowing for an in-depth discussion of their experiences and perceptions of their involvement in active shooter drills. At the time of this study, the high school enrollment was approximately 2070 students, and its ethnic composition diverse.

This report's conceptual framework consisted of three aspects of DeVos's (2018) report's policy recommendations for active shooter lockdown drills.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

I interviewed one administrator and 10 teachers who volunteered to participate in this research study. On obtaining Walden Institution Review Board approval, officially informed consent invitations were sent out to each participant via email. Scheduled Zoom interview sessions were completed with each participant upon receiving consent responses. I incorporated a feasible data collection method to track all communications with the participants in accordance with DeVos's (2018) report. At the start of each interview, I introduced myself and briefly provided an overview of the purpose of the research project: as a final step for meeting my ED requirement. I shared the details and basic parameters of the interview session, per the meeting's protocol, and obtained their consent to record the entire interview. I allowed each participant ample time to respond to any pending questions or concerns and reminded each participant of their right to dismiss themselves at any time. I initiated the interview process by reading the first question aloud and began journaling their responses. A Zoom audio recording app was used to record the interviews. Following the interviews, the recordings were downloaded and

transcribed within 48 hours using Otter software. Upon the conclusion of each interview, I expressed my gratitude for their participation in this study, checked the transcripts for accuracy and completed a reflexivity journal. Each participant received a copy of their interview transcript via email to confirm its accuracy.

The study's participants one high school administrator and 10 teachers, representing a diverse group of educators with varying levels of experience and participation during school active shooter drills. My goal was to obtain the most recent information pertaining to this study's topic.

The interview process consisted of Zoom interview sessions that were completed during August 20th and September 17th of 2020, ranging in varying lengths between 15 and 36 minutes. The formatted interview protocol was used to establish continuity in the sequence of questions being asked (see Appendix A), which facilitated the need to probe further. The use of thematic analysis was extremely helpful in exploring and organizing the collected data. I commenced the preliminary analysis of data by compiling and examining the interview transcripts and performing an analysis of similar responses while observing trends and patterns. I created various margin annotations with each transcript related to the implementation of active shooter lockdown drills.

Open coding is the coding process used to identify patterns, themes, and trends that are relative to the study's research questions. The use of open coding allows the data to be filtered for further analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I utilized the NVivo software to upload documents responsive to a list of preset codes in alignment with each participant's responses. As I revisited the data, I identified text segments in the transcripts and similar

responses to implementing the active shooter lockdown drill to be coded. Subsequently, I generated various codes and sub-codes categorically with other related codes. The use of axial coding was implemented to accurately combine and synthesize the codes to identify foremost revolving themes related to the implementation of active shooter lockdown drills. It is the process of axial coding that helps the researcher transfer large quantities of data from the open coding process to identify patterns, themes, and trends (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I observed a reduction in data taking place within various stages of the process by grouping codes of common theses. Upon completion, a table of generated codes and sub-codes was created from the data set.

### **Coding Analysis Process**

I commenced my study analysis by engaging in the process of data reduction activities, according to (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During these activities, I initiated the process of setting aside collected data that was not significant to Step 4: Selective Coding designed to integrate the categories allowing for further development of the data's connectivity and discrepancies. Step 3: Axial Coding initiated the separation of data pieces into more defined categories. Step 2: Focused Coding simplified the collected data even further to allow a broader observation for the ongoing development of common themes and patterns. Step 1: Open Coding constituted the formulation of the initial concepts relative to the collected data. This process was effectively achieved by critiquing the data, listening to each audio, and reading through each transcribed interview.

The next process was to commence the action of open coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To achieve this process, I thoroughly examined, reviewed, and assigned a color code to each data fragment corresponding to its relationship to the research questions. I assigned each data fragment its own unique color code area and noticed that various data fragments repeatedly appeared in one area. This process was replicated using a second step referred to as the NVivo coding method, which allowed for a more in-depth observation. This procedure allowed me to reassign new color codes to the data fragments according to the new developmental patterns that were subsequently appearing. At this level, I repeated the coding process using several other coding methods, including an evaluative coding method, a descriptive coding method, and a process coding method.

During the third step of coding, I applied axial coding techniques, through which I began to develop categories (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The multiple emerging patterns that were produced in step two: coding now shifted into distinctive categories of results. The development and use of several charts facilitated the process for appropriately rearranging and organizing the color-coded data into new categories from the coding process. This third step of coding facilitated the identification of seven conceptual categories while maintaining the authenticity of each participant's responses as much as possible. These seven conceptual categories include: school climate and overall communication, partnerships and proactivity, policies and procedures, execution of drill implementation, administrative and teacher responsibilities, effectiveness of drill implementation, and student well-being.

At this time, I decided to examine the data for similarities between each participant's roles. The final step of coding used to evaluate the raw data to access potential patterns and connections that might have been missed was selective coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This coding step enhanced the identification of four distinctive connections: purpose and prevention, implementation, training, and follow-through. Consequentially, it was during this coding step that I was exposed to the substantiated emerging connections which readily interfaced within the themes affirming the discrepancies between the schools committed to the DeVos' policy recommendations and the implementation of district Safety Response Protocols (SRPs). This process produced more explicit evidence of distinctive patterns within the participants' perceptions.

During the entire coding process, seven campus themes became apparent. The theme relative to the prevention of active shooter drills was the foremost essential fundament factor expressed repeatedly by each of the study's participants. It conferred that they need to respect the intelligence of all teachers and students that are working within each of the Safety Response Protocol's programs. The primary reoccurring theme in the data within all programs consisted of empowering teachers and students to take responsibility for their safety and preparing staff and students on how to survive within our complex world and have the freedom to make immediate decisions regarding their own safety. The importance of these seven themes will be discussed further in the following chapter.

## Results

The purpose of this section is to provide the tabulated results based on the specific responses to the research questions to characterize all of the emerging patterns and themes: school climate and overall communication, partnerships and proactivity, policy and procedural consistencies, policy and procedural inconsistencies, administrative and teaching responsibilities, strengths and/or weaknesses in the execution of drill implementation, positive and/or negative perceptions of the effectiveness of drill implementation, and success and/or system failure in student performance outcomes.

Each participant was asked specific questions that would convey their participation in and understanding of the school's active shooter lockdown drills. The participants were given alphanumeric coding to identify their unique transcribed responses to be analyzed and interpreted separately while maintaining anonymity. During the coding process, seven distinctive themes became apparent that were expressed separately by all participants. The study's participants felt that the need to develop the intelligence of those working with Safety Response Protocols and programs was an important factor. An essential common objective within these programs addresses the need to train and empower all teachers and students to assume responsibility for their own safety and be free to make life-threatening decisions.

### **Research Question 1: Administrative Perceptions of Active Shooter Drills**

“What are the administrator's perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?” This first research question examines challenges

each participant faced when implementing active shooter drills that may negatively affect the student learning environment. The administrator was given many questions relating to firsthand experience in active shooter lockdown drills pertaining to their definition of the purpose for the drills, their level of involvement in the drills, barriers they encountered by the drills, their implementation of drill requirements, and their observation of post drills effects on students.

For this study, a school administrator was defined as an assistant principal or a teacher (instructional coach or campus athletic director) who functionally led the staff. It is a role designed to strategically assist the principal overseeing assigned campus staff by providing direction, employing standardized curricula, evaluation of teaching methods and accessing student performance, engaging parental involvement, updating department policies and procedures, managing the department's school budget, and recruiting and hiring staff personnel.

**Administrative responsibilities.** The implementation of the school's active shooter drills rests ultimately with the administrator who is in charge of handling and overseeing the complete success and preparatory procedures of these events. This refers to the managerial responsibilities of implementing personnel drill preparedness training; both oral and written, securing, monitoring teachers and student safety activity, enact safety policies and procedures, law enforcement, counseling professors, community engagement protect the entire campus. The administrator should implement an active shooter drill aftermath plan, delegate, and follow-up with teachers to provide, which is



need for students before, during, and after an active shooter drill. Administrators must enforce effective communications at all levels.

**School Climate and Overall communication.** The success of a school culture/climate depends on having all students actively engaged in building a successful and positive school campus. Many students will go unnoticed and try to resolve their emotional problems; however, we must effectively become engaged in their lives to determine and understand and assist students with their needs and issues to reduce destructive behaviors and help them participate in the crisis plan positively is beneficial. All students feel comfortable knowing that there is an emergency active shooter plan in place. The art of developing a trusting relationship with your students proves to be a valuable strength during an active shooter event. Programs that involve mentorship that addresses different weekly student issues, such as, working and dealing with bullies, dating violence and other concerns are invaluable for relieving students' emotional concerns. Professional and caring counselors and teachers can provide an outlet for encouraging students through emotional times with positive solutions; and not tear down the student. Collaboration that includes students creates a positive school culture when it is designed to help build up students. We have a system in place for this, which moves things in the right direction.

