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A Phenomenological Study of First-Year Elementary Teachers Managing Disruptive Behaviors

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Abstract

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Lucina V. Smith

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Research consistently reflects novice teachers' feelings of inadequacy in effectively responding to students' disruptive classroom behaviors. Some teachers may quickly default to disciplinary write-ups or make behavior-related referrals to special education. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perspectives of first-year elementary general education teachers about their competency and their tolerance for managing problem behaviors; to identify supports that will strengthen their ability to acquire and use effective behavior management skills, and thus reduce referrals. Social constructionism was the guiding conceptual framework. In-depth, semistructured interviews were conducted via telephone and analyzed using Moustakas' adaptation of the Van Kaam method for analyzing phenomenological data. The participants consisted of two White female teachers and three Black male teachers from a South Carolina school district. The findings showed(a) their reliance on personal resources to manage disruptive behaviors, (b) decreased tolerance as the school year progressed, and (c) insight into their perception of the support needed to become more competent and tolerant. Examples included (a) support from administrators when responding to disciplinary incidents, (b) more training on classroom behavior management, on cultural competency, and on the impact of mental health disorders on students' learning and behavior. The positive social change implication of this study is the enhancement of teachers' competency and tolerance to effectively respond to disruptive behaviors without feeling inept, defeated or burnt out and decrease unnecessary referral use.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mentor, retired elementary school principal Dr. Robert Scotland. The one who disrupted my complacency, challenged and somehow convinced me to not stop at where I was, but to “go further and achieve the highest level of education in the land.”

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I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank everyone who played a significant role in helping me to accomplish this milestone. Firstly, to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ whom makes all things possible. The one who empowered me with the strength, endurance, faith, and can-do power to complete this academic journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

When students display behaviors that interfere with the learning environment, teachers must be prepared to employ effective behavior management skills. Students who exhibit behaviors and attitudes that are counterproductive to the learning environment pose a great challenge to many teachers. Azzi-Lessing (2010) wrote that even under the best circumstances, students who display disruptive behaviors can be a challenge for many teachers, but the challenge is even greater for those teachers who lack an understanding of behavior triggers and do not have the skills and strategies to address them.

Many teachers experience a reality shock as they transition from being student teachers in training to beginning teachers. That is because of their lack of preparation for managing disruptive behaviors once they leave their teacher preparation programs and are in the actual classroom setting (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck & Leutner, 2015). Unfortunately, teachers experience a range of disruptive behaviors for which many do not have the competence nor expertise to manage (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011). Nooruddin and Baig (2014) asserted that quality education is contingent not only upon quality resources and superior content, but also upon teachers having the ability to effectively deal with problem behaviors. This study was needed to gain further insight into first-year general education teachers' perceptions of their competency for managing students with challenging behaviors and their perspectives on what supports are needed to enhance their competency and tolerance. This study had implications for positive social change:

the enhancement of teachers' competency and the refinement of classroom practices could lead to a decrease in unnecessary referrals to intervention services (e.g., special education and mental health services).

This chapter will present the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, nature of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance of the study, and a summary.

Background

There is substantial research on the struggles that many general education teachers face with classroom behavior management. It is an unresolved and ongoing problem. Garland, Garland, and Vasquez (2013) conducted a mixed method study using grounded theory as the qualitative method. The study involved undergraduate student teachers in an inclusive setting and their assessment of how prepared they were to effectively manage students with problematic behaviors. The results showed that some of the interns were not confident in their ability manage students who displayed disruptive behaviors. Garland et al. (2013) further reported that many of the student teacher interns also desired earlier exposure to the actual classroom setting and preferred more instruction on how to apply evidence-based practices to students with problem behaviors. Rosas and West (2009) conducted a study on preservice and in-service teachers and found that while both had positive views about classroom management, the preservice teachers had less confidence in their adeptness to handle and redirect students engaging in unwanted behaviors. Teachers who are less efficacious and untrained in managing students with disruptive behaviors may employ interventions that are more punitive and

less effective. Woodcock and Reupert (2013) found that rather than preservice teachers implementing proactive interventions designed to avert unwanted behaviors, many tended to incorporate strategies that were reactive or corrective. O'Neil and Stephenson (2012) asserted that classroom behavior management remains a concern for many beginning teachers because of insufficient instruction in this area.

In addition to the challenges of applying effective classroom behavior management techniques, the inability to appropriately distinguish between behaviors that are normal and behaviors that are consistent with a mental health disorder can lead to inappropriate referrals (e.g., special education and community mental health services). About 20% of school-aged children younger than 18 years of age are diagnosed with a mental health disorder. However, Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, and Goel (2011) revealed a number of teachers are not aware of how to respond to students with mental health needs. Martinussen, Tannock, and Chaban (2011) reported similar results, as they, too, found that many educators lacked confidence in their ability to work with students with behavioral issues and problems with inattention. In exploring the extent of in-service training that both special education and general education teachers received on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and the connection between the application of evidence-based strategies, Martinussen et al. (2011) discovered that 41% of the special education teachers and76% of the general education teachers had barely any formal training in working with students with ADHD.

Because some teachers are not familiar with the various types of behavior supports for themselves or for students, they may resort to interventions that have not

been considered useful in addressing disruptive behaviors (Youngbloom & Filter, 2013). For instance, applied behavior analysis (ABA) and functional behavioral assessment (FBA) are two models that are considered evidence-based behavior management strategies. However, not many teachers are familiar with these models or have incorporated them as part of their teaching practices. Main and Hammond (2008) found that, in addition to preservice teachers reporting low efficacy for teaching students with challenging behaviors, they were not using interventions that research has deemed most effective in dealing with disruptive behaviors such as the ABA and the FBA. Main and Hammond (2013) also learned that only 6% of the preservice teachers in their study had knowledge of the two behavior management models, nor seen evidence of the models being implemented at their schools. Main and Hammond (2013) determined, that although teachers had good intentions for managing behaviors within the classroom setting, unfortunately, many of their responses were not consistent with the recommended evidence-based strategies aligned with ABA or FBA. Youngbloom and Filter (2013) advised that if teachers are to become skillful in using empirically based behavior models, constant training and assistance is strongly encouraged. Researchers maintained that preservice teachers not only need training in behavior management, they also need to experience these models being practiced (Main & Hammond, 2008; Woodstock & Reupert, 2013).

This study will address the gap in knowledge between the extent of research on evidence-based practices for behavior management techniques and understanding why there still seem to be so many teachers that feel unprepared to prevent and manage

student behavior problems as there were 10 years ago. This study was needed to increase understanding of the barriers that continue to wedge a gap between research and practice, while simultaneously identifying the supports that are needed to increase teacher efficacy ineffectively managing students' challenging behaviors and reducing the use of unnecessary referrals.

Problem Statement

Educators are on the front line of guiding students' learning and managing their behaviors. Effective behavior management within the classroom setting is a fundamental requirement for conditions to be favorable for learning (Gottlieb & Polirstok, 2004). Numerous studies have been conducted on teachers leaving their teacher education preparation programs feeling unprepared to handle students with problem behaviors (see Begeny & Martens, 2006; Halford, 1998; Rosas & West, 2009). This research gives a hindsight perspective of novice teachers, focusing on the lack of training and support from their teacher preparation programs. Despite researchers demonstrating that classroom management is a longstanding problem for many teachers, governing accreditation bodies, such as the TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council), NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education), and the education reform of NCLB (No Child Left Behind), have merely maintained established standards for teacher qualifications and content areas to enhance student achievement; they have not established a standard for competency in classroom management (Stough, 2006). Unfortunately, there are still reports of teachers feeling as though they lack the competence to effectively manage disruptive behaviors (e.g., see Chesley & Jordan,

2012; Garland et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2014; Webster-Stratton et al., 2011; Woodcock & Reupert, 2013).Egyed and Short (2008) recommended additional research into teacher efficacy beliefs pertaining to their tolerance and perseverance in managing challenging behaviors along with their willingness to adopt new interventions. No studies found in the literature on first-year elementary teacher's self-efficacy beliefs, such as their competency and tolerance, and their perspectives on supports needed to effectively handle unwanted behaviors within the classroom. This study sought to fill the gap to help enhance first-year teachers' skills for responding to students with various types of challenging behaviors and to minimize improper referral use (Main & Hammond, 2008; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010). While future aspiring teachers may benefit from revamping teacher education programs to increase the focus on classroom management, there is a present-day need to help novice teachers who have already transitioned from the education setting into the classroom setting.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary general education teachers in their first year of teaching in regards to their management of students with disruptive classroom behaviors. This study also explored teachers' perception of their competency and tolerance for managing challenging behaviors while identifying supports needed to increase their efficacy for effectively managing behavioral issues and reducing unnecessary referrals.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of first-year elementary general education teachers in South Carolina, in relation to feelings of competence for managing disruptive student behaviors?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of first-year elementary general education teachers in South Carolina on their lived experiences in relation to supports needed to increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors?

Conceptual Framework

Social constructionism was the guiding conceptual framework for this phenomenological study. Patton (2002) wrote that constructionism means constructing knowledge about reality. The construction of knowledge is the result of social interactions and the expectations of society. Social constructionism allows one to understand the complexity of a phenomenon, to look at the world differently and learn more about it rather than going along with one's assumptions. Moreover, the manner in which individuals view and interact with the world around them is not limited to any one influence, but is instead a combination of influences (Roller et al., 2015).

Social constructionism connects with the key elements of qualitative research: It accounts for the influence that social interactions have on individual experiences when constructing knowledge about reality. Teachers learning how to effectively manage students with these problems and teaching students who have behavior problems are both inherently social activities that require social interactions. This framework also aligned with the key research questions that sought to explore how teachers perceive their competence for managing behavioral issues and their position on supports needed to help

them become more effective classroom mangers. The phenomenon can be expressed in different ways, yielding different perspectives and insight, and thus eliminating the need to distinguish between which description is right or wrong (Willig, 2013). Chapter 2 will present more thorough explanation and a more detailed analysis of the conceptual framework of this study.

Nature of Study

The focus of this research was not to obtain quantifiable data, but rather to understand individual perspectives and experiences, which a quantitative study would not yield. As Creswell (2013) noted, the focus of qualitative research is to gain insight into the meaning that each participant holds about a particular problem or issue. Roller et al. (2015) argued that qualitative research accepts the complexities of human behavior and thoughts which are ever-changing and influenced by various experiences. Qualitative research provides understanding of a problem within the context or setting in which the problem exists through individuals' shared experiences (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the nature of this study was qualitative, and it used a phenomenological approach. The insight gained from exploring the shared lived experiences of first-year general education teachers could be used to develop novice teachers' ability to handle challenging behaviors and to maintain a milieu that's conducive for students to be successful.

Qualitative studies use fewer participants because topics are discussed in depth. Patton (2002) asserted that in contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative methods usually produce an abundance of details about a smaller number of individuals and cases. Data saturation was employed to ultimately determine when enough participants had

been interviewed. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) maintained that if the goal of a study was to gain insight about the experiences and beliefs of a homogenous group, 12participants should be sufficient to reach saturation. Saturation will be achieved when no new insights or concepts emerge in subsequent interviews. Consistent with Patton (2002) and Guest et al., (2006) this study was intended to have a purposeful sampling of 10-15 elementary general education teachers in their first year of teaching. However, after extensive recruiting efforts, only five participants were secured. Data was collected via telephone, semistructured interviews and then analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modification of Van Kaam's method.

Definitions

Classroom management: commonly defined as "efforts to oversee the activities of the classroom, including learning, social interaction and student behavior" (Rosas & West, 2009, p.55).

Functional behavior assessment: a process for identifying factors that trigger an unwanted behavior. The information obtained from the assessment can then be used to develop interventions to modify the unwanted behavior (Hanley, Iwata, & McCord, 2003).

Positive behavior support: positive behavioral interventions and systems designed to achieve socially acceptable behaviors through teaching new skills and amending the environment (Sugai et al., 2000).

Assumptions

This study was based on two assumptions. First, that each participant was open, honest, and forthcoming about their experiences and feelings of competence in relation to managing disruptive classroom behaviors as first-year general education teachers. This assumption was necessary because the teachers are sharing their individual experiences and there is no way to verify if their responses are correct. While there may be veteran teachers who likely feel ineffective in the area of classroom behavior management, the intent of this study was to follow the population to which the research points, which are novice teachers. Second, targeting novice teachers will lead to a paradigm shift in the way teacher education programs and school districts prepare teachers to effectively handle disruptive classroom behaviors. Novice teachers are the obvious teachers who struggle with handling disciplinary problems within the classroom setting, whereas veteran teachers will probably avoid it, deal with it, or leave the field altogether. Novice teachers are most likely to lack experience in managing disruptive behaviors and still be dependent upon the scant classroom management skills they were taught prior to entering into the field of education.

Scope and Delimitations

As noted above, what novice teachers are going into is new and they are dependent on their education on how to enter the classroom, but do not have substantial experience. For these reasons, the focus was on first-year general education teachers due to consistency in the literature on the ongoing struggle of novice teachers to manage disruptive behaviors as they transition into the classroom setting from their teacher

preparation programs. Only first-year general education elementary school teachers were included in this research. Participants were limited to teachers in South Carolina. Populations excluded from this study were teachers who were beyond their first year of teaching along with special education teachers. More discussion is provided in chapter 3.

Social constructionism was used as the conceptual framework. Social constructionism is not to be confused with constructivism. Patton (2002) emphasized the distinction of these two terminologies: whereas constructivism is concerned with meanings derived from individual experiences, constructionism focuses on a more collective standpoint, derived from socially construed meanings. However, constructivism could have been used, but it was not used because it focuses on the individual experience and the subjective perspective in which humans construct knowledge, where as social constructionism embraces the influences of social interactions in how people construct knowledge. Therefore, the manner in which teachers think, feel, and go about constructing realities about their competency and tolerance for handling students with challenging behaviors is influenced by the consensus of those within the culture.

To address transferability, this study used purposeful sampling and thick description of the phenomenon to demonstrate that the findings can be applicable to other situations or similar contexts, as well as ensure that the readers have clear understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the potential for personal bias. Creswell (2013) asserted that one of the characteristics for a good qualitative research is that the researcher's position is clearly stated and in detail. In effort to control for this limitation, a reflective journal was kept throughout the research process.

Another limitation was that this study was conducted within the school district with which I am contracted as a school-based mental health counselor. Creswell (2009) referred to this as "backyard search" (p. 177). To eliminate the appearance of coercion and to maintain confidence in the validity of the findings, research participants were solicited only from the schools in which I did not serve.

Significance

According to Domitrovich et al. (2008), evidence-based practices are strongly promoted, but there seems to be a disconnect in the research on ways to integrate evidence-based practices with fidelity. Teachers today would benefit from various levels of support to help them properly and consistently implement interventions that are deemed appropriate for addressing classroom behaviors. Traditional methods of professional development are no longer a sufficient catalyst for changing classroom practices (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013). A goal of this research was to contribute to the literature by identifying the supports that are needed to remove barriers that prohibit teachers from adopting evidence-based practices. Incorrect or poorly implemented interventions can compromise its effectiveness. Enhancing teachers'

efficacy beliefs about behavior management will help change the focus from behavior-related issues to positive classroom environments that are conducive to learning.

Furthermore, when students are mislabeled as having a disability (i.e. learning disability, emotional disturbance)—when in fact they do not have one—generates unnecessary services and supports (National Education Association of the United States & National Association of School Psychologists, 2007).According to the findings of Gottlieb and Polirstok (2005), the teachers who were skillful in classroom behavior management had fewer incidents of referring students for support services.

