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## Teachers' Perspectives on Positive Behavior Intervention and Support in the Classroom

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Corlett Pinnock

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects, and  
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2020

Abstract

Teachers' Perspectives on Positive Behavior Intervention and Support in the

Classroom

by

Corlett Pinnock

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

Positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS) is a data-driven approach to promoting productive student behaviors and learning. A key facet of sustainable success when using PBIS is evaluation. More insight is needed on the perspectives that teachers have about PBIS and as well as details about whether and why it is accepted. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of teachers at 3 high schools in Western Jamaica as it relates to a PBIS pilot program. Twenty-six teachers from 3 schools in Region 4 in Jamaica were interviewed with the aim of understanding how teachers received training on PBIS, how the teachers used PBIS, and what the teachers perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of PBIS. The findings indicated that participants' primary education regarding PBIS was internal and external trainings. In implementing PBIS, the participating teachers utilized methods that were similar to, or aligned with, the schools' systems and practices while receiving support for their own implementation strategies from internal stakeholders. Participants reported that since the implementation of PBIS, students' behaviors improved and were more positive, more time was spent on teaching and learning tasks, and teacher-student relationships improved. However, the participants explained that, because of insufficient buy-in and support from all stakeholders (i.e., the Ministry of Education, the principal, the administration, the parents, and the community), optimal results were still not achieved. A conclusion was that the strengths of PBIS are best realized in an environment of maximal support and buy-in from all stakeholders. Nonetheless, the use of PBIS, even in the pilot stage, shows the potential to improve student behavior. Improved student behavior may support student learning outcomes as an implication for positive social change.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Classroom discipline is a complex issue and an international concern among educators and education authorities (Lopes & Oliveira, 2017). Classroom management has been characterized as one of the most challenging aspects of teaching in the modern classroom (Corzo & Contreras, 2011). The challenge is even greater as several schools globally report heightened levels of student disciplinary problems and violence (Geleta, 2018). Some of the common disciplinary challenges faced by teachers are misbehavior, rivalry, backtalk, bullying, lack of punctuality, truancy, substance abuse, and reluctance and or inability to complete schoolwork (Alsubaie, 2015; Semali & Vumilia, 2016).

Despite the challenges associated with managing student discipline and the fact that factors external to the school may impact student discipline (Gazmuri, Manzi, & Paredes, 2016; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010), ensuring discipline among students is imperative for the classroom teacher (Corzo & Contreras, 2011; Cotton, 1990). Researchers have found that student discipline within the school affects student outcomes (Gazmuri et al., 2016; Osher et al., 2010), teacher efficacy (Corzo & Contreras, 2011; Lopes & Oliveira, 2017; Osher et al., 2010), and teacher burnout (Corzo & Contreras, 2011; Lopes & Oliveira, 2017; Osher et al., 2010). There are parallels to these same issues in Jamaica, which is the location where this research was conducted.

Within Jamaica, significant discipline issues are manifested in schools and classrooms. In 2018, Barbara Dandy, the dean of discipline at Godfrey Stewart High School in Westmoreland, Jamaica, asserted that Jamaican students exhibit a high level

of problem behavior (Miller, 2018). Such high levels of indiscipline within the classrooms is beyond the scope of what teachers were trained to manage (Cammock-Gayle, 2015). Among the severe indiscipline behaviors are attacks on teachers and senior administrators (RJRNews, 2017).

Cammock-Gayle (2015) suggested that firm action needs to be taken to improve the discipline in Jamaican schools. In contrast, Riddell, Bailey, and Valentine (2013) asserted that students are not merely perpetrators, but victims of violence. The authors further asserted that in addition to being victimized by their peers, they suffered violence at the hands of teachers and other administrators at schools who used corporal punishment (Riddell et al., 2013). However, the Jamaican government with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is seeking to institute methods of positive discipline within schools (Ministry of Education, 2011; Wilson-Harris, 2019). In this study, I investigated the use of one method of positive discipline in schools and how it is perceived by teachers in three schools within the rural areas of Jamaica.