Participant 2 explained that training teachers and students to know how to locate the commanding officer and how many police will be responding to an active shooter event. Students should know that if one should sustain an injury, there will be someone to check in on them. The teachers are there to prevent potential threats and save lives.

Students and teachers are taught what to do if a shooter is coming down the hall with a gun in his hand, and have the students think through this in discussion to get them serious about active shooter drills. Explain what would happen if, during an active shooter event, everyone got on their cell phones. In addition to the noise and distraction, parents would frantically arrive at the school, creating more chaos.

### **Strengths and/or weaknesses in the current execution of drill**

**implementation.** Some the reoccurring themes pertaining to weaknesses expressed by the study's participants were more regular active shooter drill training should be provided to teachers; as well as students and that many teachers are available and/or unaware of their direct roles during the implementation because active shooter drills are unannounced and that professional active shooter training should be annual and not every three years; similar to fire drills, so teachers will know what ESSA stands for. As with students, active shooter drills are not taken seriously, and many inappropriate behaviors are tolerated as teachers are responsible for controlling students' behaviors. Students become desensitized of active shooter events over time and become immune to the practice of active shooter drills and active shooter events as they have become too familiar and are not taken seriously as they were during the Columbine High School mass shootings. Teachers express that this challenge is the most difficult, and when students will not listen to and/or obey proper instructions. There is no active shooter drill aftermath plan that is needed and more follow-up with teachers to get them to respond accordingly before, during, and immediately following active shooter drills. There are no

accountability plans to locate students following active shooter drills and/or active shooter events. Students are scattered, and many are unaccounted for.

A strong collaborative administrative team is needed to protect students from active shooter events. There is never any feedback among teachers revealing their perceptions of active shooter drills. This information is needed to equip other teachers with less experience better, and professional advice should be considered. There is no real protection in place for wandering intruders who are allowed to enter the building to use the restrooms or other situations. No system in place to make suggestions on the practice of active shooter drills. Our school has never had a real active shooter event, and most teachers have not experienced one. Some teachers indicate no after active shooter plan or after active shooter drill plan in place or preventative training besides active shooter drills for students. Teachers expressed the concerns of putting your life in the way to protect students is a big thing causing psychological concerns for teachers and represents a barrier for them to get through when they have their own children at home to raise and protect. As a staff member, we need solid training to handle all these kids during a stressful active shooter event; this is a real challenge.

While some teachers are incredibly nervous about carrying out safety responsibilities and/or tasks and will sit back during an active shooter drill while others take on the challenge with ease because of having a military background and are instinctively prepared for handling immediate dangerous situations, the teachers mention the need for classroom barriers.

**Execution of Drill Implementation, Success and/or System Failure.** The study's participants all expressed the need for improvement in implementing active shooter drills as being prepared and knowing what to do is critical. A more define system of teachers' roles, responsibilities, and communication during an active shooter drill to mitigate confusion. Basic training advises teachers to get everyone down, hideout of sight, lights out, secure doors, cover windows, and lock doors, safe evacuation of the building and above all, remain quiet which is problematic. The Mandatory Training Practice of active shooter drills is required every 3-4 months, and other types of drills that should be announced prior to the drills. The knowledge of the Every Student Succeeds Act related to school safety and/or the "No Child Left Behind" and school safety protocol, programs, and initiatives for active shooter drills should be aware of, and each teacher should thoroughly understand red binders on safety. Make each student feel as comfortable as possible.

Participant 2 mentioned that teachers have a specific or designated location were to vacate the building and where to go once out of the building. The training of staff and students on how to locate the commanding officer and to ascertain the number of responding police officers is required. Students should know that if one should sustain an injury, there will be someone to check in on them. The teachers are there to prevent potential threats and save lives. Participant 2 explains, "that teachers are not part of the decision-making process on the use of available resources and/or allocation of funds for students' safety training; we are told to teach the student about keeping a positive attitude and being responsible for action should an active shooter event occurs. I have not

communicated anything about this to leadership.” Participant 2 states I was a participant to prepare teachers better a presentation and an active shooter drill, and I volunteer to teach what we had just learned to others. What would I do if there was an active shooter event while students were here? I hope I would work back to my training and the last thing we are going to do is try to fight our way out of it. The district does a great job of providing real training and goes through every single scenario possible to prepare us as much as they can. Participant 2 says an announcement comes on over the PA to announce an active shooter drill. Participant 2 says outside of me clubs, organizations, you know, our curricular sports. Our lead counseling team for the district handles those issues and provides those services not necessarily to be even someone from here. I am unaware of what resources I have used. I have not used any resources to prepare them for active shooter drills. Participant 2 says we must have posters on the walls, doors, and classrooms advising staff and students what to do in specific types of situations. We review them daily to tell where to go or some. Participant 2 mentions, “my school has a Safety and Security Committee that addresses active shooter drills that meet with teachers to discuss different ideas to enforce security in the building. We discuss why the doors are outside exit doors are sometimes propped open with a rock or similar other safety challenges that we might be facing. I do not know exactly how the school would respond during an active shooter event. I have not been informed of what they would respond after an active shooter event.”

**Student Well-Being.** Participant 2 says, “I have not witnessed any emotional or psychological trauma in any of those drill.” However, Participant 2 says that to calm fears

or anxieties is incumbent upon the teacher to reassure that it is going to all workout and that this is just an active shooter drill, and if the drill causes too much anxiety or harm, they do not have to participate in it. I cannot say that I am particularly aware of that guidance. Participant 2 says, I think we have those in our clubs and organizations. That is a way for staff and students to connect, and we have the “STOP IT” app. Any suspicious activity can be reported anonymously so that students’ needs have gone unnoticed. I do not have any concerns regarding students’ psychological drama trauma from an active shooter drill perspective.

Participant 2 says, “some of the barriers on how to get everyone to a safe place while being quiet, especially those students with special needs who have difficulty performing or doing what you say at the time you say it according to the student population I assist. The weaknesses of that there are some things we just cannot avoid. I asked our trainer, what do we do with our kids who will not duck, cover or run when you tell them to. The strength of the active shooter drill training prepares staff to determine a game plan on what to do in different scenarios.” Participant 2 how do you assist all those kids in such a stressful active shooter event is a challenge. This is something that we have not received training on. How do you help Johnny, who is freaking out and has urinated on himself or whatever? How do I help Katie, who is ready to fight? It is the teacher’s responsibility to handle so many students at various levels of emotions. The best-case scenario, if there was an active shooter, we have to think about children’s emotional needs. I must get the children ready to fight, and children will be freaking out. Some students do not want to know what to do and will call their parents. The strengths would

be preparing teachers for different scenarios, but the challenge is the emotional aspect. If we were to have an active shooter drill where we involve the students, I fear for their emotional well-being right after because and it is very traumatizing as a teacher when you have to think about yourself and your students, so I can only imagine what it would be like for students.

### **Research Question 2: Teacher Perceptions of Active Shooter Drills**

“What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student’s psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?” This second research question examines any and all challenges or barriers each participant teacher’s face when implementing active shooter drills that may directly or indirectly negatively affect the student learning environment. Each teacher was given many questions relating to the firsthand experience in active shooter lockdown drills pertaining to their definition of the purpose for the drills, their level of involvement in the drills, challenges, and barriers they encountered by the drills, their understanding, and implementation of drill requirements and the overall observation of the post drills effects on students. An aggregation of patterns, connections, and themes relative to the interview questions will be discussed in the following sections:

#### **Purpose of Active Shooter Drills**

Each study participants expressed the underlying need for relative changes in active shooter response policies to help keep students and staff safe from harm during an active shooter event. This was noted in the purpose and goals of each of the SRPs presented by the districts. Federally mandated active shooter drills are commonly

expressed by the administrator and teachers to prepare and protect students in active shooter drills.