The implication for positive social change is that the findings of this qualitative, exploratory study could enable researchers to explore new lines of research about what is and is not being taught to new teachers in the training stage concerning classroom behavior management. Its findings may serve as a basis for future quantitative research that may contribute toward the enhancement of efficacy of first-year teachers and reduce unnecessary referrals. Reducing unnecessary referrals can lead to increased savings for school districts, allowing schools to reinvest those funds in other areas that will benefit the school as a whole.

Summary

Teachers' responsibilities go far beyond lesson planning, teaching, and evaluating student progress. Teachers are not only responsible for their students' academic development; they must also have the competence and tolerance to be able to respond the diverse social and emotional needs of their students. The goal of this study was to create a discourse about the struggles of managing disruptive classroom behaviors, but to

identify ways to enhance teachers' classroom practices and to discern how novice teachers might become better equipped to respond to challenging behavior.

Chapter 2 will present a thorough review of the literature that covers the following topics: literature search strategy, conceptual framework, classroom behavior management, evidence-based practices, and literature related to methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

For more than 20 years, legislation has encouraged the inclusion of students with disabilities and special educational needs in general education classrooms alongside non-disabled students (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). The transition from segregating students due to their physical, cognitive, or behavioral needs has transformed today's classrooms into a melting pot of diverse learners. Because of this progressive move toward inclusion, teachers are tasked with the responsibility of meeting the needs of all students (Oliver & Reschly, 2007). According to Marzano and Marzano (2003), 18% of students have special needs and require specialized interventions and services that extend beyond the everyday resources that are made accessible in the classroom. While students with and without disabilities are all subject to presenting problem behaviors, Marzano and Marzano (2003) highlighted that students with high needs may present problems that the average teacher is not equipped to handle.

Students who present challenging behaviors in a general education classroom setting often leave teachers who lack the skills for managing such behaviors in a quandary. Having the ability to effectively handle classroom behaviors is an essential skill that all teachers must have to maintain a successful learning environment (Woodcock & Reupert, 2013). The lack of competence in managing classroom behaviors can lead to unnecessary referrals to intervention services outside of the classroom (e.g., office referral, special education referral, and mental health services; Oliver& Reschly, 2007). According to Massé, Couture, Levesque, and Bégin (2013), this lack of training

and competence for understanding disruptive behaviors often results in teachers using negative strategies such as punishment, disciplinary referrals, and threats. According to Dutton, Varjas, Myers and Collins (2010), the way that teachers perceive classroom behavior management likely influences how they respond to behaviors and how they approach intervention strategies. Therefore, by gaining more insight into their perspectives, teacher educators will be able provide trainings that are more specific to the needs of the teachers.

This chapter is a review of literature on the competence of general education teachers in the areas of classroom and behavior management and its influence on referral use. Due to ongoing reports of teachers feeling as though they lack the competence to effectively manage disruptive behaviors (Butler & Monda-Amaya, 2016; O'Neil & Stephenson, 2012), a closer look into teacher efficacy beliefs is necessary to identify the supports that will enhance their competence and persistence in effectively responding to student behaviors and to be able to better discern behaviors that require a referral for school support services (Main & Hammond, 2008; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010).

As previously stated, the purpose for this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary general education teachers in their first year of teaching in regard to their management of students with disruptive classroom behaviors. It also explored teachers' perception of their competency and tolerance for managing challenging behaviors while identifying supports needed to increase their ability to effectively manage behavioral issues and reduce unnecessary use of referrals. This

chapter will begin with the literature search strategy used, continue with a discussion of the conceptual framework, present a literature review of key concepts such as behavior management strategies and the impact of competence and confidence, present a discussion of research methods used in the literature and conclude with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

The following databases were used to develop this literature review: ERIC, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and Education Source. The search was limited to full text and peer-reviewed scholarly journals published between 2000 and 2016. The following keywords were used: *school-based referral, teacher efficacy, behavior management, classroom management, student behavior problems, elementary teachers, challenging behaviors, functional behavior assessment, positive behavior support, applied behavior analysis, evidence-based practices,* and *rules.* Keywords were used in various combinations to help identify prospective articles.

This search produced over 800 results. Studies that focused on classroom behavior management, teacher efficacy, functional behavior analysis and positive behavior support management were selected. This body of literature clearly highlights student behaviors that most teachers find difficult to manage and identifies strategies that are being used in comparison to those that have been recommended. This overview of research on general education teachers' competence in classroom behavior management and its influence on referral use unveiled much of the same recurring themes: lack of preparation for dealing with challenging classroom behaviors, lack of knowledge in evidence-based practices for managing challenging classroom behaviors, and the negative

impact of student misbehavior on novice teachers and the learning environment (Egyed & Short, 2006; Garland, Garland, & Vasquez, 2013; Main & Hammond, 2008; Martinussen, Tannock, Chaban, 2011; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010; Rosas & West, 2009). However, what the literature lacks is insight from teachers' perspectives of supports needed to increase their competence and tolerance for managing challenging behaviors.

Conceptual Framework

In this phenomenological study, the conceptual framework of social constructionism will be applied. Cunliffee (2008) pointed out that social constructionism is historically rooted in sociology, social philosophy, and the sociology of knowledge, each of which were responsible for shedding light on ways reality is conceptualized. Burr (2015) further affirmed that social constructionism emerged from a combination of influences consisting of continental, American and British writers. However, the work of Berger and Luckmann in 1966 is widely recognized as being one of the major influences of social constructionism (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 2015; Cunliffee, 2008). Berger and Luckmann (1966) postulated that realities are subjective and objective. Subjective realities are those meanings produced by an individual, whereas objective realities are the result of common meanings shared among others. These realities are socially created and shared through conversations with others.

Patton (2002) also referenced that constructionism is the process of constructing knowledge about reality. This process involves shared assumptions about reality among individuals. Individuals generate their own meanings which are reflective of their personal experiences. Although each experience produces subjective meanings across

individuals, these experiences are produced by virtue of social interaction with others (Creswell, 2013). Individuals may share different realities, but sharing those experiences helps to shape others' understanding.

Social constructionism further asserts that knowledge is historically and culturally specific, going beyond individual knowledge and derived from viewing the world from another perspective (Burr, 2015). Teachers' feelings of competence towards managing disruptive behaviors can be influenced by a variety of factors (i.e. school environment, personality, level of training, administrative leadership, etc.). Teachers may construct their individual teaching philosophies and preferences for educational practices based upon perceived "truths" they have received or repeated within the social world in which they live. Therefore, one's beliefs of successful classroom and behavior management cannot necessarily serve as the standard. Social constructionism argues that one way of understanding is no better than any other (Burr, 2015). The social constructionist approach yields positive implications for this current study by capturing different perspectives and experiences of first-year general education teachers. Thus, creating a dialogue that can yield a better understanding of supports needed to increase personal efficacy and tolerance for managing disruptive behaviors and lead to a possible reduction in unnecessary referral use.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

The following key concepts will be reviewed in the next section: classroom behavior management, evidence-based practices for classroom behavior management,

functional behavior assessment, positive behavior support, implementing functional behavior assessment and positive behavior support, competence and confidence.

Classroom Behavior Management

Teachers are responsible for establishing and maintaining classroom order through the implementation of effective classroom management skills. Classroom management is established when rules, boundaries, expectations are clearly communicated and enforced. Rosas and West (2009) explained that classroom management is commonly defined as "efforts to oversee the activities of the classroom, including learning, social interaction and student behavior" (Rosas & West, 2009, p.55). Clunies-Ross et al, (2008) conducted a quantitative study of 97 primary school teachers in Australia and found a significant relationship between teachers' positive responses to student behaviors and increased on-task student behaviors. While they could not conclusively confirm that using proactive approaches increases on-task behaviors, they found that practicing predominately proactive strategies voids the likelihood of teachers using mostly reactive strategies, which does have a strong relationship with decreased on-task behaviors. Poorly executed classroom management will often lead to misbehaviors that disrupt teaching and learning (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Rosas & West, 2009). Therefore, it is imperative that teachers not only be able to respond positively to student behaviors, but have knowledge of effective proactive strategies to prevent them from resorting to negative and reactive responses that are ineffective. Novice and experienced teachers, along with administrators and parents all concur that

classroom management is and imperative skill for teachers to gain (Woodcock &Reupert, 2013).

Classroom management is one of the key components in fostering student academic success (Johansen, Little, & Akin-Little, 2011; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008). Teachers who possess the proper skills and understanding of classroom behavior management are better adept at supporting the behavioral and academic needs of their students (Butler & Monda-Amaya, 2016; Woodcock & Reupert, 2013). However, students who present emotional problems, behavioral problems or both pose the most challenge for many general education teachers. Behaviors such as disobedience, aggression, talking out loud, making unnecessary noises, inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and idleness are a few of the behaviors that have been reported to occur frequently throughout classrooms abroad as well as in the United States (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Martinussen et al 2011).Teachers who have difficulty managing student behaviors may rely more frequently on referrals or resort to strategies that are ineffective or punitive in nature. However, Gottlieb and Polirstok, (2005) asserted that teachers who are provided with the skills to manage disruptive behavior refer fewer students for special education.

Preparing teachers to establish and maintain a positive learning environment should be just as important as preparing them to teach within their subject area (Rosas &West, 2009). Poor classroom management has been found to not only hinder teachers' capacity to teach, but interfere with learning and frequently accounts for increased stress and burnout (Rosas & West, 2009).Brophy (2010) further noted that failure to keep

students occupied with meaningful learning activities and minimizing idle time can result in classroom discord and disruptive behaviors.

Teachers have varying perceptions of effective classroom and behavior management. Rosas and West's (2009) quantitative study examined the beliefs and perceptions of 5,306 preservice and 1,159 in-service teachers' regarding classroom behavior management to determine if there were any differences. The study consisted of mostly female preservice teachers in their final semester and in-service teachers who graduated from institutions in Ohio. Rosas and West (2009) gathered data via anonymous surveys based on voluntary submissions. However, the response rate from the in-service teachers was much lower than the preservice teachers, therefore their results could not be generalized without additional research comparing the results of the preservice and in-service teachers who did not respond. In addition, the researchers were unable to include classroom observations, preventing them from making a comparison between teachers' perceptions on classroom management and their actual classroom practices. However, for each limitation identified, the researchers offered plausible suggestions for future research. The results indicated that although both preservice and in-service teachers were confident in managing classroom behaviors, their beliefs about classroom management were significantly different. In-service teachers reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to redirect a disruptive student while preservice teachers reported lower levels of confidence in redirecting disruptive behaviors. This study further highlights the plight of many preservice teachers who leave their teacher preparation programs with limited or poorly implemented classroom behavior management skills. One particular

strength of this study is that it demonstrated the need for teacher education programs to put greater emphasis on providing teachers as a whole with effective strategies on classroom management. Ducharme and Shecter (2011) also argued that the training that teachers receive prior to entering the classroom insufficiently prepares them for the behavioral challenges they will likely face.

Evidence-based practices for classroom behavior management. Functional behavior assessment (FBA) and Positive behavior support (PBS) were introduced in the amendment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 (P.L. 105-17).Though initially designed for students with significant disabilities who presented self-injurious and aggressive behaviors, IDEA mandated that these interventions also be applied to students whose challenging behaviors put them at risk of special education placement (Safran, & Oswald, 2003; Sugai et al., 2000).FBA and PBS have been deemed effective and commonly recommended interventions for behavior management (Dunlap et al., 2000;Hanley et al., 2003; Sugai et al., 2000) as discussed below.

Functional behavior assessment. FBA originated from applied behavior analysis, used as a method for identifying the relationship between the environment and behavior. FBA focuses on determining variables that activate and maintain the occurrence of a problem behavior, thus yielding essential information that can be used to develop interventions to modify the unwanted behavior (Hanley, Iwata, & McCord, 2003). FBA consists of data collection through the processes of behavior observations, interviews, and review of school records (Scott et al., 2004). Information gathered from these resources help to provide valuable insight into the reason and purpose for which a

student may or may not engage in unwanted behaviors. During the process of information gathering, special attention is given to antecedents or triggers, which are events that take place prior to the behavior occurring, specifics about what the behavior looks like, and lastly, the consequences. The key question that FBA answers is "What purpose and need does the misbehavior serve?" Through the acquisition of answers related to who, what, when, and where of challenging behaviors, students can be matched with targeted interventions to successfully increase the desired behaviors (Scott et al., 2005).

Positive behavior support. PBS was initially based in the field of developmental disabilities, and derived from three principal sources: applied behavior analysis, the inclusion movement, and person-centered values (Carr et al., 2002; Johnston, Foxx, Jacobson, Green & Mulick, 2006).PBS emerged in the mid 1980's as a method to prevent aversive consequences for people with developmental disabilities by employing non aversive behavior management techniques. (Johnston et al., 2006). Though previously used in clinical settings, PBS is now acceptable to and adaptable to educational settings and found to produce successful outcomes when applied to children with challenging behaviors, as well as those with emotional and behavioral disorders (Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009; Hieneman et al., 2005). PBS consists of positive behavioral interventions and systems designed to achieve socially acceptable behaviors through teaching new skills and amending the environment (Sugai et al., 2000). Information identified during the FBA process is used to develop PBS strategies. PBS promotes behavior change through incorporating proactive and positive strategies. Rather than focusing on stopping students from displaying unwanted behaviors (i.e. talking out in

class, having temper outbursts, getting out seat without permission) PBS focuses on changing the environment or system in order decrease the need for the unwanted behaviors and teaching more appropriate behaviors to help students be more successful (Sprick & Borgmeier, 2010).

Implementing FBA and PBS. Despite the development of these evidence-based practices for behavior management, many teachers lack the proper training to implement these interventions with fidelity, therefore some rarely, if at all use them to help manage students with challenging behaviors (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Ducharme & Shecter, 2011; Ficarra& Quinn, 2014; Westling, 2010). However, Sugai et al. (2000) suggested that one way to combat this problem is for schools to employ "user-friendly" methods. Scott, Alter, and McQuillan (2010) proposed simplifying the concept by using more straightforward language, providing a rationale and examples for how the intervention can be used within the classroom. Dunlap et al. (2000) also maintained that collective efforts are required to provide training and build the competency of educators. While Hieneman, Dunlap, and Kincaid (2005) further agreed that adequate personnel training, consistency, and commitment to the implementation practices are essential to the success and effectiveness of these interventions. Wood, Umbreit, Liaupsin, and Gresham (2007) studied how implementing direct, interval-by-interval measures of treatment integrity of a function-based intervention could determine if the outcomes were attributable to the intervention itself or incorrect implementation of it. The researchers conducted a quantitative study on a first-year elementary teacher with one month of experience who expressed to her administrator that one of her third-grade students needed

to be in special education due to presenting behavior problems (yelling, crying, throwing things) the first two weeks of school, although he was performing well academically. Instead, the administrator recommended implementing the function-based intervention. The teacher however was not in agreement with the recommendation and doubted that the intervention would work. The results showed that the teacher was inconsistent in implementing the intervention throughout the study. However, when the teacher implemented the intervention correctly, the student's on-task behaviors occurred 91% during the intervals but only occurred 9% when the intervention was incorrectly implemented. Without the prescribed degree of regularity and fidelity in which these interventions were intended, the desired behavioral outcomes cannot manifest (Wood et al., 2007).