There exist various methods of positive discipline, including discipline with dignity, assertive discipline, and positive discipline. I selected the school-wide positive behavior intervention and support (SWPBIS) framework for investigation based on the Jamaican government's exploration of this method as the primary method of discipline to be adopted by Jamaican schools (UNICEF, 2016). According to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 2019), the SWPBIS distinguishes three tiers of intervention and support. In the first tier, teachers establish normal behaviors, methods of intervention, and support for positive behaviors. In the second tier, those students whose negative behaviors are more severe than the

established norms are identified and interventions and support programs set up so that behaviors can be aligned with the expected norms. Finally, in the third tier, students with extreme behaviors are identified and specialized interventions and support devised to address their behaviors. It is noteworthy that the SWPBIS framework is not a universal framework but is developed based on the population it addresses (OSEP, 2019).

In this study, I examined the perception of PBIS among teachers in three schools in Western Jamaica and discussed the implications. In this chapter, a background to the study is provided, the problem which prompted and necessitates this study is outlined, and the purpose of the study and the research questions are stated. Additionally, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework before describing the nature of the study, defining the key terms that were used in the study and highlighting the assumptions, scope and delimitations as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, the significance of this study is discussed.

### **Background**

A high level of academic achievement is one of the main goals of the Ministry of Education in Jamaica (Thwaites, 2014). Nonetheless, Thwaites (2014) warned that neither the nation's populace nor its government should deny the negative role that indiscipline within schools or among the student population can have on educational achievement. For the academic year 2012-2013, the Ministry of National Security, based on data from the Safe School Program, reported that 3,671 students were cited for varying degrees of antisocial behaviors (UNICEF, 2016). UNICEF (2016) further pointed out that the Global School Health Student-Based survey for 2010 revealed that among Jamaican students 13 to 15 years old, 40% were bullied at least once

monthly, 50% were involved in fights within the 12-month period, and 60% were seriously injured within the 12-month period.

The Ministry of Education's (2012) *National Education Strategic Plan 2011-2020* illustrates its recognition of the importance of ensuring a safe environment for children to succeed educationally. The Ministry of Education authors recognized schools as a microcosm of society and explained that the increasing levels of violence within the country's schools was overwhelming the education system, specifically the schools in which violent incidents were most frequent. In highlighting the challenges associated with the increased levels of violence in the schools, the Ministry of Education declared the need to work with stakeholders to improve safety and security within schools and listed the "creation of an environment which fosters positive social interaction" (p. 14) as one of its strategic priorities. In line with this priority and with financial assistance from UNICEF, the Ministry of Education began a 3-year pilot of the SWPBIS framework among 56 schools in 2014 (UNICEF, 2016, 2018).

The Ministry of Education selected the SWPBIS framework based on its conformance to the nonuse of corporal punishment and its alignment with existing training, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms (UNICEF, 2018). The SWPBIS is "a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavior support" (OSEP, 2019, para. 1). According to OSEP (2019), the tiers are developed based on the needs of the implementing organizations. The Ministry of Education selected three tiers for the pilot schools (universal interventions, targeted interventions, and individualized interventions) but allowed school committees to select the set of practices to be used to achieve the goals at each level (UNICEF, 2018). Ministry staff have not yet

conducted a formal evaluation of the pilot program and its effectiveness in reducing disciplinary issues and improving academic achievement.

### **Problem Statement**

A key facet of sustainable success when using the SWPBIS is evaluation (OSEP, 2019). Such an evaluation is yet to be completed in Jamaica. As such, there is the need for an understanding of the experiences of those who have been utilizing the program so that an understanding about the benefits and challenges can be gathered to guide future implementation of the SWPBIS framework in Jamaica.