### **Policies and Procedures**

Participant 9 mentions that teachers are trained and told many things by administrators not to tell students what could happen instead of giving too much information where someone could get hurt. P4 says, “I am not familiar with ESSA. I think it was replaced by “No Child Left Behind.” I am sure that there are collaborated efforts regarding initiatives or programs regarding active shooter drills, but I am unaware of this. Participant 7 says, “ESSA?” Participant 11 discusses how the Every Student Succeeds Act related to school safety has been revamped with “No Child Left Behind,” a better improvement for school safety. Participant 6 states that the purpose of a mandated active shooter drill is to prepare and train staff and students for an active shooter event to minimize life loss. Participant 7 states, “the purpose for mandated drills is to provide training and to protect those who are unable to protect themselves during a dangerous situation. The training is beneficial and required as designated teachers are responsible to be aware should an active shooter event occurs and knowing what to do. Training provides understanding and confidence to act, not to be afraid to act or make a reasonable decision to save lives.” For mandated, active shooters embrace the current world we live in, where the act of threat is terror. Any home front, any nation has to prepare for that real threat, and the best way is immediate exposure. The decision to fight or flight response until that moment, so any form of preparedness is better than none. Participant 1 says the purpose of active shooter drills is to give teachers different ideas or teachers and admin



different scenarios of how an active shooter could behave and also give teachers insight on how to respond with a short amount of time that you have got to make critical decisions. Participant 9 explains that the purpose of active shooter drills is implemented to prepare and protect the lives of school personnel and students in the event of an active shooter attack; and to make sure that more teachers can fake through a situation, handling safety responsibilities, and aware of what to do in all types of situations.

### **Prevention**

**School Culture/ Climate.** School Culture/ Climate involves all students, even though causing problems in life with sometimes unnoticed issues to meet all students' needs and issues to be able to reason with them to help them accomplish in crisis plan is beneficial. The students feel comfortable knowing that there is a plan in place and follow the procedures.

Participant 9 explains that a trusting relationship with your students is strength during an active shooter event. Mentorship programs to address different weekly student issues, such as working and dealing with bullies, dating violence, and other concerns, and being able to talk out emotional concerns with caring professionals that will encourage one another and not tear down the student. We have a system in place for this, which moves things in the right direction. Collaboration creates a positive school culture to help build up students.

Participant 11 says staff and administration collaborate to make certain requirements for school safety according to the Every Student Succeeds Act. All drills, training, and other school-wide practices are designed to keep students safe during an

active shooter event or other types of dangerous events. The teachers and students collaborate during the daily activity period, and mentors' use helps build strong relationships with the students. The inclusion of students' involvement promotes school safety where no student feels left out and has intervention in place to help students sort out their emotions.

**Training.** Participant 6 states the best safety practices taught during active shooter drills are to Lock classroom door, cover or add windows shields and Velcro (to limit shooter view), and barricade student within a corner of the room far away from the door, down out of sight, or get to an exit immediately, quietly and safely as possible is the main factor, if possible. If it is unsafe to exit the building from the second floor, place a barrier between the wall and students while keeping them quiet. The use of a belt to strap around handles to hold it shut, securing doors. The teacher should stand near the door to prevent the intruder from entry to further protect students. Sometimes the door locks are not working, which creates multiple safety issues. When doors are always locked, this poses a problem if the keys are not readily available. These steps are essential for maximum safety during an active shooter event. It is necessary for schools to be safe if students are to succeed academically. Participant 9 mentioned for active shooter events; the key is to have learned to stay calm, think through the situation, and get everyone to safety as quickly and as quietly as possible. Advise students to throw objects at the active shooter to distract him if approached by him and save others' lives. P6 says specific cards as codes are used to indicate that the classroom is safe, so that should the police appear no one is accidentally shot. This technique is used before, during and after an active

shooter drill. Red Binders with the necessary instructions for active shooter drills and events are located in all classrooms. Each teacher should discuss the significance of the active shooter drills to students to be taken seriously, such as, 1) Do not leave doors propped out or unlocked during school hours while students are in the building. 2) Security guard patrol the building, hallways and intruders must acquire a badge from the main office. Participant 9 mentions that teachers play as students or pretending to be an intruder entering classrooms during an active shooter drill and the use of gunshot sound effects and nerf guns are used to determine where in the building an active shooter may be. This is done to provide a lifelike illustration of what it would play on different levels; such as, 1) if we did nothing, 2) or, if we followed procedures, giving us the ability to see both sides of situations. Different types of building lockdowns and other technologies and techniques are used to react if students were not in classrooms and safely vacate the building during an active shooter event. This provided participants an opportunity to think through different ways to protect students as prevent injuries. Teachers are assigned different responsibilities depending on the type of drill. They are given a short period of time to figure out the best moves for training in classrooms on how to let student know that someone is potentially on campus that might cause them harm. We have many frequent active shooter drills without calling them to educate students on what to do if there is an active shooter event. Participant 7 mentions that SRO/Police Officers are on campus to talk with students and coordinate different auditorium training classes. The act of positioning tables and chairs to block classroom entrance does not educate students or this. If you see a suspicious backpack or bag on the ground, do not approach it, tell a

police officer and let them deal with it. We use a cue card reader or QR Code reader on the cell phone as a method to build students up saying nice things about them, not negative to reinforce a feeling of connection with the school. They all need to feel recognized for what they do, having those needs met, feeling of loneliness will cause one to lash out. Participant 5 states Police Officers provided training or a preview of an active shooter drill beforehand on what to expect, such as, loud clacking sounds to represent nearby firearms. They would replicate the sound with having them. The teams were teammates and we received lessons on how to distract the shooter, ways to run and hide, and how to make quick decisions. We always practice fire drill where we are able to walk immediately out of our classrooms. I would assign a student to be in charge should an active shooter event occur and have him run to our designated outdoor meeting place and then look back. Another student in charge is assigned as the "last guy out" with drills hind he can everyone is out of the classroom and keeps running if we can get everyone out. If not, we will barricade the door. This process requires trust. The Police Officers are brought in to introduce the resemblance of a firearm with a sound that you may or may not hear depending on the firearm what it should sound like from a different area of the building for those who never; we exposed to this level of training. There are backpack restrictions on what can be carried into class. Teachers have assigned duty stations during their off time to check doors and perimeters of campus posted at entrances and exits, checking student for their ID badges at doors each morning. Student must wear badge or go to the front office. Have a pre-assigned student in mind, someone you trust to be in charge knowing their abilities to handle pressure. Not having students exposed to an

active shooter event for the first time again could trigger a reaction not expected. The student coach twisted his knee, running out the door. Injuries can occur. Police Officers demonstrating having item thrown at them and some hitting them, telling teachers to tackle them if that is what they had to do. They prepare for some kind of harm and encourage it even. Some of the teachers participating said physical and some psychological effects in converse demonstrated were items hit them during an active shooter drill, and some were laughing while others were upset about it. They were not having a good time because they were intimidated and scared in that environment. Participant 5 and Participant 3 says administrators send out emails regularly reminding students on safety procedures. For teachers, reminders on what your role is and you're your assigned station duty is during off time. They check to see if the teachers are where they are supposed to and ask them to hold themselves accountable or be disciplined as this is important. Participant 5 says we have a Student Watch at school, in which teachers are actively promoting mental health and holding meetings looking out for those students as mentors to others. We have a Student Council Group Mentors reaching out to incoming students to be proactive on safety. Student Council mentors' elementary schools show them how to mentor younger students and the Middle Schools, which starts to spread. Because of collective consciousness and "it takes a village," we all want to be the same thing to spread good feelings. Participant 1 explains, "we do have an emergency evacuation plan. I don't feel that metal detectors belong in a school, as schools should be a safe place and not a situation of concern and creates a belief that school is not safe."

## **Protection and Mitigation Policy Recommendation**

**Administrative Responsibilities.** Participant 7 states to secure and monitor outside, do not door and using keys to permit entry and exiting the building. Principals are responsible for walking the halls to minimize disturbances and help control classroom attendance. Teachers are assigned to watch doors, keeping them locked with only one way in or out. The key is to keep classroom doors locked at all times and use a magnet to prevent locking the students out. During an active shooter event, someone can close the classroom door if there are any suspicious sounds. After an active shooter drill, counselors and/or administrators will help locate missing students. It is the district's responsibility to provide real training to ascertain what each teacher can do. High School district's active shooter live training to protect staff and students is essential. Some participants feel that the police department should train staff on active shooter drills and protocols. Participants 1 through 11 say administrators should implement an active shooter drill aftermath plan is needed and more follow-up with teachers to get them to respond accordingly before, during, and immediately following active shooter drills. Participant 11 on communication says administrators must enforce effective communications at all levels. The uses of walkie-talkies are by hall monitors and security personnel. Administrators assign teachers to monitor certain hallways. Participant 1 mentions I have been an active shooter drill, and they made us pretend like we were the students. It was a teacher training, and they wanted us to pretend like we were the students. If I could not exit the building, we would lock the doors in the room, and then I would tell my students to be ready to fight. Participant 1 says there has not been much

dialogue, no specifics during an active shooter drill on what to do with the students emotionally during an active shooter event, keeping them calm, getting ready to defend, and to get out of the building, making it challenging. What resources given from the district? I OWN started training myself to strengthen my own skills should an active shooter event occurs; to include defense training, and look for different activities to help students feel more welcomed, and created more dialogue to get to know them better by asking the right questions to target their correct interests would help. Participant 7 Not aware of administrators' responsibilities or not implemented.