Competence and Confidence. Research has shown evidence of a connection between teacher efficacy and the forms of behavioral strategies he or she employs (Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh, & Khalaileh, 2011; Putman, 2009; Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013). The theory of self-efficacy was developed by Albert Bandura. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy influences the way a person thinks, feels, and behaves. Behavior is reinforced by one's personal beliefs in his or her capacity to create positive results. Bandura (1977) proclaimed that the extent of effort one puts forth and their persistence when faced with adversity is determined by their self-efficacy. Tsouloupas et al. (2014) conducted a phenomenological qualitative study to understand how high school teachers developed efficacy for handling student misbehavior with consideration to their years of experience and subjects taught. The participants consisted of a purposive sample

of twenty-four high school teachers who taught math, science or PE with low experience (three years or less) to high experience (10 years or more). Data was collected via in-depth interviews. The study revealed that the teachers' efficacy for handling student misbehaviors was influenced by personal and professional supports received, their ability to personally develop effective strategies for managing misbehaviors, and the degree of training they received from teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities. Teachers who have confidence in their ability to address behaviors that interfere with the learning environment are most likely to resolve these disturbances themselves instead of seeking a referral. Abu-Tineh et al. (2011) also declared that teachers' self-efficacy predicts their willingness to work with difficult students. Teachers who perceive themselves as having low self-efficacy for deterring behavioral problems are more unlikely to embrace and implement strategies that are considered effective (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt & Leaf, 2010; Reinke et al., 2013).

Teachers need be confident in their ability to effectively manage their classrooms and create a milieu that fosters pro-social behaviors and student achievement. The stronger the management skills the more likely the teacher will be able to establish order and keep his or her students actively engaged in the learning environment. However, there are some students with high needs that present problems that the average teacher is not equipped to handle (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). This may cause some teachers to question their ability to effectively manage disruptive classroom behaviors and for some to contemplate leaving the profession altogether. Marzano and Marzano (2003) also noted that although teachers may not be in position to directly address severe problems,

those who possess effective classroom management skills are cognizant of high needs students and maintain a repertoire of effective strategies they can employ to meet at least some of those needs. Contrary to this, (Pas et al., 2010) quantitative study of 491 general education teachers from 31 elementary schools in Maryland, investigated if high burnout and low efficacy increased student referrals to support services or disciplinary infractions. Surprisingly, the researchers found that teachers with low efficacy and high burnout were associated with decreased referral use for behavior and academic problems. These results are even more concerning due to the indication that the problems with poor classroom behavior management may result in teachers becoming apathetic and disengaged from teaching, resulting in students who are truly in need of support services, but likely not receiving them (Pas et al., 2010).These results revealed a different perspective on the impact of low teacher efficacy for managing student behaviors. Rather than being solely concerned with teachers with low efficacy resorting to unnecessary referral use because of their inability to respond effectively to unwanted behaviors, it is as important to be mindful of how low efficacy can also result in diminished inclination to seek support even when it is warranted.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of today's classrooms, all teachers should be equipped with a repertoire of strategies and skills to effectively manage an array of student behaviors. The lack of preparation diminishes the opportunity for success for both students and teachers. Teachers who lack the training, skills and pedagogical knowledge of classroom management are a recipe for failure. Westling (2010) conducted a quantitative study on 38 special education and 32 general education teachers to rate their

perceptions of students with difficult behaviors based upon seven dimensions. The Likert-type ratings on the questionnaire revealed that both general and special education teachers reported a lack of adequate professional preparation to manage challenging behaviors and mainly relied on what they had learned from past experiences about how to deal with those behaviors. Westling's (2010) results also revealed that many of the teachers lacked sufficient support, felt their interventions were ineffective and reported increased stress from their students' behaviors. Garland et al. (2013) conducted a mixed method study which explored intern undergraduate student teachers' level of preparation for managing student behaviors in an inclusive classroom setting. The researchers found that a number of the interns were uncertain about their capabilities, desired to have advance exposure to the classroom, and for instructional guidance on best practices for effectively implementing classroom behavior management techniques.

Research has consistently emphasized the need for and benefits of teacher preparation programs implementing initiatives that provide more opportunities for preservice teachers to develop more in-depth knowledge and skills for effectively managing the diverse needs of all students (Oliver & Reschly,2007; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). Richards (2010) highlighted the benefits of teacher preparedness programs implementing initiatives that prepared all new teachers to work with students with special educational needs. The results showed that the teachers who completed student teaching in the placement with students with special educational needs reported increased knowledge, were better informed, and expressed greater confidence in their ability to work with students with

special educational needs. O'Neill and Stephenson (2012) however noted that while teacher education programs play a significant role in equipping preservice teachers with knowledge and skills, teachers and education systems must also bear some responsibility in the matter as well. O'Neill and Stephenson (2012) stated that teacher preparation programs should offer mandatory courses in classroom management, but teachers must also be committed to being life-long learners and education systems need to provide ongoing professional development in classroom behavior management to increase preparedness and confidence. According to Ficarra and Quinn (2014) coursework from formal, accredited higher education institutions is not a common source for learning and rehearsing classroom management skills, for only 18% of teachers reported learning classroom management skills from their teacher preparation programs. The researchers conducted a quantitative study using the survey method to investigate how and when K-12 grade teachers learned their skills for classroom management. The researchers found that knowledge and competency for using evidence-based classroom management skills resulted from working in schools that implemented evidence-based practices such as PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) which is a school-wide approach for promoting positive behaviors to create a safe learning environment; in addition to being certified in special education, and in-service training received. Therefore, to depend solely upon teacher preparation programs to supply teachers with the support, skills, and knowledge needed to combat the varying degrees of problem behaviors would be an unrealistic expectation.

On the contrary, there are some teachers who have the skills to implement effective strategies for managing difficult behaviors, but for other underlying reasons are not able to. Reinke, Herman, and Stormont (2013) conducted a mixed method study to assess the alignment of classroom behavior management strategies with school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports among 33 elementary school teachers. The study also evaluated the connection between teachers proclaimed self-efficacy with classroom management and emotional burnout and actual observed classroom management strategies. The researchers collected data through direct observations and teacher self-report scales. The results indicated a positive connection between general praise and self-efficacy with classroom behavior management. The expectation was for every one negative interaction with students, teachers would provide four positive interactions. The results revealed that the ratio of positive interactions was less than ideal. The direct observations also showed a lack of follow through with implementation of documentation systems for rewarding positive behaviors and tracking of inappropriate unwanted behaviors (Reinke et al., 2013). Last, the researchers found that teachers who had lower ratios of positive to negative interaction, used harsh reprimands frequently, and had higher incidents of disruptions and experienced higher levels of emotional burnout. This study demonstrates the diminishing powers that challenging behaviors can have on even well-equipped teachers. Therefore, without ongoing training and supports to help teachers obtain and maintain effective classroom behavior management skills, even the most skilled may become burned out or show decreased fidelity in the implementation of evidence-based practices.

When novice teachers transition into actual classroom settings without the necessary knowledge, skills, and support needed, they will likely carry over those same insecurities and incompetence of how to effectively manage challenging classroom behaviors. Unprepared preservice teachers consequently will result in unprepared in-service teachers. While there is much research highlighting teachers' defeatist attitudes toward classroom behavior management with the majority of the blame being placed on inadequate training received from teacher preparation programs (Landau, 2001;Maskan & Efe, 2011; Rosas & West, 2009; Stough, 2006).Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, and Leutner, (2015) argued that while research in the field of classroom management has focused primarily on minimizing classroom disturbances, more concentration on teachers' management skills is needed. Based upon this review of literature, there seems to be a gap in literature concerning general education teachers' perceptions of supports needed to both obtain and maintain the necessary skills and competence for managing challenging behaviors. The aim of this present study is to fill this gap in the literature and extend knowledge in the discipline by shedding light onto the perspectives of teachers regarding their beliefs about supports needed to increase their ability to effectively manage student behaviors. These perspectives can be incorporated into teacher education programs to better prepare upcoming teachers as well as serve as a guide for administrators and school districts on specific professional development opportunities needed to ultimately develop and retain excellent educators.

Review of Literature Related to Method

The foregoing literature review presented a discussion of the methodological details of individual studies in the literature. The next section will address epistemological issues related to the kinds of methods used or not used in the literature of the topic and its implications for the design of the present study.

Mixed Methods

Two studies using a mixed methods design were found throughout this literature review (Garland, Garland, & Vasquez, 2013; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008). Using a mixed method design helps to minimize the inherent limitations of using either a quantitative or qualitative design as a standalone. There are some instances where quantitative or qualitative data alone is not sufficient, thus mixing the two renders a more in-depth explanation of the results (Creswell, 2009). For example, in the mixed methods study Reinke et al. (2008) conducted, the researchers used both direct observations and teacher self-report scales. The participants consisted of four White female general education teachers with 4-25 years of teaching experience who expressed the need for support with classroom management. The researchers used these direct observations and teacher self-report scales to evaluate the alignment of classroom behavior management strategies with school-wide positive behavioral interventions and the connection between teachers proclaimed self-efficacy with classroom management and emotional burnout and actual observed classroom management strategies. The ability to triangulate the data and provide explanation of survey responses that were contradictory to direct observations helped to strengthen the results of this study. On the contrary, using the mixed method

strategy weakened generalizability of the results because of the small sample size and data from direct observation was from one day only.

Quantitative Method

This review of literature also revealed a number of studies which used a quantitative research method. Quantitative research consists of several methods of inquiry. The experimental and survey methods are among the most popular in the quantitative approach. There were no experimental, correlational or quasi-experimental studies found. Seven quantitative studies in this literature review used the survey method (Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh, & Kalaileh, 2011; Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Ficarra & Quinn, 2014; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010; Rosas & West, 2009; Westling, 2010; Woodcock & Reupert, 2010).According to Creswell (2009), survey research provides numerical descriptions of attitudes, trends, or population through questionnaires or structured interviews.

One study which serves as an example of the survey method was conducted by Woodcock and Reupert (2012). The survey-based research looked at the comparison of behavior interventions between 205 (18% male and 82% female) student teachers enrolled in a four-year and one-year teacher education training program. The researchers used the Survey of Behaviour Management Practices (SOBMP), which was designed by the researchers to analyze the frequency, confidence and effectiveness of preservice teachers' behavior management strategies. The results indicated that the teachers in the four-year program used more preventive strategies than teachers in the one-year program. The results also indicated that the teachers in the four-year program were more confident

in practicing preventive strategies (i.e. establishing routines, class rules). The researchers further noted that based on the sample of preservice teachers, particularly those in the one-year program, the results indicated that they may not be adequately prepared to stop classroom problems from occurring. One of the significant limitations noted was the sole reliance on self-reporting. Self-report data is subject to the bias of social desirability, where people tend to alter their responses to make themselves appear more favorable. Therefore, it is likely that information reported may not be consistent with the actual practices within the classroom. While quantitative research provides information about causal relationships, trends and associations it doesn't give insight into the processes that impact participants' behaviors, thoughts and experiences (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, rendering the need for qualitative research methods.

Qualitative Method

Qualitative research is used to gain insight into a particular phenomenon from the perspective of a targeted audience (Creswell, 2009). Understanding a particular phenomenon can be achieved through the following strategies of inquiry: ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research. According to Creswell (2009) these five strategies are the most popular strategies used in social and health sciences. Qualitative research generates rich descriptive data through the processes of direct observations, written documents and in-depth interviews. Most commonly, the exploratory approach of qualitative research allows researchers to explore problems that cannot be quantified, giving voice to groups or populations where further exploration to needed (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, qualitative research aids the

researcher in understanding the thought processes, ascriptions, and meanings that mold the participants' thinking and which potentially underlie the behavior being studied.

One particular strategy of inquiry found in this review of literature was grounded theory, two studies were found. Grounded theory is used to generate a theory that describes or explain a process, action or interaction that is based upon the views of the participants (Creswell, 2009). According to Patton (2002) the theory emerges from observations and interviews conducted by the researcher. Of the three kinds of data collection methods used in qualitative research, in-depth interviews were commonly used. Dutton, Varjas, Myers & Collins (2010) conducted a qualitative study using principles of grounded theory and in-depth interviews. The population consisted of 20 kindergarten and first grade general education teachers from five elementary schools in a rural school district in the Southeastern United States. The researchers examined kindergarten and first grade general education teachers' perceptions of behaviors, the causes and behavior management strategies. The researchers used in-depth interviews to grasp the perspectives of the teachers and to develop themes and the teachers' theories about causes of behavior. The researchers asserted that their use of in-depth interviews helped set their research apart from previous studies in this area that used surveys, vignettes or rating scales, thus allowing for a more in-depth probe and description of the teachers' perspectives, focusing more on the teachers' voices instead of the researchers. One particular limitation of the study noted by the researchers was that only one method of data collection was used. The researchers recognized that observations of the teachers' classroom behavior management practices would have strengthened the findings.

Because qualitative research is judged by trustworthiness and credibility, Creswell (2009) recommended using multiple strategies to ensure accuracy of the results. Smart and Igo (2010) also used grounded theory to examine novice teachers' selection and implementation of behavior management strategies and their perceived effectiveness. The theory that emerged from the data indicated that novice teachers select and implement behavior strategies contingent upon the severity of the unwanted behaviors.

Similar to this study, Tsouloupas et al. (2014) used the phenomenological qualitative method to identify factors that influenced the development of teacher efficacy for handling students that misbehave among 24 high school teachers teaching different subjects and various years of experience. The researchers chose to use in-depth interviews, which enabled them to obtain descriptive reflections of the factors that the teachers attributed their current efficacy for handling misbehavior. This study was strengthened by the researchers taking the necessary steps to ensure validity, integrity, trustworthiness, and dependability by securing a sufficient sample size, using procedures such as bracketing, member checking and peer debriefing. The researchers asserted that future research on teacher self-efficacy in handling student misbehavior can aid in developing professional develop opportunities geared more towards equipping teachers with more realistic expectations and clear-cut tools for managing misbehavior.

No other relevant qualitative studies were found. This qualitative study specifically focused on first-year elementary general education teachers. The elementary level is where students began to exercise independent behaviors outside of the home. Many elementary age children transition from unstructured environments and at this age

they are least capable of managing their own behaviors and emotions. Therefore, it is important for the teachers at this level to have effective behavioral management skills to help modify unwanted behaviors because they play a critical role establishing standards and expectations. Dutton et al. (2010) noted that kindergarten and first-grade teachers are many times the first individuals to come in contact with students displaying problem behaviors and with adequate behavior management skills it is possible for them to curtail problem behaviors early on. The field would definitely benefit from additional studies using methods other than grounded theory to address the topic at hand and a focus specifically on the elementary level teachers. Despite the existence of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies related to teachers' perception of behavior management, no phenomenological studies were found on the topic specially related to capturing the shared experiences of first-year elementary general education teachers' perceptions of their efficacy for managing disruptive behaviors and supports needed to increase their tolerance and competency for dealing with students' challenging behaviors. This represents a gap in the methods applied to research this topic.

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter examined literature related to teacher classroom behavior management skills(e.g. see Johansen, Little, & Akin-Little, 2011; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008; Rosas & West, 2009), and skills and competence for appropriate implementation of evidenced based practices(e.g. see Dunlap et al., 2000; Scott, Alter, & McQuillan, 2010; Sungai et al., 2000).The research examined provided insight in the challenges many teachers face in managing disruptive behaviors and the

need for additional supports and training. However, there appears to be little to no resolution to the struggle that too many elementary teachers continue to face. This study will fill a gap in the literature and extend knowledge in the discipline by further exploring the challenges of managing elementary student misbehaviors and how teachers' self-efficacy can be increased from their perspectives of supports needed. Chapter 3 will discuss the research method chosen for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

As the review of literature revealed, no phenomenological studies were found that captured first-year general education teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and supports needed to effectively manage students with disruptive behaviors. While there is a wealth of research that promotes evidence-based practices for managing students with disruptive behaviors, many teachers still lack the competence for employing effective classroom behavior management skills. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of elementary general education teachers in their first year of teaching in managing students with disruptive classroom behaviors.

This chapter consisted of a thorough description of the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

For this study, a phenomenological approach was chosen. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of first-year general education teachers in South Carolina in relation to feelings of competence for managing disruptive student behaviors?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of first-year elementary general education teachers in South Carolina on their lived experiences in relation to supports needed to increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors?