An underlying goal of the Ministry of Education and UNICEF in the introduction of SWPBIS is the reduction and eventual removal of corporal punishment from the education system (UNICEF, 2018). This has not been the first attempt at removing corporal punishment from within the school system as the Ministry of Education as well as the prime minister have attempted to remove corporal punishment from within schools through the use of memos and by punishing teachers and pleading with them to desist (Wilson-Harris, 2019). However, UNICEF (2018) pointed out that teachers continue to use corporal punishment in direct breach of the directives. The knowledge that teachers continue to use methods of discipline that go against the Ministry of Education's directives increases the need to understand, from the teachers' perspectives, whether SWPBIS is sufficiently beneficial to improve student discipline, thereby removing the need for corporal punishment (Apolitical, 2019).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Western Jamaica as they relate to the pilot

program of positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS). In the study, I explored the dimensions of SWPBIS and sought to understand the teachers' perceptions of the whole framework as well as the individual components. Additionally, because the government of Jamaica and UNICEF indicated that one aim of the SWPBIS is the reduction or removal of corporal punishment from schools, the teachers' perspectives on the SWPBIS as an effective replacement for corporal punishment were explored.

### **Research Questions**

I sought answers to the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1. How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS?
- RQ2. How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica use PBIS?
- RQ3. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS?
- RQ4. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS?

### **Theoretical Framework**

To guide this study, I used critical theory as the theoretical framework. Originally developed by Max Horkheimer (Bolaños, 2013; Fuchs, 2015; Kellner, n.d.; Thompson, 2017), critical theory is a sociopolitical theory that posits the critique of social structures, frameworks, and institutions from an idealist perspective while considering historical perspectives (Bolaños, 2013; Fuchs, 2015; Kellner, n.d.; Thompson, 2017). In criticizing an institution, proponents of critical theory have suggested that the reviewer take an anthropological view, being aware of the historical reality of the situation as well as the ethical perspectives which guide the



understanding of the institution (Fuchs, 2015). Within education, the educational framework should be reviewed against its goals as well as the level of oppression involved, while considering the viewpoints of the participants and the historical context within which the framework and institutions exist (Dell'Angelo, Seaton, & Smith, 2012).

The critical framework was ideal for this study as it supports and encourages the use of the phenomenological approach to review educational frameworks while encouraging holistic critiques in examining the views and experiences of teachers (St. Mary, Calhoun, Tejada, & Jenson, 2018). In applying critical theory, I first sought to identify the ideal vision of student discipline within Jamaican schools. Thereafter, the ideal vision for the PBIS program was investigated. Finally, the teachers' perceptions of the successes and failures of the program were assessed and conclusions drawn. Thus, the institutions' successes and failures were evaluated against their own goals and the goals of the Ministry of Education (as portrayed by the literature) as per the suggestions of critical theory proponents (Bolaños, 2013; Fuchs, 2015; Kellner, n.d.; Thompson, 2017).

### **Nature of the Study**

I followed the qualitative approach in collecting and analyzing data for this study. The reason for using the qualitative approach is that the primary aim of the study was to understand, from the teacher's perspective, how PBIS has been working. I did not aim to provide numerical results, as is the norm for quantitative studies (Creswell, 2014). Instead, the aim was to understand the lived experiences of the teachers and how they interpret their experiences, which supported the use of the qualitative approach (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Numerous qualitative traditions exist (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). For this research, I used the phenomenological tradition. Admittedly, the phenomenological approach cannot produce theory that allows researchers to explain systems or interactions (Vagle, 2016). However, phenomenological research provides researchers with plausible insights that enhance understanding of the world (Vagle, 2016). As such, the phenomenological approach was best suited for this study which focused on the PBIS, which is currently being piloted in 56 schools across Jamaica. I sought to understand how it was introduced, how it is being utilized by teachers, how it is viewed by teachers, and what are the reasons underlying how teachers view the PBIS as they do.