**Teacher Responsibilities.** Participant 10 Teachers provided PowerPoint training that instructs them to have everyone keep moving, do not stand still if an active shooter is near as it is hard to hit a moving target. Do not make it easy for a shooter to harm you and moving makes it harder to shoot you. Everyone should have the awareness on how to response should there be an active shooter drill or active shooter event and specific codes are needed to protect lives. This will help protect the well-being of the students. Training emphasis to exit the building as quietly and quickly as possible, run for your life in the direction of your home. Participant 11 says during active shooter drill, classroom teachers were required to get everyone down, hide/out of sight, lights out, secure doors, cover windows, and lock doors to protect and keep students safe was the purpose of drills. The main essential instruction was to keep the students quiet at all times and the most difficult. Mandatory Training Practice of active shooter drills was required every 3-4 months and other types of drills. Participant 11 states some teachers were unaware of any school initiatives aimed toward preventing active shooter events. Participant 3 Teachers

are given crisis plans within the red emergency binders and given covering to place over the classroom window to prepare other teachers and students? Participant 11 explains SRO's have cameras and track everything during active shooter drill procedures in each classroom. During active shooter drills, teachers exchange roles from a teacher to a spy or student. Participant 9 says active shooter drills are unannounced. I need to escape the building from a classroom window that will not break, knowing where to position students away from windows, Etc., so that an outside intruder cannot see them. Be prepared and know what to do is critical. Make students as comfortable as possible and them that you are there to protect them. Prepare students what to do if they are out of the classroom when an active shooter event occurs. Best to have them think it through than to be unprepared at the last moment Participant 7 Communication with RSO/SRO officers has been implemented in the past two years. I have not communicated anything about this to leadership. I am unaware of a response or recovery plans or protocols that are being implemented. We always have grief counselors on staff that can meet with students in an active shooter event for loss of life or other events. In a real active shooter event, we would have more counselors available. Everyone would bond together to support each other. We have active shooter drills and procedures in place for an active shooter event on campus. We mostly have online active shooter drills online, but I would like to have more face-to-face training. We have rehearsal graphs to "suit or drill" and respond if this counts as a program. The faculty has been trained to a certain standard practice for the active shooter drills. Students are not provided with this training, and it needs to be implemented. Teachers are to tell students what they are doing during an active shooter



drill. Students are told to go to our designated area, which is another local school building. Participant 1 says, “I was just a participant where everyone went through a presentation and an active shooter drill, and I volunteer to teach what we had just learned to others. What would I do if there was an active shooter event while students were here? I hope I would work back to my training and, the last thing we are going to do is try to fight our way out of it. The district does a great job in providing real training and goes through every single scenario possible to prepare us as much as they can. An announcement comes on over the PA to announce an active shooter drill. Outside of clubs, organizations, you know, our curricular sports. We are provided yearly active shooter training.” Participant 7 said teachers must have posters on the walls, doors, and classrooms advising students what to do in a certain type of situation. We review them daily to tell where to go or some.

Participant 4 explains that the campus has active shooter drills and procedures for an active shooter event on campus. We mostly have online active shooter drills online, but I would like to have more face-to-face training. We have rehearsal graphs to “suit or drill” and respond if this counts as a program. The faculty has been trained to a specific standard practice for the active shooter drills. Students are not provided with this training, and it needs to be implemented. Teachers are to tell students what they are doing during an active shooter drill. Participant 5 mentioned that if you see another adult or teacher without their ID badge, they are asked to put it on. We have intruders walking into the building looking for the bathroom to make it into the building. Students are told to go to our designated area, which is another local school building. Participant 1 says, “the level

that the district has is actually I think it's above average. We have train people like leading this and basing it on, you know, evidence from other active shootings in the past. That ended up being very deadly. So, I think that my district has done a great job with performing those drills to better prepare teachers."

### **Response & Recovery**

Participant 7 on Grief Counselors mentions counseling after an active shooter drill is available if the student is emotionally disturbed. P5say, "I have not heard much from students about their feelings on active shooter drills; they do not talk about things like that." Participant 11 Counseling Department has various programs lined up to counsel students with emotional issues and emotionally traumatized for any reason.

**Thoughts.** An active shooter event can happen anytime, any day, and in any part of the school campus. It is said that someone will get injured or killed before the event is interrupted in most cases. These are real concerns. People do not commit an active shooter event where there are guns in the building. In Texas, people know how to use guns, and most own them.

Participant 6 says, "The Columbine High School and Sandy Hook School active shooter events made participants feel that the active shooter drills should be taken seriously and that these events shook the nation. The teacher expressed that he was unaware of student stress as teenagers are unpredictable and will panic in a real-life situation." Also, Participant 6 says the thought of having teachers carrying firearms during class with SRO is divided. Some teachers strongly oppose it. It is believed that staff with a military background and who currently feel comfortable with firearms should

be the ones to carry them if allowed—mental health concerns with those authorized to carry firearms on the school campus. Firearms should be designated as a specific location on each floor, with only those with authority the ability to access. No information on minimizing student fears. Practicing drills often are designed to protect students should an active shooter event occurred lessons in the Advisory period. Participant 11 explains that after an active shooter drill, students joke and do not take the practice seriously. No indication of any adverse psychological effects displays with students. No apparent stress as they seem to be independent and use violence from having watched television.

Students seem to be used to active shooter drills, and now it is a normal thing to them.

The parents are anxious about active shooter events. One active shooter event will bring the seriousness back to the forefront. Heighten levels in communications throughout the campus have been implemented in the last few years. Some students joke about active shooter drills during participating while other students are nervous regarding the drills, yet there are times when students are actively engaging in what to do if an active shooter event occurs. Participant 9 says some teachers have a military background and are more prepared than others in an active shooter event or active shooter drills. Some teachers are incredibly nervous about carrying out safety responsibilities and/or tasks and will sit back during an active shooter drill while others take on the challenge with ease. Participant 4 mentions that this school always takes precautions to make sure students are safe.

Participant 1 says active shooter event prevention is so important; however, it is hard to think about an active shooter event if it were to happen, how I would respond during or after one.

**COVID-19.** Participant 11 says COVID-19 will have a direct impact on mandated active shooter drills. However, when students return to school, practicing active shooter drills and effective communication with SRO with cameras to make sure all students have been accounted for. Active shooter drills need to be continued as soon as possible to help prevent an active shooter event. Participant 9 says to be able to adapt to whatever situation and prepare to accommodate various crisis events. Participant 7 explains observing the state of tension in the United States right now; I hope we get to a place as a people in this country, as we are the same people; we are all Americans and should be working together through our petty differences and start to care for each other. To recognize each other more and appreciate the ‘gifts of God’ that we have been blessed with. We can work together to build a better country and not force our views or opinion on others and maybe eliminate fears and hostilities that cause people to lash out in violence. Participant 1 says, “I am struggling with the answer because of Coronavirus. Now, allowing doors open and allowing backpacks. Do they want to limit what is accessible to students on their person? The doors always need to be locked , regardless if a student must go to the restroom. There are no door stoppers; they took that away from us last year. I am frustrated because there is nowhere, we are trying to avoid the spread of COVID. Now, we have another problem that we must face. Everyone’s mental health has been in the tanks right now, including children. I fear that a student might have a mental breakdown and just decide to do create an active shooter event.”

**Student Well Being (Psychological, Social, Emotional, and Physical Health).**

Participant 1 mentions the strengths would be preparing teachers for different scenarios, but the challenge is the emotional aspect. If we were to have an active shooter drill where we involve the students, I fear for their emotional well-being right after because and it is very traumatizing as a teacher when you have to think about yourself and your students, so I can only imagine what it would be like for students. Also, Participant 1 says it should be a norm to talk about our feelings and release feelings and be heard. We have many available extracurricular activities that students can participate in to help them feel like the school community. This helps students to feel like they belong and can make friends. Additionally, the school has an activity period and a mentoring session where during the students four years in high school, you get to see them grow, which helps the students is a big thing.