The central phenomenon of this study was to explore first-year elementary general education teachers' competence for managing students with disruptive behaviors and to identify their perspectives on supports needed to increase their efficacy and decrease unnecessary referral use. When the focus of a study is to understand how participants undertake an issue or problem in a specific context or setting, Creswell (2013) recommended using a qualitative design. Unlike the quantitative design, which focuses on causation, the qualitative design focuses one explanation. Qualitative research gives voice to the research participants, allowing them to share their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, open-ended research questions were designed specifically to reveal the experiences and perceptions of first-year general education teachers about managing students with challenging behaviors and identify supports needed to increase their persistence and competency.

Qualitative research design consists of many different approaches. Creswell (2013) identified five common approaches used among social, behavioral, and health science: ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study.

The ethnographic approach focuses on describing and interpreting beliefs, values and behaviors of a culture-sharing group within the context of their culture (Creswell, 2013). Ethnography requires studying a culture-sharing group over a prolonged period of time within their natural setting (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).Because it is unlikely that my participants will share the same culture or same sub-culture, ethnography was not chosen, Furthermore, this approach will not provide the data needed to answer the research questions.

A case study is an in-depth descriptive report of patterns and behaviors pertaining to a single person, group, situation or program (Creswell, 2013). Case studies can use both qualitative and quantitative data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Data is usually collected from a variety of sources such interviews, observations archival records and psychometric test. Case studies particularly focuses on one specific person, group or event which limits insight into the phenomenon being studied. Moreover, Creswell (2009) noted that cases are confined by time and activity. Because the participants being studied will not fall within these limits, case studies were not used for this study.

Grounded theory approach is used to develop a theory that offers an explanation about a process or phenomenon that is based on the participant's perspective (Creswell, 2009). According to Creswell (2013) the grounded theory strategy is the best strategy to use when there is no theory that explains the issue being studied. Because the focus of this study is not to generate a theory, but rather to explore an experience, the grounded theory strategy was not used.

The narrative approach uses storytelling as a method for understanding the lived and told experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Data is primarily collected via interviews, but can also be collected via observations and documents from one or two individuals. The narratives are then restructured and reordered to fit into literary formats. The narrative approach was not considered for this study because the goal is to explore lived experiences and not to tell a life story of one or two individuals.

Of the five approaches identified, phenomenology was selected. While similar to the narrative approach, the phenomenological approach is different because it captures

both the lived and shared experiences of several individuals (Creswell, 2013), which was the aim of this study. According to Patton (2002), phenomenology must be an in-depth, thorough process to capture and describe the full meaning and understanding of an individual's experiences. The phenomenological strategy captures individuals' feelings, perceptions, descriptions, and conversations pertaining to a particular phenomenon shared among others (Patton, 2002). Data is most often collected via in-depth interviews with multiple individuals. Creswell recommended interviewing anywhere between 5–25 individuals who have shared a particular phenomenon. Creswell also opined that knowing the common experiences of groups such as teachers, therapists, healthcare personnel, and policymakers is very beneficial. Such insight can be used to help to identify supports, inform policies and practices, all of which are the main goals of this study.

Role of the Researcher

One of the key characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher is the key instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2009). In addition, Patton (2002) opined that researchers should have both personal experience and a strong interest in the phenomenon being studied. However, if not carefully orchestrated, this combination can easily taint the true essence of the shared experiences being studied. Having both personal experience and a significant interest in understanding the experiences of first-year general education teachers working with students with challenging behaviors and their perspectives of supports needed to increase their efficacy, it is important that I not be guided by my own perspective. Moustakas (1994) recommended the process of epoche, which means to "refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the

everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p.33). Creswell (2009) further recommended that researchers identify things such as their biases, values, personal background, history, and gender due to the likelihood of these factors influencing the researcher's interpretation.

Because of my deep concern for the well-being and success of both teachers and students, I felt compelled to conduct this research. However, because of my experiences and knowledge, I am aware that I bring undeniable biases to this study. Being aware of my perspective as well as the participants' perspectives is key in preserving the true essence of this study. Patton (2002) recommended that researchers exercise being reflexive which entails self-awareness and ongoing assessment of what one knows and how one knows it. Exercising reflexivity enabled me to maintain constant awareness of how and when my own perspective, assumptions, opinions, and beliefs maybe influencing the study. In efforts to facilitate reflexivity, a reflective journal was kept throughout the research process detailing my personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

As the sole researcher in this study**,** my role consisted of recruiting and interviewing participants, transcribing the interviews, data analysis and interpretation. I am currently employed by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health as a school-based mental health counselor. As a school-based mental health counselor I provide advanced assessment, crisis management, and short- and long-term individual and family therapy services for children and their families with existing psychiatric needs in a

school-based setting. I also provide school consultation, education, and prevention to the school district through staff in-service training as needed.

Over the years I have received numerous referrals for mental health services from school psychologists, administrators, counselors, and parents, some of which I felt were appropriate and many of which I felt were not. Through the years, I have acquired a frustration towards schools referring students for mental health services (particularly Blacks) when few to no interventions have been applied at the school level to help modify the unwanted behaviors. Most problems identified were things such as excessive talking, not listening, not following directions, or anger outbursts. There have been many instances where I have gone to observe a student and I could not tell which student was being referred for services due to the entire class behaving out of sorts. Instances like this is what sparked my interest in conducting this research to better understand the struggle many teachers have with managing disruptive behaviors and what supports are needed to help them become better classroom managers.

Aside from my professional experiences, I have also had personal experiences with my own child. As a single parent of a 14-year-old, I had one of his teachers imply that he may have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and suggested that I seek treatment for him because of the behaviors he was presenting in her class. However, once I addressed the behaviors with my son and had a conference with the teacher where I offered her suggestions on how to better manage his behaviors, there no further disruptions. Unfortunately, not all parents have the knowledge or ability to articulate their concerns and advocate for their children as I did. Furthermore, not every teacher is open

to feedback on what they can do differently; some fail to see that parents do have some degree of expertise when it comes to their child's development and learning.

One significant concern regarding my role as the researcher is being able to effectively manage any potential conflicts of interest. Because this study was being conducted within my own work environment, minimizing the appearance of coercion and pressure to participate was essential. Creswell (2009) defined this type of research as "backyard research" (p. 177) and warned that issues with positions of power and compromised objectivity of the researcher may arise. Collecting data within the school setting where I work would be very convenient, but Bersoff (2008) discouraged the use of friends, personal contacts, or professional contacts. To address this issue, instead of recruiting participants from within my two homeschools, I solicited participants from the schools that were outside of my coverage area. Prior to my recruitment of participants, permission to conduct this study was obtained from the university's Institutional Review Board as well as from the school districts' gatekeepers.

Methodology

Sample

A purposive sample consisting of general education elementary teachers in their first-year of teaching from various school districts in South Carolina was used for this study. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) a purposive sample is a nonprobability sample design in which participants are selected based upon the researcher's own judgment. Creswell (2009) further noted that using a purposive sample allows the researcher to select participants that will best help answer the research

questions and further understanding of the problem. A sample size of 10-15 participants was anticipated; however, the sample size is ultimately be determined by the process of saturation. Saturation occurs when no new themes are identified or when the information gathered becomes repetitious.

Participant Recruitment

As previously stated, first-year elementary general education teachers from various school districts in South Carolina was solicited for this study. An invitation for voluntary participants (see Appendix A: Research Participant Invitation) was sent out via the district email system and social media detailing information about the study and participant requirements. A consent form was provided that gave detailed information about the study, the procedures, potential benefits and risks, stakeholders involved, how the information will be used and limits of confidentiality.

Permission to conduct this study was solicited from two local school districts. A proposal application was completed and submitted, along with a letter of cooperation. The districts required that the proposal either be approved or granted exempt status by the IRB prior to conducting the study or collecting data.

Email addresses and permission to send out emails was obtained from one of the two school districts. My personal computer was used to send out a mass email to eligible teachers from my district issued email address. However, for this study, I created a new personal Gmail account that was used for communication purposes. In efforts to maintain privacy and confidentiality, participants were assigned a pseudonym and advised to use their personal email address rather than their district issued email address. Interested

participants were advised to send their responses to my personal email address provided. The first five qualified volunteers were selected and notified via their personal email.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Patton (2002) noted that there are some things that cannot be observed such as one's feelings, thoughts, and intentions. Therefore, the art of interviewing allows access to information that cannot be observed directly (Patton, 2002). According to Creswell (2013) interview questions should be standard, open-ended, and aimed towards understanding the main phenomenon of the study (see Appendix B: Interview Questions). The interview questions were based upon my prior experience and observations as a school-based mental health counselor.

For this qualitative study, I was the key instrument. Creswell (2009) asserted that qualitative researchers are responsible for collecting data through the processes of behavior observations, examining documents or participant interviews.

Data Collection

The data in this study was collected via in-depth, semistructured, telephone interviews with first-year elementary general education teachers. Although face-to-face interviews are preferred for data collection in qualitative research, telephone interviews are more suitable for this study taking into consideration convenience for the participants and maintaining confidentiality of the participants. Novick (2008) also argued that telephone interviews are economical in reducing cost and travel, enable the researcher to reach participants who are geographically dispersed, and may help participants be more relaxed and willing to share sensitive information. Telephone interviews were anticipated

to last between 45 minutes and an hour and were tape recorded. Interviews were scheduled during a time that was convenient for the volunteers and at a location that was comfortable, private, and free from noise and distractions. Interviews were conducted via telephone, consisting of open-ended questions (see Appendix B: Interview Questions). The use of open-ended questions in a semistructured format helped to ensure content validity by allowing me to use probes to follow-up on individual responses as well as permit emergent data. The use of the conclusion of the interview allowed me to confirm with the participants if the description of their experience was complete, gave them the opportunity to identify if some aspect of the topic was not covered, and determine if there was anything else they wanted add. Also, the use of member-checking was used to further ensure content validity by offering participants a copy of their transcripts to check for errors, confirm accuracy and give feedback on whether or not the textual-structural descriptions accurately convey what they were trying to express. Lastly, using purposeful, criterion sampling also gave added content validity.

Data Analysis

According to Richie et al., (2013) data analysis is a "continuous and iterative process" that entails both managing the data and making sense of it (p.220). The data for this study will consist of verbatim transcripts from individual interviews. Each interview and research questions have been specifically linked (see Appendix B: Interview Questions).

Coding

I transcribed the interviews via Google docs. Detailed notes were kept throughout the analytical process to indicate the reasoning used in developing meaning units, themes,

groupings, and structures. The process of coding will entail both pre-set codes (known as a priori codes) and emergent codes. Predetermined codes will be based on the conceptual framework of social constructionism and existing literature. Creswell (2013) recommended the use of both processes due to the limitation that preset codes put on the analysis, whereas emergent codes provides the researcher with other ideas and concepts that come up during the analysis. Any data that does not share a commonality with the categories identified will be grouped and labeled as discrepant data.

Analysis

For this study, Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method for analyzing phenomenological data will be used. This method for analyzing phenomenological data consists of the following steps using the complete transcript of each participant:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping—Horizontalization: list every expression relevant to the experience.
2. Reduction and elimination: determine the invariant constituents by testing each expression to confirm if they meet the two requirements of containing a moment of the experience that is necessary and sufficient for understanding it and has the possibility of being abstracted and labeled. Any expression that does not meet these two requirements will be eliminated along with those that are overlapping, repetitive, and vague. The remaining will be the invariant constituents of the experience.

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents: cluster the related invariant constituents of the experience into a thematic label. These clustered and labeled constituents represent the core themes of the experience.
4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application: Validation Check the invariant constituents and themes against each participants' complete record.
5. Construct an individual textural description of the experience for each participant using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes. Verbatim examples from the transcribed interview will be included.
6. Construct an individual structural description of each participant experience based upon the individual textural description and imaginative variation.
7. Construct a textural-structural description of the meaning and essences of the experience for each participant, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes.

Last, the individual textual-structural descriptions are combined to develop a composite description of the meaning and essence of the experience that is reflective of the entire group (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Quality

In efforts to preserve the quality and trustworthiness of the data analysis, member checking was used. Participants were offered a copy of the transcript for their records via email and prompted to check for errors and to confirm accuracy. Participants were also given the opportunity to give feedback on the individual textural-structural descriptions

to confirm accurate conveyance of what they were trying to express through their interview.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Creswell (2009) asserted that the validity of qualitative research is based on affirming that the findings are accurate from the viewpoint of the researcher, participant, or readers. Therefore, concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are required. Elo et al., (2014) asserted that credibility is established when researchers can assure the readers that the participants in the research are identified and described precisely. To ensure credibility, member checking and reflexivity are two strategies that will be incorporated into this study. According to Cho and Trent (2006) member checking is the "most crucial technique" (p.322) for certifying the credibility of a study. Using member checking ensures accuracy of the information and interpretations drawn from the participants. Elo et al. (2014) also recognized that self-awareness is essential to establishing credibility. Therefore, the strategy of reflexivity (reflective journaling) was also incorporated to aid in managing my subjectivity and to further eliminate researcher bias.

Another strategy for addressing issues of trustworthiness is transferability. Transferability is roughly equivalent to generalizability and demonstrates how applicable the findings are to different settings or with different participants (Anney, 2014). Transferability can be facilitated through rich, thick description, which is the process of thoroughly describing themes identified, the setting and the various perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2009). Providing such extensive details about the methodology

and context allows the study to be replicated by other researchers (Anney, 2014). Every effort was made to highlight the details of this research process to ensure transferability.

Dependability in qualitative research refers to reliability, how stable the data is over time and under various conditions, and demonstrating that the methods used in the research can be reproduced and are consistent (Ary et al., 2010; Elo et al., 2014).Golafshani (2003) asserted that consistency can be achieved if the steps of the research process are verified by examining items such as raw data, reduction products, and process notes. Creswell (2009) also suggested checking transcripts to ensure there are no mistakes made during the transcription process and cross-checking codes as well. To ensure dependability, after the data analysis is complete, I solicited the assistance of a colleague to cross-check my codes to confirm consistency in codes found. My colleague is a fellow mental health counselor as well as a Ph.D. student who is also doing qualitative research.

Lastly, the concept of confirmability refers to objectivity of the researcher. Remaining objective helps to minimize researcher bias. One-way confirmability will be established in this study is through the use of reflexivity. Creswell (2013) recommended that researchers be aware of the biases, values, and experiences they bring to their study and making them known. As mentioned earlier, a reflective journal was kept throughout this process. By keeping a journal, I remained cognizant of my experiences and perspectives and prevented them from influencing my interpretation of the phenomenon being studied.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures are based upon the respect the researcher has for all participants, thus requiring researchers to obtain informed consent, protect vulnerable participants, and maintain confidentiality (Patel, Doku, &Tennakoon, 2003). Before gaining access to participants or collection of data, permission was obtained from the university's IRB (08-03-18-0444492). Thereafter, a letter of cooperation was sent to the school districts to obtain their permission to conduct this study. The study did not begin until permission was granted from the Walden IRB and the school districts. The Walden IRB and district research committee reviewed the recruitment materials and processes for ethical concerns.

Consent forms were emailed to participants upon their agreement to participate in the study. The consent form outlined the purpose of the study, description of the date collection process, an estimated time of 45 minutes to an hour commitment needed, potential risks and benefits, and contact information describing how I can be reached. Participants were advised that their participation was voluntary and that they have the liberty to withdraw at any time. Participants were assured that interviews will be confidential and their anonymity maintained. Volunteers were advised to reply "I consent" upon reading the consent form should they decide to follow through with participating in the study. Participants' identities were not revealed; instead they were referred to by the pseudonyms assigned. Telephone interviews were conducted outside of school hours in a private location that was most convenient and comfortable for the participants. Interview transcripts were saved on my personal laptop, which is password

protected. The data was also be backed up on an external hard drive that is password protected. As the sole researcher, I am responsible for dissemination of the findings. Participants were advised of potential risks and benefits and their right to withdraw their participation from the study at any given time, for any reason without penalty. A $10 gift card was offered in exchange for subject participation. In an effort to eliminate the appearance of coercion or conflicts of interests, only the schools outside of schools that I covered were included in this study. Upon exiting the interview participants were thanked for their participation. Participants were asked if the description of their experience was complete and given the opportunity to add anything else if they liked. Permission to contact participants in near future was also be obtained from each participant to share with them their transcript and textual-structural depiction for review and feedback. I also provided each participant with my contact information to contact me if they had any questions or wanted to discuss the findings. The findings will also be shared with the participating school districts. The data will be stored for a period of five years and thereafter will be erased from my password protected laptop and external hard drive.