To collect data, I interviewed 26 teachers at three schools (13 from School A, six from School B, and seven from School C), per Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) suggestion. Interviews were used because they are the best way to gain information about individuals' experiences (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). Specifically, I conducted the interviews using Zoom meeting platform. While the face-to-face interview is beneficial because it allows the interviewer the opportunity to interact with the environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), using the Zoom platform was necessary because executing face-to-face interviews during the Covid-19 pandemic increased the risk of infection to both the interviewer and the interviewee and research should limit risks while providing benefits (Creswell, 2012, 2014).

### **Definitions**

Following are definitions of the key terms that are used throughout the study:

*Corporal punishment*: “Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light” (UNICEF, 2014, p. 4). UNICEF (2014) further explained that corporal punishment can be done with or without the use of an implement and is not limited to hitting.

*Positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS)*: A framework in which the social, behavioral, emotional, and academic competencies of students are supported along a multitiered continuum (OSEP, 2019a).

*School-wide positive behavior intervention and support (SWPBIS)*: The name given to PBIS when applied at the school-wide level (OSEP, 2019b).

*Student discipline*: “The practice of teaching or training a [student] to obey rules or a code of behaviour in both the short and long terms” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006, p. 21, ).

### **Assumptions**

In this study I assumed that the teachers at the selected schools implemented the PBIS program in their classrooms based on their interpretation of the program. I had this assumption because the schools are a part of the pilot program that was implemented by the Ministry of Education which has ultimate authority over the public schools in Jamaica. This assumption was necessary to identify the population and the final sample for the study.

Another assumption that I had was that access would be granted by all necessary stakeholders (i.e., the Ministry of Education, the individual schools, and teachers) and that sufficient scope and information would be provided to allow for robust findings. Furthermore, I assumed that sufficient stakeholders would agree to participate in the study thereby ensuring the viability of the research. The British

Psychological Society (2014) explained that all participants in research should participate of their own free will. As such, I conveyed to all stakeholders that they could refuse participation.

The study was phenomenological which means there was a reliance on the participants to provide honest information. However, participants could have misrepresented history (either knowingly or unknowingly) and in so doing could have caused the reporting, analyzing, and interpretation of incorrect facts. Nonetheless, because researchers have to report the data as presented, I assumed that all participants were as honest as possible.

Finally, I assumed that sufficient preparation would take place for the data collection process. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained that in qualitative research, the major tool for data collection is the researcher. As such, the researcher needs to be adequately prepared to adapt to the situations presented, elicit necessary information, and fulfill the role in such a way that the data collection process is optimized for maximal benefit. Thus, self-preparation was done prior to the data collection process, and it is assumed that such preparation was adequate.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

In this study I focused on the perceptions teachers have about the PBIS employed at their school. As such, I focused on participating teachers' experiences related to the implementation of the PBIS program. I investigated their perceptions about the support they received in implementing PBIS in their classrooms, the training they received, and their understanding about the program. Finally, I explored their perceptions about whether PBIS is sufficient to act as a standalone method of

classroom management or whether there is need for additional programs and the extent and frequency with which these programs are utilized.

I focused on PBIS only. Other methods of discipline were not explored except to the extent that they explained the reason for the implementation of PBIS or acted as a complementary method of discipline. In exploring the participants' perceptions of PBIS, I used critical theory. Additionally, I explored the theories underlying PBIS. These were explored to give a deeper understanding of PBIS and not as the theoretical framework for the study.

It is understood that the implementation of any school-wide program is dependent on the school's leadership. In this study, I focused on classroom management and the teachers' perception of PBIS. Because of this, I did not focus on leadership decisions but briefly explored them as a reason for the implementation of PBIS as a classroom management strategy. Additionally, I focused only on teachers at three schools in Region 4 of Jamaica. There was no exploration of any school outside of Region 4.