Participant 9 says the use of different types of locked doors, active shooter drill lockdowns, and other technologies and techniques are used to reaction if the student were not in classrooms and how to vacate the building during an active shooter event safely. This provided participants an opportunity to think through different ways to protect students as prevent injuries. Participant 7 explains that not having a Crisis Plan would probably make teachers' and students' anxieties. With the rigorous fake and real-life crises, this can be psychologically draining, yet active shooter drills are a minor thing that I can deal with. Students are joking about bringing weapons to school and shooting everybody. Students making such comments should be held accountable and reported to school officials to check these students out. Putting your life in the way to protect

students is a big thing causing psychological concerns for teachers and represents a barrier for them to get through. Participant 11 says students become desensitized of active shooter events over time and become immune to the practice of active shooter drills and active shooter events as they have become too common and are not taken seriously as they were during the Columbine High School mass shootings. Participant 7 says Grief Counselors – counseling after an active shooter drill is available if the student is emotionally disturbed. No knowledge of students talking about having anxieties after an active shooter drill, but I know both teachers and students have something to say. Having a strong rapport with students is beneficial. Participant 4 says having students put on lockdown is not a big concern among the teachers that I hang around with or feel that the campus is not safe. I have not heard much from students about their feelings on active shooter drills; they do not talk about things like that. Our teachers and students need more consistent active shooter drill training and more often like every year; like fire drills are regular, it will be ingrained in teachers' and students' minds, so they know what to do. This might encourage them to take the active shooter drills more seriously as this could happen anywhere. There should be more training with the students instead of just training with teachers. Participant 5 mentions had a pre-assigned student in mind, someone you trust to be in charge knowing their abilities to handle pressure. Not having students exposed to an active shooter event for the first time or even again could trigger a reaction not expected. One coach twisted his knee, running out the door. Injuries can occur. Police Officers demonstrating having items thrown at them and some hitting them, telling teachers to tackle them if that is what they had to do. They prepare for harm and

encourage it even. Some of the teachers participating are saying physical, and some psychological effects in conversation that they were shaken up during an active shooter drill, and some were laughing while others were upset about it. They were not having a good time because they were intimidated and scared in that environment. Participant 5 says we have a Student Watch at school in which teachers are actively promoting mental health and holding meetings looking out for those students as mentors to others. The school is doing a lot to embrace mental health, accommodating anxieties and other disorders that were not acknowledged before. Some of the teachers oppose the active shooter drills, not sure about how the students feel. An active shooter event is a real threat; therefore, a plan to prepare is proactive rather than reactive in a situation. Some of the comments were that psychologically they were shaken up, frightened and that the active shooter drill was scary even though they knew it was a drill. I have asked out SRO where the fractures in the classroom windows should be trapped in the classroom. Knowing this, I can get the student out and discuss the best ideas for escape, a rope, or a ladder with the homerooms. We all agreed on the rollout ladder. The goal is to get out of the room. SRO linked? I have not suggested this to leadership. Participant 1 I think the district has put more emphasis on mental health professionals in the building or even on I know for a fact that you know this in public, that they have hired mental health professionals to assist the needs better and to another thing is you know the district has and generic scenarios that are on. It is very stressful and very traumatizing to even think about the fact that that I could be in a scenario like that. We cannot tell students what the protocols are because if a student decides to be an active shooter, they know what we are

doing through training. There is much stress involved because you want to tell them what to do ahead of time on how to be prepared, but then also it is for their safety if I do not tell them if you know, the shooter knows our tactics, right, like how to respond. That is one struggle, and that is one challenge about all you know about having a drill is the emotions making it a hard time sleep. I had a conversation with my childlike, you know if there is a shooter in the building, you start thinking about the people you care about, what they know, and how they are trained? Participant 1 says that because teachers are more prepared, they have an idea of how to respond. The only problem is it is different because a drill is just a drill until you're in it. You know things you have to apply it. The district required training can often be, but it is different from when you are in an actual active shooter where so many different possibilities and so many factors in place. Participant 1 There has not been much dialogue, no specifics during an active shooter drill on what to do with the students emotionally during an active shooter event, keeping them calm, getting ready to defend, and getting out of the building, making it tough. Participant 1 says that everyone's mental health has been in the tanks right now, including children. I fear that a student might have a mental breakdown and just decide to create an active shooter event. There is no guidance making it more difficult. Some of my coworkers have expressed the same things that I have expressed regarding the whole doors and the backpacks and student mental health and well-being in the past, but not for this school year. Students ask what we are supposed to do, not just sit in the dark during a lockdown and add more to this. Some of my coworkers have also shared the same frustration that I have; with everything I have seen and heard, some of them are taking medication for



anxiety, and some are unable to sleep after having been in an active shooter drill.

Participant 1 Students could benefit from receiving more training, education, and/or guidance on appropriate coping skills are important so that they know how to respond in any stressful situation, such as an active shooter drill or an active shooter in the building. It is extremely traumatizing to go through these events or other types of traumatizing situations and teach them when to fight or flight. Participant 1 says as a teacher during an active shooter event, what is the best response depending on where we are relative to the active shooter to preserve life? How do I help these students calm and assure them that things will work out, we they can lose their lives? It should be a norm to talk about our feelings and to release feelings and be heard. Participant 1 mentioned they are on track to achieving their goals as the counselors are readily available to help. Our school district has done a great job checking on our student mental health with four or five counselors in the building, and they are doing everything they can, but we could use more. School counselors send out Google Forms for students to complete to help evaluate their mental health for suicide prevention and determine how they feel and what is going on. This helps create a safe place for students to open and know that the counselors are ready to support them appropriately. Participant 1 says through student communication, you can see if a student is at risk and is capable of an active shooter event by how they respond to questions, even if they appear to be joking or not; are they crying out for help and have the potential threat to commit an active shooter event? Look for warning signs or subtle statements. I have not discussed any of this to our school leadership. Participant 1 believes that in mental health awareness, and this needs to be addressed, resources, or

recommendations. I think some kids could use someone else other than a parent to talk to. Some people do not believe in getting mental health or taking medications and do not want to be told how to live their lives as we can all use some mental health support of some kind. Participant 1 thinks more about mental health awareness and adding more mental health resources as a critical concern, and we do not have enough of it. I have been told by an administrator at this school to stick to teaching my pedagogy of science and not psychology, as this is cognitive behavior. Participant 9 says some teachers have a military background and are more prepared than others in an active shooter event or active shooter drills. Some teachers are extremely nervous about carrying out safety responsibilities and/or tasks and will sit back during an active shooter drill while others take on the challenge with ease. Putting your life in the way to protect students is a big thing causing psychological concerns for teachers and represents a barrier for them to get through.

**Weaknesses/Challenges.** Participant 6 says that the teachers receive very little active shooter drill safety preparedness and/or training. Not all teachers are available during active shooter drills and are unaware of their roles during the next active shooter drill or an actual active shooter event. The students tend not to take the active shooter drills seriously and engage in distracting conversations, giggling, making noises, and/or misbehaving, which will be attended to the classroom when absolute quiet is critical if an active shooter event is in progress. What students practice with success will be critical during an active shooter event? This is the complete opposite representation of the kind of behaviors students should be displaying. The teachers are responsible for controlling

students' behaviors, taking the drills seriously, and understanding that these drills are intended to save human lives. The teacher's ability to keep the students quiet and take the active shooter drills seriously during the process is the most difficult— Participant 9 No after active shooter drill or after active shooter event protocol provided to teachers.

Administrators should implement an active shooter drill aftermath plan that is needed and more follow-up with teachers to get them to do what is needed before, during, and after an active shooter drill. Participant 10 Hot outdoor temperatures dictate the success of an active shooter drill for protecting students when exiting the building and practicing the drills in Texas. No accountability plan to locate students following active shooter drills and/or active shooter events. Students are scattered, and many are unaccounted for.

Parents desperately need to connect with their children. No campus system in place for the student to check in with school to confirm that they are safe and unharmed. This provides the school with an accurate list of those students who are not wandering around and confused. A strong collaborative administrative team is needed to protect students from active shooter events. There is never any feedback among teachers revealing their perceptions of active shooter drills. This information is needed to equip other teachers with less experience better, and professional advice should be considered. Participant 10 says no real protection in place for wandering intruders allowed to enter the building to use the restrooms or other situations. No system in place to make suggestions on the practice of active shooter drills. The school never had a real active shooter event, and most teachers have not experienced one. Participant 11 says students become desensitized of active shooter events over time and become immune to the practice of active shooter

drills and active shooter events as they have become too familiar and are not taken seriously as they were during the Columbine High School mass shootings. Participant 9 says, to make a student understand why active shooter drill, preparing and practicing them should be taken seriously and so important should an active shooter event occur. The students need to think through situations and know that teachers are there to help them and do everything to protect them from bringing about the best outcomes. Students MUST listen, follow instructions, and know their first response should an active shooter event happens. To know what if feel like to barricade the door, what do I do, where do I go and do, I need to be quiet, and above all, remain calm are some immediate concerns students need to handle. Participant 9 states that students and teachers should be aware of when an active shooter drill is about to occur. Active shooter drills are unannounced. According to teachers, there is no after active shooter or after active shooter drill plan in place.