Summary

This chapter provided a thorough description of this qualitative study using a phenomenological approach, which was designed to explore the shared experiences of first-year elementary general education teachers regarding their efficacy and persistence for managing students who present disruptive classroom behaviors. The aim of this study was not to acquire quantifiable data nor to generate a theory. Instead, the motivation for this study was to gain insight into the challenges experienced by first-year general

education teachers regarding classroom behavior management and their perspectives on supports needed to increase their competency and tolerance for working with students with challenging behaviors. This chapter further provided an in-depth explanation of Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method for data analysis, discussed the role of the researcher, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures which will be followed.

Chapter 4 will present the findings of this phenomenological study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary general education teachers in their first year of teaching in regards to their management of students with disruptive classroom behaviors. The study also explored teachers' perceptions of their competency and tolerance for managing challenging behaviors while identifying the supports needed to increase their efficacy for effectively managing behavioral issues and reduce unnecessary referral use. The following two research questions were answered: What are the lived experiences of first-year general education teachers in South Carolina in relation to feelings of competence for managing disruptive student behaviors?" and "What are the perspectives of first-year general education teachers on their lived experiences in relation to supports needed to increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors?" Identifying supports needed to increase teachers' tolerance and competency was expected to lead to a reduction in unnecessary referral use. This chapter presents the findings of this phenomenological study, along with discussion of the setting, participant demographics, data collection, analysis and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

First-year elementary general education teachers were solicited and obtained to participate in this study. Initially, the scope of participants was limited to Richland and Lexington county school districts in South Carolina. However, because school administrators denied my call for participants and a lack of responses, IRB permission

was requested and granted to recruit directly through social media via Facebook. This broadened the scope of recruitment to include all first-year elementary teachers in South Carolina. To further appeal to potential participants, IRB permission was also obtained to offer a $10 gift card as an incentive.

Demographics

The participants in this study were all first-year elementary general education teachers employed by various elementary schools throughout school districts in South Carolina. The participants consisted of two White females and three Black males, ranging in age from 26–35 years.

Data Collection

A call for voluntary participants was sent out via Facebook and through district email to the names of first-year teachers provided by the school administrators who agreed to my call for participants. A consent form was provided which gave detailed information about the study, the procedures, potential benefits and risks, stakeholders involved, how the information would be used, and limits of confidentiality. Five participants volunteered to participate, which was much lower than the initial projection of 10-15 participants, despite multiple calls. Data were collected via telephone interviews with elementary general education teachers from various school districts in South Carolina. Participants were advised that a private and quiet location was needed for conducting the interviews.

The interviews for each participant were transcribed via the software, Transcribe. Due to the small number of participants, no computer software was used to code or to

organize the data as previously planned; instead the data were hand-coded and then organized in Word document.

Data Analysis

Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Van Kaam method for analyzing phenomenological data was used. Complete transcripts of each participant were used to analyze the phenomenological data. Using the participants' transcripts, every expression that was relevant and explicitly represented the experience was listed. Cross-checking was used to confirm consistency and relevance. Textual and structural descriptions were presented for each participant, followed by a composite description. Each participant was given the opportunity to review their textual and structural descriptions to certify accuracy. The following categories and themes emerged from the data: nonacademic challenges and issues, self-reflection of experience with disruptive behaviors, classroom behavior management strategies, and criteria for referring students for special services, self-reflection of competence and persistence, and supports needed.

Through concurrent review of the individual transcripts and textual-structural descriptions, it was noted that the findings were pretty consistent among all the participants. Comparatively however, one notable uncommon finding that was not completely reflective of the entire groups' experience was the noted influence of environmental factors at home on student behaviors at school and the difference in cultural backgrounds that shapes the teachers' own behaviors and attitudes toward what is deemed disruptive behaviors. Thus, emphasizing the need for culturally competent teachers who are aware of the norms and expectations for certain groups of students,

rather than judging from their own cultural base. Although this data was not representative of the entire group's experience, I did not consider it discrepant for this information like all the other findings were consistent in addressing the problem and research questions presented.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility and dependability, the transcripts were thoroughly checked to ensure that there were no errors. Member checking was used to ensure the validity of the content. Each participant was given the opportunity to review and revise their transcripts as well as certify that the textual-structural descriptions accurately reflected their experience. Once the themes were identified, cross-checking was done by my colleague who is also a PhD student to verify consistency in themes found. Transferability was also implemented by providing a rich description of the research process, entailing the themes identified, the setting, and the perspectives of each participants. Lastly, through reflexive journaling, confirmability was also established which allowed me to journal my personal thoughts and feelings that surfaced while interviewing participants and completing their textual-structural descriptions. Thus, decreasing the likelihood of my perspectives to influence the research. The strategies used here are consistent with the strategies identified in chapter 3.

Results

In this study, I inquired into the experiences of first-year elementary general education teachers' management of disruptive behaviors. The following research questions were answered: What are the lived experiences of first-year general education

teachers in South Carolina in relation to feelings of competence for managing disruptive student behaviors?" and "What are the perspectives of first-year general education teachers on their lived experiences in relation to supports needed to increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors?" My hope for engaging in this process is that by identifying needed supports that are reflective of the perspectives of first-year teachers could lead to an increase their tolerance and competency for managing disruptive behaviors and ultimately lead to a reduction in unnecessary referral use.

Theme 1: Nonacademic Challenges and Issues

Each participant was asked to identify and describe nonacademic challenges they have faced during their first-year of teaching. Each of the five participants endorsed similar nonacademic challenges such as excessive talking, students being disrespectful and defiant, not following directions, sleeping, physical aggression, throwing things and students not being used to being in structured environment. Participants also noted issues related to having to deal with problems that students bring from home to school, lack of consequences and not having behavioral strategies incorporated into their daily lesson plans. For instance, Brandon (a pseudonym) shared "so I think the nonacademic challenges are perhaps how do I plan for behaviors that are not tied to the lesson I'm trying to teach today and furthermore when those behaviors change or even if I do respond to those behaviors, like what do I do when the reactions of the students are not what I expected if I ask them to be quiet and their reaction is perhaps different than what I anticipated." Samantha (a pseudonym)and Orlando (a pseudonym)in particular both

identified having a lack of support from their school administrators as their main nonacademic issues. Orlando stated:

> Well, where I'm at a lot of the issue is on which, we have a lot of behavior problems. So, um I guess one of the main things would be just as far as support from Administration. So, we have a lot of problems with kids acting up and they don't have any, there's not any consequences for them, to, it's not it's not really anything like they're not going to really get in trouble or anything like that.

Theme 2: Self-Reflection of Experience with Disruptive Behaviors

Each participant endorsed feeling challenged in managing disruptive behaviors at some point during their first-year of teaching. Similarly, Orlando and Samantha both reflected on their experience as being "rough" and "stressful and discouraging" while relating it to their lack of support from their school administrators. Claire (a pseudonym) also described her experience as being "challenging" because of the consistent redirection she has to give her students who are presenting unwanted behaviors such as "not being still and chewing on their shoelaces." Brandon and Gregory (a pseudonym) both deemed their encounters with disruptive behaviors as a learning experience, trying to figure out what the child responds to and building relationships. Many participants reported that their school provided little to no resources to help them better manage students with disruptive behaviors which added to the stress and struggle. However, many of them shared that they relied on their personal studies, undergraduate experiences and help from their colleagues.

Theme 3: Classroom Behavior Management Strategies

The participants shared various strategies and interventions they use to help manage disruptive classroom behaviors. Each participant recognized that there is no

cookie-cutter approach to managing disruptive behaviors. Gregory and Brandon both emphasized the importance and impact that building positive relationships with their students has had on their ability to effectively manage disruptive behaviors. The other participants reported using redirection, positive reinforcement, time out, student/parent conferences, and remaining consistent. While Orlando main strategy was using his reflective station where students go to write about their behavior and feelings, Samantha and Claire both reported using redirection and positive reinforcement as their means for managing disruptive behaviors. Samantha shared,

> I use redirection and then I use positive reinforcement. So, when students doing that they're asked to do or they're staying on task I make it a point to notice that and I use a lot of incentive for the students that are you know, being cooperative and following directions.

Theme 4: Criteria for Referring Students for Special Services

The participants shared similar thresholds for when they feel it is appropriate to refer students for support services due to disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Participants noted that their decision to refer a student to support services would occur when the unwanted behaviors are a daily occurrence, negatively impact other students, they have sufficient documentation of the disruptive behaviors or there's been no response to the classroom level interventions put in place. There was no indication from any of the participants that they were quick to refer students to support services or the office out of lack of tolerance or competency for managing the unwanted behaviors. For instance, Gregory shared,

> I take my approach, several approaches, you know it in order to do so, but once it becomes consistent defiance, that's when I reach out to you know, my mentors and other teachers as well as Administration to kind of help with the situation.

Claire also asserted that “there has to be a lot of documentation first so I can have a lot of hard evidence documenting things that have happened in the classroom.” However, out of the five participants, Brandon was the only participant who acknowledged that he’s less motivated to refer a student for support services because of his personal studies regarding Black students being overrepresented in special education. Therefore, he chooses to focus on what he can do to become a better teacher.

Theme 5: Self-Evaluation of Competence and Persistence

At the time of the interviews, each participant endorsed positive feelings about their competency and tolerance for managing disruptive behaviors. However, they collectively recognized that they all still had room for growth and could benefit from additional training.

Each participant shared changes they noticed in their competency and persistence during their first-year of teaching. Many admitted that their competency and persistence started out low at the beginning of the school year, but increased as the year progressed. One teacher shared how practicing self-care helped her maintain her persistence and another felt that his persistence and competence increased when he began to establish relationships with his students. However, one of the participants reported that his persistence in managing disruptive behaviors started out high, but gradually declined as the school year progressed because by then he had already established relationships and his students were well aware of the expectations, therefore he was less tolerant of unwanted behaviors. Moreover, this participant and one other shared the need for

exercising grace when it comes to working with students with disruptive behaviors and being able to judge each student and situation individually.

Theme 6: Supports Needed

The participants were very forthcoming and practical in their accounts of what they felt they needed to help them become more competent and tolerant in managing disruptive student behaviors. Two of the participants felt that having more support would help them be more competent and tolerant. Samantha asserted having "more support from administration." Samantha explained "I'm not quick to call administration, but when I do call is like a really good reason because I really need somebody to come in." Samantha further explained that she looks to her administrators for encouragement and empowerment, especially when it comes to responding to disciplinary incidents. Orlando identified needing "support across the board for first-year teachers." One area he identified needing support in is being able to receive feedback after being observed to tell him what he's doing right or need to do better, rather than just coming in and not giving any feedback as he's experienced.

The most common need shared across majority of the participants was the need for more professional development opportunities. Four of the five participants specifically expressed wanting to receive professional development training on behavior and behavior management strategies. Youngbloom and Filter (2013) asserted that in order for teachers to become skillful in using evidence-based behavior models, constant training and assistance is imperative. One participant shared wanting more training on understanding mental health disorders. These findings were consistent with past research

that pointed out the lack of formal training teachers have on mental health disorders and how to respond to students with such needs (Martinussen et al., 2011; Reinke et al., 2011). As Gregory expressed that he would like to receive more training on understanding childhood mental health disorders and how they affect students, he noted how he's often received copies of students 504 Plans without any real explanation or understanding of their diagnosis. Gregory stated, "I want to have the knowledge and the background." Gregory believes that having this knowledge would enable him to better respond to those students.

In addition to receiving training on behavior management, Brandon also shared his desire for "professional development like understanding different cultures and how students are raised and the environments they're raised in." Brandon shared from experience that he knows these factors impact how students behave at school and when teachers come from different backgrounds then their students there's a greater need for being culturally competent.

Tsouloupas et al., (2014) emphasized the significance of relying on teachers to identify their needs to improve their self-efficacy for managing disruptive behaviors and allowing those needs to be a guideline for developing professional development opportunities. Each of these needs identified, if met can greatly shift the trajectory of first-year teachers' competence and tolerance in managing students with disruptive behaviors in a positive direction.

Participant 1: Samantha

Textual description. As a first-year general education elementary teacher,

Samantha provided an in-depth description of the factors that shaped her experiences related to managing students with disruptive behaviors. Samantha reported, “I’ve had students yelling, throwing things at me, just blatant disrespect as far as you know defiance and not following instructions and refusing to do so.” Samantha described her first year as “very stressful and discouraging.” When it comes to employing strategies for managing challenging behaviors, Samantha reported “I use redirection and then I use positive reinforcement.” When it comes to making the decision about when to refer a student to the office or recommend them for special service Samantha responded, “When I know it’s nothing else I can do to make the situation diffuse and when I see it, the situations getting, then that’s when I decide to call in administration and then as far as referring a student, once I have enough data as far as you know, it being a constant behavior issue, more than one or two, three times a day or throughout the week.” Samantha reflected on her persistence and competency in managing disruptive behavior throughout her first year, stating, “I would say it’s a strong level of competence, but I still need improvement.” Samantha attributed her knowledge and skills for managing disruptive behaviors to her college undergraduate experience. Samantha denied receiving any formal training or professional development from her current school on classroom behavior management, reporting that they focused more on academics and on things like integrating technology in the classroom. As for identifying supports needed, Samantha asserted having “support from administration. I guess just being understanding and supportive of me. I would be stronger as a teacher and more empowered.”

Structural Description. The foundation that Samantha defined her experience as a first-year 4th grade teacher was based upon the types of nonacademic challenges and issues encountered, her ability to effectively respond to disruptive behaviors, what she believes constitutes an appropriate referral, and overall perception of what she feels she needs to help her become a better teacher.

Samantha quickly identified the lack of support from administration along with problem behaviors of students yelling, throwing things, blatant disrespect and defiance as her nonacademic challenges and issues. With this combination of problems Samantha described her first-year as "very stressful and discouraging." It was at the point when Samantha felt like there was nothing more, she could do to diffuse behavioral disruptions and the problems continued to escalate that she sought assistance from an administrator. Whenever she felt a student needed more specialized support, Samantha would consider the frequency of the behavior. Samantha would look for and document the frequency of the unwanted behavior(s) and if they exceeded 1-3 times a week or throughout the day she would proceed with a referral to special services. Samantha emphasized the importance of having sufficient data to support her referral.

In general, Samantha has found success in using redirection and positive reinforcement as strategies for managing disruptive behaviors. Recognizing students who are behaving grabs the attention of those who are not, thus motivating them to "get back on track with the other students." Samantha reflected on the various problem behaviors she's experienced, recognizing that throughout this first-year she is more patient when certain behaviors occur and she has more resilience and understanding. However, before

getting to this point, Samantha admitted that there were times when she felt like "just giving up" because she did not see any change in sight.

Samantha was able to draw strength and support from her instructional coach and mentor, noting that they were both beneficial in helping her gain access to resources and behavioral strategies. Samantha expressed appreciation for having these two individuals who were her sounding boards, giving her the opportunity to express her feelings and have daily debriefings about her day. Having someone who understands what she was going through was very important to Samantha being a first-year teacher. While Samantha considers herself to have a "strong level of competence," she willfully acknowledged that she "still need(s) improvements."

Samantha felt that her competency and persistence would be further increased by having "support from administration." Samantha explained that she strives to handle behavioral disruptions on her own, stating, "I'm not quick to call administration." Samantha let it be known that the only time she calls for an administrator is when she feels like the situation is out of her control. Samantha was passionate in expressing how she would like to be supported by her administrator(s). Samantha explained that when she calls for administrative assistance, she would like for them to come with a mindset of being understanding, not quick to judge the situation in favor of the student or making her feel as though she's responsible for the student acting out. Samantha seemed confident that having this kind of support will make her "stronger as a teacher and more empowered."

Participant 2: Claire

Textual description. In discussing nonacademic challenges, Claire reported that she had the most problems with students who had not been to pre-k, the ones who are new to school and who are not accustomed to knowing procedures of school. Per Claire, "the most behavior issues I see are like not knowing procedures of school and how to behave at school and with other children, like being able to shout out whenever you want to...not being able to sit still, I have a few that chew on their shoelaces." Before making a decision to refer a student for special services or to the office for disruptive behaviors, Claire noted "there has to be a lot of documentation." Claire reported that she documents incidents that have occurred, describing this documentation as her "hard evidence." As for strategies used to manage disruptive behaviors, Claire reported using "a lot of redirection, a lot of positive reinforcement for students who are doing the right thing, like calling out students who are doing the right thing and rewarding their behavior and usually that help straighten up the misbehavior of the ones that aren't doing the right thing." Claire also reported using a clip chart with green, yellow and red which give students a visual of where they are behaviorally and to help keep them on track. Claire noted that colors represented the following: Green=Ready to learn, Yellow=Think about it, Red=Lose a privilege. Throughout her first-year of teaching Claire noted the following changes in her competence and persistence, "Definitely some days gets very tiring like by the end of the day, some days I'm just kind of over it. I'm like screw it just let him chew on a shoelace, I don't care...like it's just some days it does get difficult, but I definitely try to restart every day and treat every day as a new day." As for resources made

available to help manage disruptive classroom behaviors, Claire reported that she can call a member of her administration team but has not encountered anything to the point of needing them. Claire also reported that she has a classroom assistant but feels that her assistant is not that great of a disciplinarian, so she ends up doing all the discipline herself, which she finds frustrating. Claire denied receiving any training on classroom behavior management from her school, noted that she received "a little bit" of behavior and classroom management training at the college level, but attributed her knowledge and skills to "experience and learning from other teachers and little tricks that I see that I like from other teachers, little sayings and just picking up on stuff that I've witnessed other teachers do is where I get most of my stuff from." Claire described her current level of competence for managing disruptive behaviors as "pretty high." Claire expressed that she's had a lot of experience with many types of behaviors and there have been times when teachers of the same student with behavior problems have come to her and asked her why she does not have the same problems with that child. Claire attributed her success in managing that student's unwanted behavior as well as others to her "keeping the high level of expectation." When asked her opinion of supports needed to increase her competence and persistence in managing students with disruptive behaviors, Claire expressed that remaining consistent in giving the same message to every student and making sure that at the end of the day she is as consistent as she was at the beginning of the day, not getting frustrated or letting herself get tired are all important. Claire also suggested that "some more training couldn't hurt, about different strategies to use for disruptive behaviors, but I think a lot of it is just until you get in the classroom and

experience it and try and think of, because some of the stuff that I think of that works like it's just on the fly, came in my brain when you know a certain behavior happened and then it worked and it's like oh well that worked, lets continue using that."

Structural Description. Claire identified aspects of her first years' experience that have impacted her competency and persistence in working with students with disruptive behaviors. As a kindergarten teacher, Claire is not only responsible for teaching students' basic skills in reading and writing, she also has the enormous task of teaching them how to behave and interact with others. Claire noted that her greatest challenge has been with students who did not attend pre-k, those who are essentially experiencing school for the first time. Claire specifically identifies the beginning of her school year as the most challenging part of her first-year because it is during that time students are getting acclimated to being in a structured environment.

Claire described the behaviors of her students as "very challenging." Claire recognized that the most effective way for her to combat these challenging behaviors was to "be consistent with redirecting the behavior." Prior to referring students to the office or for special services, Claire believes that there has to be "a lot of documentation first." To manage disruptive classroom behaviors, her strategies of choice consisted of a lot of redirection and a lot of positive reinforcement. Like Samantha, Claire believes that calling students out who are engaging in desired behaviors tend to prompt students who are misbehaving to correct their unwanted behaviors so they too can be recognized or rewarded.

Claire acknowledged that some days are exhausting from the constant redirection and positive reinforcement she uses to minimize disruptive behaviors. Although she has a classroom assistant, Claire reported that the assistant is not much of a disciplinarian, so she is left to do all the discipline herself, which is frustrating. However, for Claire exercising self-care (i.e. positive self-talk, daily reset, extra cup of coffee, etc.) and being consistent has been key to her persistence. According to Claire she has not experienced any behaviors that have escalated to the level of needing an administrator's assistance, but she was confident that she has the support of her administrative team. Claire describes her competence for managing disruptive behavior as "pretty high, stating that she's experienced various types of disruptive behaviors."

To further promote and support her competency and persistence, Claire opined that receiving more training on behavior management strategies would be beneficial, although from experience she has found that hands on experience is the teacher. Claire thought it was important to note that all students are different and no two students are disruptive in the same manner. "You just kind of have to get in there and get in the trenches and get dirty and try to figure out what works best for you."

Participant 3: Orlando

Textural Description. Participant Orlando reported having "a lot of behavior problems." In discussing his nonacademic challenges, Orlando reported, "lack of support from administration. So, we have a lot of problems with kids acting up and they don't have any, there's not any consequences for them, it's not really anything, like they're not going to really get in trouble or anything like that." Orlando expressed that as a first-year

teacher he has found it difficult to manage his classroom because although he has rules and enforces them, once the behaviors get to a certain level where administration has to get involved, he feels that nothing really happens and the kids are aware of this; therefore he is seeing a lot of the same disruptive behaviors almost daily. Orlando reported, “I’ve had kids fighting in my classroom. Being straight up defiant, they won’t follow just simple rules, kids slamming my doors and especially in my room I have a lot of instruments like just taking instruments and pick them up and throwing them across the room.” Orlando further expressed his experience in working with students with disruptive behaviors as “kind of a challenge because like I said with for one, where I’m at with like the parents not being as supportive as they are and it’s kind of hard because they’re not really, you know teaching them anything at home. So, when they come to school, they don’t want to follow anything that’s structured.” As for knowing when to refer a student to the office or for special support service, Orlando reported, “If it keeps happening on a consistent basis.” However, Orlando noted that often times “it’s really hard because a lot of things that we tell and we suggest doesn’t really happen, so it’s kind of like the same thing consistently happening on a week-to-week basis.” When asked to identify strategies used to manage students with disruptive behaviors, Orlando reported, “I’ll do a lot of different things because you know based on the student and how they are could be different. So, I try, once I have my rules and stuff, I try to like you know have like time out area they can go and sit out and think like a reflective station.” Orlando also added that he has a desk in the back of his classroom and a little chart that the students can write down what is bothering them and how they are feeling, and he tries talking to them. As

for changes in his competence and persistence thus far, Orlando expressed, “Well, I can say from the beginning of the year it’s gotten a little better as far as trying to manage it because at the beginning I felt like it was just, I don’t know, I felt like for one the kids really didn’t care and I felt like behaviors weren’t going to change because of how they know what things are going from an administration standpoint.” However, Orlando pointed out that things got better “once I established like better relationships with those kids and I understood why they were doing some of the behavior that they were doing.” Orlando further expressed that knowing why his students engage in certain behaviors and getting to know the kids better has improved his confidence in his ability to manage the disruptive behaviors he has encountered. In response to resources available to help manage disruptive behaviors, Orlando reported that the main resource his school has is in-school suspension (ISS), where disruptive students are removed from the classroom and placed in isolation to complete their classwork. Orlando, however, noted that as of recently this resource has not been available due to the school’s ISS person leaving for another job. Orlando reported, “it’s been a little rougher lately because that resource is gone and we can’t call anybody because Administration is always busy and I feel like with Administration, but at least at our school, I feel like it could be a little better as far as support wise because we can have kids in our class like kicking our doors and throwing stuff across the room and it could be 15-20 minutes before they come down there.”

At this point in his first-year of teaching, Orlando described his level of competency for managing students as a learning process. Per Orlando, “I feel like there’s still some stuff I need to learn, which students would have disruptive behaviors. I feel as

if I thought I knew more than what I knew, but I figured out certain approaches don't work." Orlando recognized that his current teaching situation is different from when he did his student teaching. Orlando stated, "I feel like I had it good when I was student teaching and now, I'm at a place where kids are a little bit more destructive, that I could know a little bit more about those types of students and those types of behaviors." In identifying supports needed to help increase his competence and persistence for working with students who present disruptive behaviors, Orlando suggested, "I just feel like more support would be nice. I'm the type of person if somebody came in like my classroom consistently and just saw like how I manage things and how I did things and then they provided me with the type of feedback to try to improve those things then that would help me out and even like maybe going to like behavior management type classes and courses and things like that especially like for a first-year teacher." Orlando reported that he has had individuals come to observe him in class, but they did not provide him any feedback. Orlando further suggested, "Let me go out and see somebody in action in a situation like I'm in and how they handle things and maybe I could learn from that." However, Orlando repeatedly emphasized the need for more support, as he affirmed "so I feel like support is a major thing across the board."

Structural Description. Orlando shared that he struggled with nonacademic challenges of excessive problem behaviors and a lack of support from administration. Orlando attributed the excessive amount of disruptive behavior to the lack of consequences enforced by his administrators. Orlando found it difficult to maintain order in his classroom because despite the rules and consequences he had established, many of the

students had in their minds that they were not going to get into any trouble beyond that. Orlando stated, “I can take their lunch, but they know that after that nothing is going to happen.” This mindset Orlando felt was often reinforced by administration’s response to disciplinary problems. With a defeatist attitude, Orlando stated, “So it’s like in a way, it’s like what’s the point of really having rules and consequences in your classroom because the kids going to keep doing the same thing over and over and if you call admin, half of the time they don’t come or they just say well let him sit over there in a corner.” Then in conjunction with lack of support from his administration team, Orlando further expressed that there is also a lack of parental support in helping correct the students’ unwanted behaviors. As a result, Orlando repeatedly referenced this first-year of teaching as “hard” and “tough.”

Orlando opined that there are many students in his school that are in need of special services but are not receiving them. However, whenever he finds that a student is consistently displaying a problem behavior, he will discuss his concerns with an administrator. However, Orlando reported reluctance in this process because from experience he found that there has rarely been follow through. In response to addressing disruptive behaviors, Orlando recognizes that every student is different. Being cognizant of this, Orlando tries different strategies to see how his students respond. Orlando admitted that he’s “still trying to figure it all out.” Giving students time to reflect on their unwanted behaviors and talking to them are the strategies that he has found to be most effective.

For Orlando, his competency and persistence gradually improved as his first-year progressed. Initially he struggled because he saw that his students had no regard for rules or consequences, nor could he rely on his administrative team of the parents for reinforcement. However, he discovered through building relationships with his students that he was able to gain a better understanding of why they behaved the way they did. Orlando expressed the same sentiments a Samantha as he confessed that "there's still more stuff I need to learn." As he reflected on his student teaching experience, he realized that the type of students he worked with then are totally different from the students he has now. Per Orlando "I'm at a place where kids are a little bit more destructive."

In order to increase his competency and persistence, Orlando suggested that "more support" would be beneficial. Orlando believes that receiving feedback from classroom observers would also be of great value. Orlando shared that there have been times when observers came to his classroom to observe him teaching but did not provide him with any feedback. Receiving feedback will at least give first-year teachers like Orlando insight into what they are doing correctly and what they need to do differently. Orlando disclosed that everything he has learned about managing disruptive behaviors was acquired through his personal experience in the classroom thus far. While Orlando denied receiving any training on classroom behavior management through his school, he suggested there should be monthly training on the subject matter, especially for first-year teachers.

Participant 4: Gregory

Textual Description. Participant Gregory shared a different perspective regarding his nonacademic challenges faced in this first-year of teaching as they relate to student behavior and classroom management. Gregory reported his challenge was related to the upbringing of his students. Per Gregory "I teach at a title one school, so a lot of my kids come from you know homes and foster homes, some living with aunts and uncles, some don't have parents active in their lives, some come from households where you know a lot of violence and drugs is abused. So, it's kind of definitely challenging to build structure for them." Gregory shared that his challenges consist of learning how to structure, getting students to follow directions, and teaching them right from wrong. Gregory further described his challenges with "kids who are homeless, they come and they don't get enough sleep at home, so they come to class and they just like they like completely tired like they be sleeping, sitting crisscross applesauce, or they sleep standing up or get towards the wall and sleep." Gregory opined that the living conditions and environment of his students affect their behavior and interactions in the learning environment. As previous participants reported, Gregory reported having students who were defiant and disrespectful and who used profanity.

In describing his experience in working with students with disruptive behaviors, Gregory stated, "My experience has been kind of mix, I wanted to be considered as like, you know the cool teacher." Gregory shared that his goal was "being able to get to know them better and be able to use that, you know to let them know that their behavior is not tolerated, there's rules and there's structure." Gregory further explained that he tries to

find out what each child responds to, “tapping into that child as a person and then being able to kind of work from there and being able to manage and lower the chances of them acting up in class.” When it comes to making the decision about when to refer a student to the office or recommend them for special services because of disruptive behaviors, Gregory explained, “this will be after numerous attempts of you know with my own strategy, own classroom management.” Gregory reported that he tries several approaches to de-escalate unwanted behaviors, but noted that “once it becomes consistent defiance, that’s when I reach out to you know my mentors and other teachers as well as administration to help with the situation because there may be some information about the student that I’m not aware of that can help me provide, you know to find solutions.” As for strategies used to manage disruptive behaviors, Gregory reported, “I always give a warning, once I give a warning, I’ll go to student conference.” Gregory also shared once he has had a one-on-one session with the student about their behavior, he can then use them as a helper or teacher assistant, and he has found that strategy to work well.

As the school year progressed, Gregory noted that his persistence in managing students who present disruptive behaviors has changed. Per Gregory “my tolerance to be honest, I feel like my tolerance has kind of shortened a little bit than before because early on you still learning kids. You still trying to understand this so you tolerate a lot more…” Gregory recognized that his tolerance depends on the situation. Per. Gregory “so my tolerance has gotten kind of more short, but it all depends on the situation and the student and if the student I’ve been constantly having issues with and if you know things we had in place wasn’t working, then your patience can get kind of you know wears thin at times

and with some kids, you just have to be patient with more due to their outside or things they can't control like mental disorders or things of that nature that you know you just have to kind of manage without it getting too much of a burden." Gregory reported that one resource made available to him to help manage disruptive classroom behaviors is that his school offers professional development at the start of the school year, during the middle of the school year and in faculty meetings where the teachers help each other by discussing and sharing strategies used. Gregory further explained that he and his colleagues mostly teach the same students, so sharing and using the same strategies helps provide consistent structure and he has found this to be very helpful and effective.

When asked to describe his competence for managing disruptive classroom behaviors Gregory asserted, "Just to this point now, I think I'm pretty competent because I always wanted to build that one-on-one relationship with students." Gregory reported that he connects with students on topics unrelated to school such as favorite sports teams or favorite sneakers. Per Gregory, "basically building that connection that's definitely helped a lot with behavior management, connecting with students and understanding them and help them understand you and your expectations of them and let them know what they are truly capable of definitely helps out." In regards to identifying supports needed to further increase his competence and persistence in working with students with disruptive behaviors, Gregory expressed, "probably for me, it would be like more knowledgeable about the mental disorders that you know kids have. Like we get IEPs and we get our 504s, but we don't have very much detail or what the diagnosis is and what it causes. So, by just providing more information on that particular diagnosis and being able

to know how to handle you know a person with that kind you know." Gregory went on to discuss the likelihood of him teaching a student with a mental health disorder like autism and ADHD, therefore he opined that he would be better prepared to respond to the needs of those students if he were equipped with the necessary knowledge. Therefore, Gregory stated "having more resources for the mental disorders and how does it affect you know kids learning ability."