Participant 9 says some teachers have a military background and are more prepared than others in an active shooter event or active shooter drills. Some teachers are incredibly nervous about carrying out safety responsibilities and/or tasks and will sit back during an active shooter drill while others take on the challenge with ease. Putting your life in the way to protect students is a big thing causing psychological concerns for teachers and represents a barrier for them to get through. Participant 7 says some teachers are unaware of any other preventative training besides active shooter drills for students. Professional active shooter training for teachers should be done more often than every few years. Participant 4 explains there are no classroom barriers, and one can never

actually be prepared as it is unknown how you will react in the situation. Participant 4 mentions that our teachers and students need more consistent active shooter drill training and more often like every year; like fire drills are regular, it will be ingrained in teachers' and students' minds, so they know what to do. This might encourage them to take the active shooter drills more seriously as this could happen anywhere. There should be more training with the students instead of just training with teachers. Participant 5 is not necessarily prepared for your students for an active shooter event; the active shooter may be a student that is familiar. They can prepare themselves and students. To help achieve the goal of being readily prepared for an active shooter event,

Participant 11 says the need to implement bullet-proof barriers or other types of barriers (i.e., tables, Etc.) in classrooms to keep intruders out and help students feel more secure. Bullet-proof vests to be worn by teachers and/or students would be uncomfortable. Participant 11 says the requirement of having a student sitting on the floor acts as a target for an active shooter to harm them easily and should not be recommended. There should be an after an active shooter event and/or drill to keep students safe and informed. Teachers have not seen one. Participant 11 mentions the Intercom announcement from the office specifying "shelter" without saying, "we are having an active shooter drill" is protocol; part of the systematic crisis plan causes anxiety among teachers and students. The announcement should simply say, "We are having an active shooter drill," instead. According to teachers, there needs to be an after active shooter or an active shooter drill plan to handle students following active shooter concerns with professionals to talk things over with them who may need counseling. More teacher

communication is needed. Participant 7 mentioned since active shooter events have increased, teachers should receive active shooter training more often than every three years. We need to have an idea of how to protect ourselves and help to prevent active shooter events. During active shooter drills, some students are not in the classrooms and miss the drills completely. Counseling sessions for the whole school with a different class after an active shooter drill would be significant. Participant 4 explains that we have active shooter drills and procedures in place for an active shooter event on campus. We mostly have online active shooter drills online, but I would like to have more face-to-face training. We have rehearsal graphs to “suit or drill” and respond if this counts as a program. The faculty has been trained to a standard practice for the active shooter drills. Students are not provided with this training, and it needs to be implemented. Teachers are to tell students what they are doing during an active shooter drill. Participant 4 says, our teachers and students need more consistent active shooter drill training and more often, like every year; like fire drills are regular, it will be ingrained in teachers’ and students’ minds, so they know what to do. This might encourage them to take the active shooter drills more seriously as this could happen anywhere. There should be more training with the students instead of just training with teachers. The faculty is trained on certain standard practices to the active shooter drill while the same training (Rehearsal or drills) should be implemented to include students and be prepared. We should have more active shooter drill training with the students. This research interview is making me think more about being prepared and requesting more preparation. Our last active shooter drill was a year ago and only included the teachers, and they need to learn to be prepared to act with

more practice. Participant 5 says, our district should know that adding metal detectors may be needed, but maybe excessive, but not if done in an organized fashion. People may not like it. I have asked our SRO where the fractures in the classroom windows should be trapped in the classroom. Knowing this, I can get the student out and discuss the best ideas for escape, a rope, or a ladder with the homerooms. We all agreed on the rollout ladder. The goal is to get out of the room. SRO linked? I have not suggested this to leadership. Participant 1 explains, there has not been much dialogue, no specifics during an active shooter drill on what to do with the students emotionally during an active shooter event, just to keep them calm, get ready to defend, and get out of the building, making it tough. Participant 2 says, “One recommendation I would have is just love training and be prepared. Would it be a drill if they knew ahead of time that this was coming and have something after to talk about on the strengthens and weaknesses, and how can we respond differently. I have not given any of those recommendations to our campus leadership.”

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

To ensured and maintain the credibility within this study, I allowed each participant an opportunity to read and examine their separate interview transcripts and the results from the data analysis for the sole purpose of correcting errors, misstatements and to add any valuable information that had been omitted. The assurance of this study’s transferability existed through detailed observatory descriptions of various components, such as each participant’s body language, facial reactions during the interviews, and individual perceptions to include the interview setting and school climate. Within these

descriptions, the readers would be able to ascertain the study's level of relevance to their own unique research needs. I incorporated a detailed research flowchart of each step taken within facilitating the study's dependability. These details defined raw data, the process of analysis, correspondence with participants, and all other interview notes and data pertinent to this study. There was some triangulation occurring within the interview results from the administrator's and teachers' perceptions of implementing active shooter drills. An alphanumeric system was used to store the data collected, and this information was made available to each participant and any other requested from district personnel.

To ensure confirmability, I implemented and completed an audit trail to provide a detailed description and/or flowchart from the data collection process to report the study's findings. A reflexivity journal helped to facilitate the coding process, collected data interpretations, my perspectives, and essential understanding for determining specific patterns and themes.

### **Summary**

I chose this single case qualitative research study to explore the perceptions of high school administrators' and teachers' in a southwestern school district in the state of Texas as it relates to the challenges and barriers when implementing mandated active shooter drills. This study also examined these perceptions according to programs and initiatives based on the participants' responses to promote social changes and strengthen the collaborative training efforts, safety partnerships, and community professionals while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional and physical well-being. One administrator and 10 teachers from a large southwestern school district in Texas



participated in an individual video conference utilizing a semi-structured interview format. The Data were coded, categorized and interpreted based on each participant's definition for the purpose of active shooter drills, challenges during implementation, their understanding of existing programs and initiatives pertaining to active shooter drills, and perceptions relative to DeVos' policy recommendations.

Interview responses were then triangulated to the participant's involvement in active shooter drills relative to understanding and following school crisis protocol to prepare and protect students before, during, and after an active shooter event mentioned in the interviews. The participants simultaneously agreed that their involvement in active shooter drills needed to be a collaborative team effort designed to address the safety needs of all students; but, that preparing each student to be self-reliant and having the ability and liberty to make firm decisions on their individual safety when no one else is there to help.

All participants feel that active shooter drills are necessary and that more drills are needed regularly for attendance to provide training for those who missed the drill; some to include the students, with more consistent safety protocols, and that the drills shouldn't be announced. Based on the perceptions of the high school teachers and the administrator involved in this study, collectively felt that while many students did not take the active shooter drills seriously, most students were reluctant to participate in the active shooter drills and experienced harmful psychological effects which ultimately impacts the student learning environment. The findings demonstrated an overwhelming need for more collaborative team campus active shooter training for all teachers, students, parents, and

the local community that would significantly improve the relationship of school safety as it corresponds with school culture, psychological and physical student and teacher well-being, which highly impacts successful student outcomes. Many of the study's participants believe that active shooter drills are causing more harm than its subsequent benefits; as it may increase negative behaviors, reduce student attendance, self-esteem, and overall well-being expressed by some of the participants' perception; thus, may increase the desire to act out an active shooter event. The need for improved gun safety guidelines did not appear to concern the study's participants. As mentioned, there is little research on active shooter drills.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

This qualitative case research study incorporated comprehensive data analysis procedures on an administrator's and teachers' participatory perspectives within a selected southwestern Texas public high school as they relate to the implementation of federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. Data saturation was obtained from this single source of evidence. In order to address this study's research questions, the results of the interview questions were presented in terms of five distinctive themes and four specific connections. These themes and connections describe the qualities of Safety Response Protocols relative to public school active shooter events. This study's participants reported an overall complementary view of SRPs response policies and shared their perceptions on the best training for active shooter drills.