Structural Description. Gregory related students' environmental factors to the nonacademic challenges he has experienced during his first-year of teaching. Gregory explained how many of his students come from broken homes, some living with family members with no contact from their biological parents and noted that some others have been exposed to domestic violence and drug use. As a result, Gregory felt challenged in his ability to establish structure. Gregory recognized that his students often deal with problems at home that affect their behavior at school, such as them not getting enough sleep. Gregory asserted that "not being able to get enough sleep at night because of the living conditions in their environment and those things have an effect on their behavior because they have no interest in doing anything else…" Additionally, Gregory also opined that the disrespect, defiance and profanity his students display is likely behaviors that are being modeled at home.

Understanding that some of his students do not come from the best living situations and lack the proper upbringing, Gregory fashions his first-year on building positive relationships with students. Making his students feel welcome, creating an enjoyable environment while establishing rules, procedures, and consequences is

Gregory's pathway to managing disruptive behaviors. Gregory reflected on the lessons that he learned from his father growing up, stating, "My father always told me that you are one conversation away and you never know who you are affecting by what you say to them because as kids, they're young so they are like a sponge, so they see everything you do and hear everything you say." Gregory found it important to not create the persona of being that teacher who is "always fussing at them or the teacher that's always putting them in time out." Gregory strives to connect with his students on a personal and relatable level, with simple things such as inquiring about their favorite athlete, wearing colorful sneakers that attract their attention, or playing four squares with them on the playground. However, like some of the other participants, Gregory also expounded on how he changes his approach in responding to disruptive behaviors based upon the individual student. Also, having that personal relationship with his students plays a major role in helping him decide how he handles their unwanted behaviors.

Gregory maintains that he enacts several of his own classroom management strategies to de-escalate and minimize disruptive behaviors. However, Gregory explained that once he exhausts his strategies, he identified with having a support network consisting of his of mentors, fellow colleagues, and administration that he reaches out to for help. Gregory shared that he greatly relies on his fellow colleagues as resources because they all teach the same students, so learning and sharing what they do to manage certain students can be consistently implemented across all settings. Gregory further explained that his rationale for turning to his network of supporters is because he

understands that they may have information about the student(s) that he does not and may be able to offer more insight and assist with finding a solution to the behavioral problems.

As Gregory examined his competency and tolerance for managing students with disruptive behaviors, he positively credited both to his taking the opportunity to establish and build relationships with his students. Ironically, Gregory explained that now that he has a relationship with his students and they are aware of his expectations, his tolerance at time wavers and has gradually shortened. Gregory noted that he was more tolerant earlier on in the school year because he was in the process of learning his students; therefore, he was more forbearing. Moreover, Gregory's tolerance for misbehavior has also been contingent upon whether the student(s) consistently displayed disruptive behaviors and if he was aware of any underlying issues that were outside of their control. Although though Gregory maintains a positive outlook on his competency and tolerance for managing disruptive behaviors, he believes that he would be more versed in this area if he had a better understanding of childhood mental health disorders. Gregory expects that having this knowledge will help him improve how he responds to disruptive behaviors and be able to distinguish between typical behaviors and behaviors consistent with a mental health disorder.

Participant 5: Brandon

Textual Description. Participant 5, Brandon is a first-year 5th grade teacher. Brandon shared that his nonacademic challenges consist of not including in his lesson plan strategies for responding to students who are presenting disruptive behaviors. Brandon explained that many teachers such as himself are able to respond to student needs such as

getting better test scores or having greater academic achievement, but are less prepared to manage behaviors that are impeding their overall academic performance such as the unwanted behaviors he has experienced, like students getting out of their seats, talking to their neighbor, and beating on the tables.

When asked to describe his experience in working with children with disruptive behaviors, Brandon stated, “I guess it been more of a learning experience.” Likened to Gregory, Brandon also discussed how developing positive relationships with students has shaped his experience. Per Brandon “my goal is to build relationship with students, have some conversation with them whether it’s at lunchtime or at recess time, because I believe that the relationship you have with a person allows you to have more of an impact or impression on the person and they’re more willing to do things.” In regards to knowing when he should refer a student to the office or for special services, Brandon explained that he’s “less motivated to do those things.” Brandon attributed this lack of motivation to his undergraduate student teaching and personal studies about how the special education system is overly populated with Blacks. So rather than referring a student to special services for behavior problems, Brandon added that he focuses on “how do I become better teacher for those children.” However, in the event that he had to, speaking hypothetically, Brandon stated, “I would never recommend them for like special ed or special needs, but if there was a scenario, if a said student, his behavior has been very distracting and it impacts the education of others and they’re very consistent and I’ve tried several different things, none of them seem to work and particularly when a student’s behavior impedes the growth of the learning environment of another student.

That's where I feel like my hands are tied so for that reason you know, that's when I would get an administrator involved or a counselor or whoever the appropriate personnel is at the school at that time, who's available and make them aware of the situation."

Brandon was asked to describe the interventions he uses; he reported that he started the school year out with "a laundry list of how our classroom operates and why we will operate this way." Brandon also reported that when students violate the classroom rules, he does things such as have a conversation with the student, impose silent lunch, restrict certain activities, and if the unwanted behavior is significant, he makes a call to the parent and when all else fails if behaviors are persistent, he will contact an administrator. However, Brandon affirmed that his main strategy is "a lot of conversation, a lot of talking, a lot of getting on the same page and then helping those students understand why they have to be held accountable for their actions."

Brandon explained that as his first-year progressed, his competence and persistence shifted Brandon added that earlier on he was consistent in enforcing the rules without considering underlying factors that may have triggered an unwanted behavior. However, Brandon expressed that "being a human being I think it's important to understand like humans develop at different rates and every human is different and so that makes the consequences perhaps different and you have to have grace and understanding." Brandon added that he has often questioned whether he did the right thing or not, explained that his goal of each day is, "I try to be consistent in show kids that I care about them more than I want to enforce a rule." As for resources made available to him to help manage students with disruptive behaviors, Brandon. initially

stated that there were none, but after further contemplation, Brandon shared that he has the option to contact the school counselor for a student to see or contact the administrator. Brandon also noted that he uses a reward system, such as allowing students to earn extra computer time and being a teacher's helper. Brandon also added that he has reservations about overly using incentives, stated, "I think they become like drugs in certain senses where the goal now perhaps is not focused on like being a good student or being a good individual or having pride in your academic success, but at the same time, you know, I think it's tied back to what the reward is and I think that perhaps is poor."

When asked to describe his level of competence and persistence in managing disruptive behaviors, Brandon stated, "I guess if we were on a scale of 1-10, I feel like I'm at a 10, other days I feel like I'm a 1, but generally speaking I don't feel like I've mastered that aspect comparatively speaking." After further contemplation, Brandon reported that he is not known for having major behavior problems in his class, which he surmises maybe attributed to him being male. However, Brandon stated, "I'm probably a 7 out of 10, you know, there's room for growth. I have not effectively been able to support every single child at like very consistently, but I have been able to have an impact on the students that I serve. So, I think I'm doing okay. I think I could do better." In discussing supports needed, Brandon expressed, "I think it's learning more about behavior." Brandon further explained "going to college, getting your degree you learn some things that prepare you to be a teacher and then you teach and you learn that all the things that you see and do and the feedback students give you are not in all the textbooks and conversations that you had in college and then you know you try to use what the

school provided as a resource and that's not always 100% effective. Therefore, Brandon shared that he relies on "self-improvement" and "personal professional development has been key." Brandon reported reading books such as The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and books from the Black author, Jawanza Kunjufu. Brandon later suggested one helpful support would be "someone in the district office, a team of people who have gathered all this research and then figure out how we can disperse this to teachers so that they can be more effective in classroom management of student behavior." However, Brandon expressed that until this happens, he will continue to do his small research he has done, because it is helpful.

Brandon pointed out that cultural differences play a major role in how teachers respond to certain behaviors. Therefore, Brandon suggested that when it comes to hiring teachers there should be an opportunity for them to learn and think about how different students grow up in different areas and how they are going to respond to things differently. Per Brandon "if there's any professional development like understanding different cultures and how students are raised and the environments they're raised in and that perhaps impact how to behave at school."

Structural Description. Brandon identified various aspects of his personal and cultural experiences that tied directly into his overall experience as a first-year teacher. Brandon viewed nonacademic challenges from the standpoint of personal accountability. Brandon perceived that the root of his nonacademic challenges stemmed from him not properly planning for how to address disruptive behaviors. Brandon explained that during this first-year of teaching, he was so focused on his lesson plans and just "trying to instruct

right" that he didn't plan for behaviors that would interfere with the students' learning. Per Brandon, "You go in prepared with that plan and a lot of times what you find is that plan has nothing written in it for a kid who's tired, or a kid that likes to move around, or a kid who is cold, or a kid that wants to talk every five minutes." Brandon argued that while his school's overall goal is to help students obtain higher test scores and assure academic growth, there has been no in-depth discussions on how to manage disruptive behaviors that ultimately hinder students from reaching the goals the school has set from them.

Similar to some of the other participants, Brandon maintained that this first-year has been an ongoing learning experience. The fundamental aspects of relationship building are at the core of Brandon's personal and professional development. Brandon asserted that relationship building plays a major role in how he relates to "people, teachers and students alike." Brandon found that extending himself beyond his lesson plans has proved positive for his students as well as for himself.

Brandon reported that the students he teaches are predominantly Black like him. Brandon's cultural background and personal studies on the overpopulation of Blacks in special education programs has greatly influenced his attitude towards referring students for special services. When asked about his criteria for referring students to the office or for special services Brandon firmly declared "I never recommend them for like special ed. or special needs," but gave a hypothetical response for if he had to. Brandon explained that because of his personal studies he has become "very wary" of referring students for special services. However, Brandon shared that his hard stance and resistance

to referring students to special services shifted slightly after hearing an administrator explain that “special education is not a sentence, it’s a service.” Brandon recognizes that extreme circumstances that go beyond the supports he can provide may require more specialized services and by not making the referral would be a disservice to that student. Brandon however emphasized how he uses self-reflection to focus his attention on what he is doing and assessing what he can do differently to best meet the needs of his students.

Brandon views classroom behavior management as “training” and without it he believes that “people can’t excel in whatever we’re training them for.” Therefore, with this mantra, Brandon uses strategies that train his students to “treat people the way we want to be treated regardless of how they treat us.” Brandon reinforces personal responsibility and accountability whereby each student is expected to do what is right regardless of if their classmates choose to break the rules. Brandon also noted that tying behavioral objectives into whatever curriculum he is teaching helps reinforce that training. Like many of the other participants, Brandon shared an overarching behavioral expectation for his class, but stated that his approach in responding to disruptive behaviors is done on a case-by-case basis.

Brandon reflected on his competence and persistence in managing disruptive behaviors from the standpoint of understanding the experiences that his students bring to the classroom. Brandon recognized that many of his students come to him with different struggles that he has never had to struggle through and with different experiences that he has not experienced. So rather than being a stickler for executing rules and being hard

bent on not changing them like he was at the very beginning, he has become more empathy driven and operating from a place of grace and understanding. M.B. further explained that this is where he struggles with the inconsistency in discipline, management, and tolerance. During these times, Brandon reported that he relies on self-reflection once again, asking himself what he considers "hard questions" such as "how good of a teacher I've been and a manager of behavior and how much of a nurturer I've been or not." Brandon admitted that biggest question he asks himself is "Did I treat another student perhaps unfairly because of the several other behavior incidents that I experienced before with other kids?" Brandon stated that showing kids that he cares takes precedence over enforcing a rule.

Brandon recounted some of the basic levels of resources that his school offers (i.e. contact the school counselor, contact an administrator, reward system), but outside of that reported that there are not any. Brandon voiced that he is not particularly a fan of extrinsic rewards, especially when they are used effectively. Brandon argued that for many students the focus of the goal to be a good student/individual and having pride in their academic performance often shifts to the prize being the goal. Going back to his mantra about training students, Brandon strives to empower his students to become intrinsically motivated to do the right thing, rather than being driven by a reward.

Brandon prides himself on being known for not having many behavioral issues with his students, but humbly confessed that there is still room for growth. Brandon questionably wondered whether this success is somehow related to the fact that he is male. As previously noted, Brandon confirmed that his overall teaching experience has

direct ties to his college experience and programs he participated in that forced him to change his way of thinking. Brandon explained that he has learned that he cannot approach every situation solely based upon how he was raised. However, Brandon opined that many other teachers are not able to disconnect from their personal upbringing when it comes to discipline and redirecting unwanted behaviors. Therefore, Brandon strongly suggested greater promotion of cultural competency whereby teachers have the opportunity to reflect on the fact that students grow up differently and are going to respond differently. Moreover, developing a greater understanding of the manner in which students are raised and the environments they come from and how it may directly impact the way they behave in school is very important.

Composite Description

Each participant in this study reported experiencing some form of disruptive classroom behaviors that they felt challenged in managing at one point or another during their first-year of teaching. Participants identified student behaviors that ranged from, but were not limited to, excessive talking, not following directions, sleeping during class, aggression, utter disrespect, and defiance. In addition to the observable behavioral challenges that impacted their competence and tolerance for managing disruptive behaviors, many of the teachers expressed that the lack of support from administrators, parents, problems students bring from home to school, and the lack of consequences also impacted their ability to manage disruptive student behaviors.

Each participant endorsed implementing interventions and strategies that they acquired from either their undergraduate studies, fellow colleagues, instructional coaches,

mentors, or, most commonly, from their personal trial-and-error practices. All of the participants shared multiple interventions they employ to manage disruptive classroom behaviors. None of the participants gave the impression that they were quick to make a referral because of disruptive behaviors but maintained that it would come as a last resort, after they had tried all that they know to do. Of the five participants, only one expressed strong reservation about referring students for special services.

All the participants were forthcoming in acknowledging that their first-year in teaching was rather challenging and a learning experience in regards to managing disruptive student behaviors. There was a resounding expression of feeling discouraged and stressed and having a downward shift in their tolerance as the school year progressed. Many reported having a lack of resources made available to them by their schools for managing disruptive behaviors and instead frequently relied on their personal studies, trial-and-error, their undergraduate experiences, and relationships with fellow colleagues. Despite their fluctuating tolerance, the participants shared that their competence grew with the challenges they faced and successes they experienced. Each shared how they had to figure out what intervention worked best for each student who was presenting disruptive behaviors. They were all of the belief that there is no cookie-cutter approach to addressing student behaviors. Some found success in using positive reinforcement and rewards, while others found success through establishing relationships. Even though they endorsed positive feelings about their competence at this point, they all stated that they felt as though they could learn more and would benefit from additional training and support. For example, there was a consensus among the participants that they needed

more trainings about different strategies to use for disruptive behaviors. Only one participant reported being in a school where a school-wide evidence-based behavior model was being used. This participant reported that his school uses the framework of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), but admitted that he has only paid scant attention to the tenets of program and has not followed through with implementation, but surmised that he would look more into as a result of the interview. Another participant explained that although his undergraduate degree program prepared him to be a teacher, once he got into the classroom and started teaching, he quickly learned that things he was experiencing were not in the textbooks and conversations that he had while in college. Other participants also shared the same sentiments regarding their transition from being a preservice teacher to an in-service teacher, quickly coming to the reality that the things they thought they knew, they did not know and they type of students they had during their student teaching were much different than those in their actual classrooms.

One participant noted the need for professional development on understanding different cultures, asserting that it plays a major role in how teachers interact with their students, especially those who are from a different background than their students. As a teacher of predominantly African-American students, this participant further shared that although he has not received any district level trainings or professional development on how to positively address the needs of Black students, he took the liberty to educate himself by engaging in his own personal studies and adopting the teachings of Black author Jawanza Kunjufu. However, not everyone will take the same initiative to do as

such. Furthermore, by providing novice teachers with the training to gain insight into the importance of being culturally competent and developing a better understanding of students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds may lead to a positive shift in teachers' attitudes and expectations towards those students who present disruptive behaviors.

Another beneficial training and support in particular that was identified was having more resources and knowledge on mental health disorders, to understand how certain symptoms manifest and how to best respond to students who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder. At least two of the five teachers referenced having students in their classes that were diagnosed with a mental health disorder. One participant explained that even though he received copies of his student's IEP or 504 plans to review on his own, there was only limited information about the diagnosis, how it affected the student or how he should respond to the student's behaviors. In contrast, another participant expressed having great reluctance to even referring students for special services such as special education or mental health because Black students have been disproportionately represented in special education and secondly because he felt that his role was to educate his students, not try to diagnose them which he noted that he was not credentialed to do. However, with the proper training and supports in place, teachers of similar mindsets may come to develop a more positive perspective on referring students for support services and feel more confident in their ability to discern when a referral is necessary, rather than internalizing the need to refer as a failure on their part to effectively reach the student or as a decision they are unqualified to make. Not making a

necessary referral is just as detrimental to the well-being of a student as making an unnecessary referral.

Having the support of their school administrator was another sentiment shared among these first-year teachers. Having the backing of their administrators provides a sense of empowerment and reassurance, especially when being challenged with managing disruptive behaviors. In dealing with student discipline, many of the teachers shared that they expected their administrators to come immediately when they need their assistance and moreover being supportive of the rules that they have established for their classrooms and backing them as needed with consistent and fair consequences for students who violate them.

Summary

I wanted to know how first-year general education teachers view their competence in managing disruptive behaviors and their perspective on what supports are needed to help them be more efficacious and tolerant in that area. This research answered the following questions: “What are the lived experiences of first-year general education teachers in South Carolina in relation to feelings of competence for managing disruptive student behaviors?” and “What are the perspectives of first-year general education teachers on their lived experiences in relation to supports needed to increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors?” Through the analysis process the following themes emerged: nonacademic challenges and issues, self-reflection of experience with disruptive behaviors, classroom behavior management

strategies, criteria for referring students for special services, self-reflection of competence and persistence, and supports needed.

Collectively, these first-year teachers expressed feeling challenged in their competence for managing disruptive behaviors. The key findings showed that majority of the participants lacked support from school administrators when it came to addressing discipline problems within the classroom and lacked proper training in classroom behavior management and understanding of common mental health disorders. Supports needed to further increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors, some participants voiced a need for greater support from their school administrators in terms of being understanding and readily responding to their concerns regarding students who consistently present disruptive behaviors. One teacher opined that having a supportive and understanding administration would create a sense of empowerment and strength. In addition, each participant also voiced the need for more training in classroom behavior management, cultural competency and diversity, and understanding the impact of mental health disorders on students' learning and behavior.

An interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations, implications and conclusion will be presented in Chapter 5

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of elementary general education teachers in their first year of teaching in managing students with disruptive classroom behaviors. The study also sought to explore teachers' perception of their competency and tolerance for managing challenging behaviors while identifying the supports needed to increase their efficacy for effectively managing behavioral issues and reducing unnecessary referral use. The findings revealed the need for increased support from school administrators and ongoing training on classroom behavior management and mental health disorders in children.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study were rather consistent with what was found in peer-reviewed literature discussed in Chapter 2. This study answered the following research questions: "What are the lived experiences of first-year general education teachers in South Carolina in relation to feelings of competence for managing disruptive student behaviors?" and "What are the perspectives of first-year general education teachers in South Carolina on their lived experiences in relation to supports needed to increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors?"

Consistent with past research conducted by Westling (2010) the teachers in this study expressed a lack of competence and support for effectively managing disruptive behaviors. The behaviors that they reported experiencing—such as defiance, aggression, excessive talking, being off-task, etc.—were consistent with the behaviors that

Martinussen et al. (2011) rated as common and frequent in classrooms abroad and in the United States. Although this research gives only a glimpse into the experiences of a few first-year elementary general education teachers, it shines a light in the area that past research has not, thus allowing teachers to identify the supports they believe are needed to help them become more competent and persistent in managing disruptive behaviors.

All teachers in this study struggled in their competence and persistence in managing disruptive behaviors at some point during their first year of teaching. This struggle was likely exacerbated by the lack of support and lack of training they experienced. Again, these findings were very much consistent with the findings of Westling's (2010) study, in which teachers reported a lack of professional preparation and mainly relied on what they learned from past experiences. They were also consistent with a study by Garland et al. (2013), where teachers reported having a lack of support from their school administrators and their school districts as a whole.

Each participant shared how they had to rely on trial-and-error, personal studies and resources, and cultural beliefs, along with past undergraduate experiences, to help them find interventions that successfully targeted the unwanted behaviors of their students. None of the participants credited their school entities as sources for helping them develop their competence and tolerance in effectively managing disruptive behaviors. Contrary to Ficarra and Quinn's (2014) findings that teachers gain knowledge and competency for using evidence-based classroom management programs like PBIS when they work in schools that practice them, this current study found that teachers can work in a school that uses evidence-based practices and still not know, understand, or

follow through with the tenets of it as demonstrated by participant Brandon. Furthermore, despite O'Neil and Stephenson's (2012) recommendation that the education system should provide ongoing professional development in classroom behavior management as a means to increase teachers preparedness and confidence, based on the accounts of the participants in this study that has not been yet fulfilled. Many of the teachers in this study noted how their tolerance decreased as the school year progressed. Understandably, many teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by recurring disruptive behaviors and some acknowledged their tendency to be more reactive and punitive, rather than being proactive and trying to understand the source of the disruptive behaviors. This confirmed the essentiality of ongoing training and support, for without it the opportunity for increased stress, burnout, compassion fatigue and decreased fidelity in implementing evidence-based practices will inevitably set in.

While the past research has focused a great deal on how to minimize classroom disturbances, this study actually fills the gap in literature concerning the actual perspectives of first-year teachers regarding their beliefs about what supports are needed to help them increase their persistence and competence towards effectively managing disruptive behaviors.

This study used social constructionism as the theoretical framework which proved positive in exploring and explaining the subjective and objective realities formed through the experiences of the individual participants. Burr (2015) asserted that individual knowledge is derived from viewing the world from another perspective. Many participants recognized that what they experienced during their teacher education

programs was significantly different from what they experienced once they entered their classrooms. Therefore, their perceptions of effective classroom management were met with a whole new set of realties that were not consistent with the things they learned and discussed during their preservice experience, resulting in them having to adjust the methods, perceptions and attitudes about managing disruptive behaviors. As previously shared by one participant whom felt that his undergraduate degree program actually prepared him to be a teacher, but once he got into his actual classroom and began teaching, he quickly realized that his actual experience was different from what learned from the textbooks and conversations he had during his teacher education program. Other participants also shared similar sentiments, quickly coming to the realization that they didn't' know as much as they thought they knew and the students in their actual classrooms were very much different from the students they had during their student teaching.

Many of the participants reported using behavioral strategies they acquired from their undergraduate program, fellow colleagues, instructional coaches and mentors. Each spoke favorably about these connections. Through these social interactions, these teachers were able to acquire new perspectives on responding to challenging behaviors. Therefore, the shared experiences of these participants and their perspectives on the supports needed to help them become more competent and persistent in managing disruptive behaviors may lead to more intentional professional development trainings and increased support from school administrators. O'Neil and Stephenson (2012) asserted that teachers must be committed to being lifelong learners and the education system must

remain committed to providing relevant and ongoing professional development in classroom management to increase preparedness and boost confidence.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation that arose from the execution of this study was the inability to secure a sufficient number of participants. This study was projected to recruit 10-15 participants, however only five participants accepted the invitation to participate. Initially, recruitment was to take place within two local school districts in Columbia, SC. Approval to conduct research within the school district was only granted by one of the two districts. Upon obtaining approval to conduct research within the district, many of the school administrators declined to participate, blocking my call for participants within their schools. The few administrators that did allow my call for participants only had a few first-year teachers. In efforts to expand my recruitment pool and to be able to recruit participants directly, approval to extend the call for participants to social media to include all elementary teachers in South Carolina was obtained from IRB. In addition, IRB permission was also obtained to offer a $10 gift card as an incentive for those who agreed to participate.

After a year and a half of recruiting and despite all invested efforts to secure a sufficient number of participants by reaching out on social media to multiple educator groups, local colleges, the South Carolina Department of Education, and by word of mouth, I was still unable to secure the desired number of participants. Not being able to secure a larger sample size made verification of saturation open to doubt. However, Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016) proposed the concept of “information power,”

whereby they asserted that the more relevant and substantial information a subject hold, the lower the number of participants that are needed. Therefore, a small sample size is believed to be justified in this particular study as evidenced by the wealth of information and insight obtained from the few who participated.

Recommendations

One avenue for further study would be research into the impact of race on establishing positive teacher-student relationship with students who present disruptive behaviors. Three of the five participants in this study were Black males and they each referenced the importance of establishing positive relationships with their students and how in the long run it helped them become more tolerant. It is important to investigate whether racial biases, stereotypes, lack of empathy, and cultural differences between teachers and students influence how teachers connect with and respond to students with disruptive behaviors.

Additionally, having more than one method of data collection is recommended to strengthen the trustworthiness and validity of future research. As noted in Chapter 2, when research relies strictly on self-reporting as this study did, it becomes subject to bias and social desirability, whereby the researcher is unable to confirm if what the participants say is consistent with what they actually do.

Positive Social Change

This study has the potential to effect positive social change in the field of education. School districts, school administrators, and teacher preparation programs can all use this information to be more intentional in the scope of professional development

and training opportunities that they provide to not only novice teachers, but to all teachers. Addressing the needs of first-year teachers by taking into account their perspectives not only gives voice to these educators, but it also provides professional development opportunities that are applicable to their given situations that increases their competence and self-efficacy where it is most needed.

Pope and Vasquez (2016) asserted that having professional competence is the ability to execute duties according to the standards of one's profession. In order for teachers to remain competent and tolerant in managing disruptive behaviors, they must be engaged in a consistent, ongoing learning process as long as they are in the teaching profession. The more competent and tolerant teachers are, the less likely small behavior infractions will result in students being removed from the learning environment or being referred for special services unnecessarily.

Furthermore, this study offers school administrators the opportunity to see how they can best support their teachers, for just like students every teacher is different and have different needs. Moreover, school administrators can gain insight into the struggles, challenges, efforts, and expectations of their teachers. Classroom management and discipline has been a longstanding challenge for many first-year and even veteran teachers; therefore, continuous guidance, support, and resources on effective behavior strategies is essential to the success of any teacher. None of the teachers in this study gave the impression that they rely heavily upon their administrators to maintain discipline in their classes, but when they do call for their assistance it is because things have escalated beyond their control. Thus, the expectation for support was to have their

administrator respond immediately and render a disciplinary action that would actually deter the unwanted behavior rather than coming and defending or holding the teacher responsible for the students' disruptive behaviors. This study provides the opportunity for new teachers and school administrators to further discuss and clarify the guidelines pertaining to the who, what, when and where of handling student misbehavior.

Addressing the needs presented by these first-year teachers will likely increase many teachers' ability to effectively respond to disruptive behaviors without feeling incompetent, defeated or burnt out. With the proper knowledge, training and support these teachers can come to their classrooms properly equipped with a pedagogical approach that not only promotes academic achievement, but social and emotional development as well. Also, by incorporating the supports and trainings identified in this study, first-year teachers can confidently enter their classroom with the competency and tolerance needed to prevent and appropriately respond to disruptive behaviors while maintaining an environment that is conducive for learning and fosters academic success for all students, regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status. So rather than teachers having to spend significant portions of their day on discipline and trying to manage disruptive behaviors, they can shift their time and efforts to focus on teaching.

As voiced by these first-year elementary general education teachers, they are committed to being lifelong learners and desire to be both competent and persistent in managing disruptive behaviors. Having voiced their perspectives on what is needed to help them increase their efficacy and tolerance for being more effective classroom managers may be reflective of many other first-year teachers as well. What we've learned

from these participants is that they want the support of their school administrators in responding to disciplinary problems, they want to be trained on childhood mental health disorders, they want to learn about evidenced based classroom management strategies, they want feedback from classroom observers on what they can do better, and they want to see professional development on understanding different cultures and how students' backgrounds influence their behavior. If stakeholders can commit to following the research and meeting the needs identified to help new teachers successfully overcome behavioral challenges this will provide positive outcomes for both teachers and the students. Not only will this meet the ultimate goal of helping teachers be more effective in engaging students in the learning environment, but it can also lead to a reduction in stress and teachers leaving the profession early, increased competence and tolerance to appropriately respond to unwanted behaviors without inundating the special education system and other support services with unnecessary referrals.

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Appendix A: Research Participant Invitation

Greetings!

My name is Lucina Smith and I am a doctoral student at Walden University.
I obtained permission from Richland District Two Research Committee to seek participants for my study. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of first-year elementary general education teachers in managing disruptive classroom behaviors. If you are first-year general education elementary teacher and you are interested in participating in this voluntary research about the experiences of first-year general education teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and supports needed to effectively manage students with disruptive behaviors, then I invite you to take part in this research. I am seeking 10-15 participants on a voluntary basis.

A potential benefit to this study is that it gives participants the opportunity to share their experiences and offer insight into supports needed to improve teacher efficacy and competence for managing disruptive classroom behaviors. To maintain confidentiality, your real names will not be used in this study. If you are interested in participating in my study, please do the following:

1. Provide an alternate email account other than your work email to be used for correspondences hereafter.

2. Email me at Smith.LuciV@gmail.comor call me at 803-898-4349 by (date TBD) to express your interest in participating.
3. I will respond to your email and include a consent form in my response. If you are still interested in participating after reading the consent form, we will set up a date and time for your individual interview.

Please be advised that this study is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

I look forward to the opportunity to have you as part of my research. I will be checking my email for responses from of those of you who are interested in participating.

Sincerely,

Lucina

Appendix B: Interview Questions

RQ1- What are the lived experiences of first-year general education in South Carolina in relation to feelings of competence for managing disruptive student behaviors?	RQ2- What are the perspectives of first-year general education teachers in South Carolina on their lived experiences in relation to supports needed to increase their efficacy and perception of tolerance in managing disruptive behaviors?
What nonacademic challenges have you faced within your first-year of teaching in relation to student behavior and classroom management? (RQ1)	What resources are available to help you manage disruptive behaviors within the classroom? How would you rate their effectiveness? (RQ2)
How would you describe your experiences in working with students with disruptive classroom behaviors? (RQ1)	How would you describe your level of competence for managing students with disruptive classroom behaviors? (RQ1)
At what point do you make the decision to refer a student to the office or recommend them for	What do you feel you need to help increase your competence and persistence in working with

special services for disruptive behaviors (i.e. behavior intervention team, mental health, etc.) (RQ1)	students with disruptive classroom behaviors? (RQ2)
What strategies do you use to manage disruptive classroom behaviors? (RQ1)	What changes have you noticed in your competence and persistence throughout your time in the classroom thus far? (RQ1, RQ2).
What changes have you noticed in your competence and persistence throughout your time in the classroom thus far? (RQ1, RQ2).	