### **Summary of Findings**

The prevalence of increased active shooter events demands more professional and critical training for school faculty and students. During this research study, it became apparent that the need for a well-thought-out crisis plan grounded in collaborative team efforts that consisted of effective communication and consistent annual training of administrators, teachers, counselors, students, and local protective agencies will significantly reduce the psychological and/or physical injuries during active shooter drills and/or active shooter events. Many teachers feel that the acting out of injured or deceased victims and the thought of being locked down at any moment can be psychologically

draining for all involved. While some teachers feel that students are immune to active shooter drills due to their massive exposure to electronic violence and expressed desires to bring weapons to school to “shoot everybody,” other teachers feel that many students are traumatized and experience reoccurring emotional issues as a result of the announced/ or unannounced active shooter drills and that students expressing harming others should be held accountable for exposing their criminal thoughts. Some teachers oppose active shooter drills and express anxieties at the thought of having to sacrifice their lives to protect students, especially if they have children of their own. During an active shooter drill, some teachers were psychologically and physically frightened and intimidated, stating that it is a “stressful and scary” experience to be instructed to tackle police officers and prepare themselves for injury.

Some teachers can only imagine what it is like for students based on their own anxieties, as some students are currently taking medication for anxiety and are unable to sleep after having been in an active shooter drill. There has not been much dialogue on what to do with the students emotionally during an active shooter event. As the new school year approached, and with the COVID-19 pandemic underway, everyone's mental health state was challenged beyond normal ranges. One of the fears that teachers are concern with is student mental breakdown and may trigger an active shooter event. Fortunately, school counselors are available for students and teachers experiencing active shooter drill emotional trauma. Teachers feel that having a rapport with students based on effective communication can be beneficial for mitigating fears and anxieties. School programs, such as Student Watch and teacher and student mentorship promote mental

health and reduce student fear while detecting those students demonstrating emotional concerns. Teachers expressed the stress involved from not divulging detailed preparedness tactics to students, as a potential classmate may gain knowledge on how to effectuate an active shooter event. Teachers revealed that there are no specific guidelines on what to do during an active shooter drill or how to effectively handle emotionally charged students during an actual active shooter event other than keep them calm, prepare them to defend, and get them out of the building.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

My interpretation of the findings reveals that there are numerous cross-participant response similarities relative to the many important processes occurring within the school during the implementation of SRPs to completion of active shooter drills. The participants' response similarities provided valuable paradigm shift within the selected school safety protocols in respect to improving active shooter drills and how they should unfold. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the interface between the study's themes and DeVos' policy recommendations for improvement.

Table 1

*Counts of Interview Responses Interface with DeVos' Policy Recommendations for Improvement*

Active shooter drills Themes	Prevention	Protection & mitigation	Response & recovery
Purpose	Success <b>6</b>	Success <b>3</b>	Success <b>0</b>
	Needs for improvement <b>5</b>	Needs for improvement <b>7</b>	*Needs for improvement <b>11</b>

School climate & overall communication	Success <b>7</b> Needs for improvement <b>4</b>	Success <b>9</b> Needs for improvement <b>2</b>	Success <b>6</b> Needs for improvement <b>5</b>
Partnerships & proactivity	Success <b>8</b> Needs for improvement <b>3</b>	*Parental Involvement	Success <b>8</b> Needs for improvement <b>3</b>
Policies and procedures	Success <b>*11</b> Needs for improvement <b>0</b> ESSA understanding <b>3</b>	Success <b>*11</b> Needs for improvement <b>0</b>	Success <b>2</b> Needs for improvement (after a drill/attack) <b>9</b>
Administrative responsibilities	Success <b>7</b> Needs for improvement <b>4</b>	Success  Needs for improvement	Success  Needs for improvement
Teacher responsibilities	Success <b>7</b> Needs for improvement (*inconsistencies) <b>4</b>	Success <b>7</b> Needs for improvement <b>4</b>	Success <b>0</b> Needs for improvement <b>*11</b>
Strengths and/or weaknesses in the current execution of drill implementation	Strategy details explaining delineation Strengths <b>8</b> Weaknesses <b>3</b>	Strengths <b>7</b> Weaknesses <b>4</b>	Pros <b>2</b> Cons <b>9</b>
Overall positive perceptions of the effectiveness of drill implementation	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	*participants are not aware of the crisis plan's response & recovery plan or how it is implemented.
Overall negative perceptions of the effectiveness of drill implementation	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> participants are concerned about drill inconsistencies	*participants are not aware of the crisis plan's response & recovery plan or how it is implemented.

Execution of drill implementation, success and/or system failure	Success <b>9</b> Needs for improvement <b>2</b>	Cons *Finetuning	Cons *Needs Follow-up
student well-being outcomes (trauma, anxiety, and fears aka harmful psychological, social, emotional & physical effects)	Success <b>8</b> Needs for improvement <b>3</b>	Success <b>7</b> Needs for improvement <b>4</b>	Success <b>2</b> Needs for improvement <b>9</b>

*Note. The table shows the counts of participant responses interface with DeVos' Policy Recommendations for areas within the implementation of active shooter lockdown drills (ex. Bold numbers represent the amount of participants who agreed to the area of implementation as a success or in need of improvement)\*denotes needs for improvement from all participants*

Table 2

*Programs and Initiatives for Student Well-being*

Safety response protocol characteristics	Programs & initiatives	Participants
Prevention	STOP IT app *Student TV *Student Press	P2
	Student council, extra curricula activities (sports, dance, band, theatre, orchestra) *Alma Mater & Fight Song	P5
	Mentor Programs, advisory period	P1, P2, P11, P5, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
	**One Voice **Meet the Teacher Night, *Teen Squad, **Diverse Abilities Day	P1, P7
	Counselor Corners Initiatives (co-teach SEL lessons, Etc.)  *Best Buddies, Art Club, DECA, National Honor Society, HOSA, TAFE, Community Service Initiatives	
Protection and Mitigation	Student Watch	P1
	Advisory Period	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5

		P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11
	Pep Rallies promoting comradery, Youth and Government, *Black Student Union, *Curriculum Night, *Family Dinners Fundraisers, *Coffee with the Counselors (Parent Involvement) *Girls in STEM *Cafeteria Lunch to Go for Virtual Learners	
Response and Recovery	*Request a Counselor Assistance Bar Code	
	SROs	P11, P5 P7, P6, P9

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*Note. \*denotes programs within campus not mentioned in interviews*

*\*\*denotes district safety programs and initiatives*

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several aspects could be considered limitations within this study. The study's interviews were limited to one specific southwestern high school district in the state of Texas. Numerous study participants expressed the school district's need to establish and communicate recovery and response staged to be applied during the active shooter drill crisis training. The study's participants' responses made it apparent that the administrator and teachers want to be adequately informed on the latest Federal, State, and local mandates relative active shooter response protocols and other school safety requirements. Campus administrators are acquiring buy-in from all stakeholders to limit procedural inconsistencies and are needed to train staff and students through initiating the Train-the-Trainer Model. Some of the study's participants responses focus on designing a specific plan that will help accommodate students with a specific need to engage in the active shooter drills; use discussion-based and functional drills to practice safety response



protocols response and situational awareness skills; to confront and work with dismissive staff members; to develop and implement a continuous training plan, and to expand the safety response protocols to neighboring schools/districts.

The study's findings were obtained during one-on-one Zoom interviews separately from 11 high school participants. The number of sites and participants allowed for data saturation; however, it accounted for a diminutive representation of the actual number of school districts and faculty within the state of Texas, which are currently using the Safety Response Protocols as a response to active shooter attacks. The limited participatory high school sites are a factor, as this study focuses on one high school. Some of the interviewed participants had a part in extending the Safety Response Protocol programs to lower school or community levels. Additionally noted, the Safety Response Protocol programs were implemented within these high school districts and communities during active shooter training and displayed similar characteristics of DeVos' policy recommendations and programs. At this time, I decided to gauge the implementation of a safety response protocols for further examination. Unfortunately, this magnitude policy can never be thoroughly examined until the policy is tested during an active shooter event. Additionally, all participants' experiences and perceptions were limited, as none have ever experienced an active shooter event.

### **Recommendations**

There has been limited empirical research regarding the use of the Safety Response Protocols related to active shooters drills in schools and from the perceptions of a school administrator and teacher participants and should be studied. Additionally, as

indicated in this study's findings, the corresponding research on effective methods to mitigate the negative psychological consequences of mandated school security response training should increase, as well. The results from this study surmise that recommendations for future research relative to the implementation of mandated Safety Response Protocols might include the following: 1) continued research relative to emergency operations plans and policies within public schools; specifically, in the areas of a) prevention; b) protection and mitigation; c) response and recovery. Districts should have piloted Safety Response Protocols within elementary and/or middle schools; that models useful high school active shooter drills. 2) Develop comparison and contrast research between Safety Response Protocols and the actual implementation of an active shooter drill related to the framework of collaborative efforts expressed in DeVos' policy recommendations for improved student outcomes.

As discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review, one of the essential attributes of a safe and academically productive school is that it derives from having an established positive school climate (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). Further research focused on the impact of Safety Response Protocols relative to active shooter drills depicts that creating and maintaining a positive school culture is critical to school safety. An increase of empirical research on active shooter drills and/or training that incorporated the experiences and perceptions of its collective participants will help effectively students and teachers become more resilient and readily able to adapt to an ever-changing world. Additionally, implementing ongoing professional safety developmental and training programs and/or initiatives for all faculty members that established a thoroughly

comprehensive knowledge base of the school's active shooter programs is much needed. This includes procedural safety handbooks, classroom safety binders, videos, safety conferences, and regular meetings. It is unacceptable for any faculty member not to understand or be familiar with the primary purposes or the ESSA's initiative practices.

### **Implications**

With the increase of active shooter events on our nation's school, since Columbine, active shooter drills are ever-changing and demanded by the educators who are responsible for the safety and well-being of students; thus, making it a critical concern for increased and improved training and implementation designed to better protect and prevent active shooter events, according to those who participated in this research study. Teacher volunteers acting as injured or deceased victims of the drills have caused some teachers to have experienced emotional setbacks. These participants' high school teachers had been carefully chosen and given a debriefing before and after the active shooter training by the school SROs at which time the teachers could opt-out. The rationale behind training with actors as active shooter victims provided Emergency Medical Services (EMS) an opportunity to practice new emergency response protocols and new techniques for responding to the need of the injured or removing the deceased; while law enforcement officers preserve the active shooter. This practice engaged teachers participating in active shooter drills from classrooms to rapidly evacuate their training classrooms without panic to allow the first responders an opportunity to experience teachers fleeing for safety when the first responders were actively engaged in their duties to save school campus lives. More complex active shooter training engaged

simulated toy firearms with loud noises were used as sound mimicking gunfire to help officers and teachers more aware and locate the active shooter; and were discharged during this time. The use of mimicking gunfire, toy guns, or similar sound is a critical technique for locating the active shooter's vicinity. All participants were informed on the rationale behind using this technique and would hear it throughout the drill. The teachers involved handled themselves as instructed by keeping quiet when told. This entire drill exercise was comprehensively documented throughout the exercise. To demonstrate transparency, the training event was also covered extensively at the end of the training summarizing the school the active shooter drill exercise from the staff, stakeholders, or community partnerships.

Additionally, the study's participants believed that students' active shooter drills and subsequent training should be regularly taken more seriously by students, and the active shooter drills should be announced.

### **Conclusion**

There were many cross-participant similarities relative to the many vital processes simultaneously occurring within the school during the implementation of SRPs to active shooter drill. These cross-participant similarities constitute valuable examples for other schools within the district seeking to implement and achieve high-quality school active shooter drills. As mentioned, the purpose of this introductory qualitative study is to explore the challenges of public-school administrators and teachers to implement federally mandated active shooter drills while supporting students' psychological, social, emotional, and physical health. This study's collected data derived from one

administrator and 10 teachers' perceptions gathered in semi-structured interviews relative to active shooter drills. The collected data was observed, analyzed, and interpreted by various means of coding. Through my findings, I determined that an administrator and teachers perceived active shooter drills should be an informed, collaborative implementation regularly with new improvements and taught the same law enforcement techniques and given updated ESSA, SRO, and other initiatives programs to be adequately prepared and trained on. Additionally, most teachers described the current training as inadequate and need improvement as the students do not take the active shooter drills seriously. Future research studies on a local level should focus on broader demographics consisting of multiple school districts obtaining other constituents' perceptions to evaluate similarities and/or discrepancies in data for a broader perspective. This might include the study of the effectiveness of existing active shooter drill programs and initiatives. For this specific school within the study, many weaknesses were disclosed; but, all participants seemed to have taken away from the study with them the need to look at active shooter drills and/or events more carefully and be prepared to prevent the death of someone life; including their own.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Principle Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Session Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Code/Location: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Shelise Tillman, and I will facilitate all the interviews, video conferences and phone interviews for this study. I want to take this time to personally thank you for participating and providing your meaningful experiences and expertise needed to examine the purpose of this purpose. As previously mentioned, this study will seek to explore the perceptions of only administrators and teachers within the selected southwestern Texas public high school relative to the implementation and consequences of active shooter lockdown drills. This study represents a partial fulfillment for my Doctor of Education degree at Walden University.

Furthermore, there will be no participatory “thank you” gifts and/or compensation for those participating on behalf of this study. All interviews will be audio-recorded ONLY, and you will receive a transcript of your interview ascertaining the accuracy and clarification of your responses. After this study, this interview will be safely stored for five years, which will then be destroyed.

Before this interview, I sent you an introductory letter email with the study’s participation informed consent form to reply with your consent, please keep for your records. During the interviewing process, should you, at any point, feel a question creates an acute psychological state within you during or after the interview, please contact the counseling referral that is on the consent form that I sent you, or if you want I can provide that information again to you now.

During the interview, I will ask you to expound on your responses for more detailed information by utilizing phases, such as, “Would you expound upon or further explain your response?” “Can you provide an example?” “Tell me more provide more details on that comment.”

Before we begin, would you like something to drink, a snack, or a restroom break? Do you have any questions for me currently? If not, let us begin the interview process with question number one.

1. Have you ever participated in an active shooter drill? If so, what was your involvement and/or responsibilities?
2. Define the purpose of mandated “active shooter drills?”
3. Tell me a brief synopsis of what you would do if there were an active shooter event in your school during normal business hours while students are in classrooms?
4. How would you describe the level of active shooter drills in your school? What are some of the district’s initiative to help keep teachers and students safe?
5. What barriers and/or challenges do you face while implementing a mandated “active shooter drill?”
6. When implementing active shooter drills, how do these barriers and/or challenges create safety procedure strengths and/or weaknesses?
7. Have you seen any efforts implemented to assure the well-being of students prior, during or after an active shooter drill?
8. Is there a systematic active shooter campus crisis plan to ensure the safety of others from a potential active shooter event?
9. Have teachers and students disclosed to you their feelings or concerns at any time regarding active shooter drills?

10. What psychological, emotional and/or physical harm have you witnessed from others as a result of the active shooter drills?
11. What changes or improvement would recommend that would mitigate student anxieties and fears?
12. What is your understanding of the ESSA requirements related to school safety?
13. Have you participated in the process to ensure that these requirements were met?
14. Betsy DeVos, Secretary of the Department of Education, has identified three policy recommendations as leadership responsibilities to combat violence against our school system in conjunction to active school shooter drills.
  - (a) Prevention: Increased collaborative activities or initiatives related to the overall school violence prevention; especially against active shooter attacks in high schools through collaborative efforts to develop a positive school culture connecting teachers to students that builds self-esteem. What specific safety programs and/or initiatives have been collaboratively implemented to build a more positive and safe school culture that would enhance student learning?
  - (b) Protection and Mitigation: Protection and mitigation as it relates to the specialized training development and communication to include school resource officers (SROs) and all qualified school personnel to collaboratively work as a team consisting of emergency and crisis training that protect students and teachers equipped to handle their own school's unique set of circumstances before an active shooter attack. What programming or initiatives have your school implemented related to active shooter training and communication?
  - (c) Response and Recover: The goal in this section relates to the proper preparedness, and response for effective recovery from an active shooter attack. In an effort to minimize loss of life, the value of preparation before, during and after an aggressive shooter attack depends heavily on prior collaborative staff training, planning, and other safety strategies. What programming or initiatives have your school implemented related to response and recovery after an active shooter attack?
15. What active shooter drill resources have you utilized to better prepared teachers and students for unannounced active shooter drills?
16. What recommendations would you suggest that would better protect teachers and students in preparation for an active shooter drill? Have you communicated these recommendations to school leadership?

17. Do you have any further concerns relative to this topic that you wish to share?

This ends our interview. I want to thank you for your time and participation. Should you have any additional comments or wish to provide more information, you can contact me on your phone or email (non-work telephone or email) at the following phone number or email address at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

## Appendix B: Research and Interview Question Alignment

*Research and Interview Question Alignment*

Question	RQ1: What are the administrator's perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?	RQ2: What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing mandated active shooter drills while supporting student's psychological, social, emotional, and physical health?
Interview Question 1	x	x
Interview Question 2	x	x
Interview Question 3	x	x
Interview Question 4	x	x
Interview Question 5	x	x
Interview Question 6	x	x
Interview Question 7	x	x
Interview Question 8	x	x
Interview Question 9	x	x
Interview Question 10	x	x
Interview Question 11	x	x
Interview Question 12	x	
Interview Question 13	x	
Interview Question 14	x	
Interview Question 15	x	x
Interview Question 16	x	x
Interview Question 17	x	x