### **Limitations**

Initially, I expected equal participation from each school and that a minimum of eight participants per school would be achieved. However, because of the Covid-19 pandemic all teachers were not available. Additionally, many teachers from School B and School C elected not to participate. As such, saturation was not reached at all schools.

Because I only used one data collection method, there were limitations in the trustworthiness as there was total reliance on the interviewees. Nonetheless, attempts were made to present contradictory findings so that an array of experiences and

interpretations were presented. However, in some instances, there was a lack of contradictions. While the lack of contradictions may be considered proof of honesty, there is a lack of verification since only teachers were interviewed. Thus, only teachers' perspectives are provided.

Creswell (2014) explained that research can be limited because of the methodology chosen or because of human and resource limitations. I utilized qualitative methodology in executing this study and the sample size was small with only 26 participants. Additionally, the study focused on three schools within one Region of Jamaica. Because of the relatively small sample size, the study is not be generalizable.

### **Significance**

This study is significant to leaders within the Ministry of Education, school administrators, SWPBIS committees, school principals, teachers, and education research community. The study is beneficial to the Ministry of Education as it is a source of insight into the perspectives that teachers have about SWPBIS. In this study, there are also details about whether and why PBIS is accepted by the teachers, who are among the major contributors to the success of the program. The study can also be a source of insight to the Ministry of Education regarding how the use of SWPBIS has been able to reduce or remove the use of corporal punishment from the classroom. By providing insights about the acceptance and success of the program, the study serves as a platform for discussions about whether and how the program can be tailored to the Jamaican setting.

The SWPBIS committees will benefit from the study as it contains information about the practices of different teachers from different schools within

Western Jamaica as well as descriptions of the successes realized when using different strategies, thereby allowing them to assess their own practices based on their unique situations and implement changes where necessary. Existing and future committees will also be made aware of potential challenges that may be unique to the Jamaican school and schoolteachers when using SWPBIS, allowing for proactive planning to resolve these challenges, should they occur. By reading this study, the committees will gain insights about how SWPBIS education is received, allowing them to design methods to fill potential knowledge gaps and increase the potential for success of the program.

Teachers who read the study will gain knowledge about successes and challenges realized in using SWPBIS, thereby allowing for development of strategies to succeed when participating in the program. For those teachers who participated in the study, it was an opportunity to express their honest perspectives about the program and candidly discuss the methods they have utilized to enhance the program or their own experiences. Finally, in reviewing the study, teachers will find shared behaviors and perceptions and solutions to shared problems.

The study was a novel one for the Jamaican population. As such, the insights provided were new as no previous study had been completed with the target population. The study therefore adds to the body of knowledge related to SWPBIS in Jamaica specifically and SWPBIS generally. The study can also form the basis for the development of hypotheses which can be tested in future studies.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided an introduction to the study. Specifically, I explained that maintaining classroom discipline was important for effective teaching

and learning and that historically multiple methods of discipline were tried with various levels of success being achieved. One method of classroom management that has not been explored in Jamaica is the PBIS. As such, the perception of teachers at three high schools in Western Jamaica as it relates to the pilot program of PBIS were examined. This study is potentially beneficial to stakeholders as it provides an initial analysis of the PBIS from the perspective of the teachers and can serve as the basis for future research which could lead to amendments in future PBIS programs. In this chapter, I explained that the study was delimited to teachers in Region 4 in Jamaica and did not thoroughly explore any other method of classroom or school-wide discipline management. The limitations of this study are that the results are not generalizable, the findings are dependent on teachers' accuracy in reporting their experiences and how well the investigator was able to manage bias during reporting. The next chapter explores the literature related to the major concepts explored in this study while in chapter 3 the methods used for data collection and analysis are outlined. In chapter 4, the findings from the interviews are presented and in chapter 5, the interpretations of the findings, recommendations for future research, implications for social change, and the conclusions are presented.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Western Jamaica as they relate to the pilot program of PBIS. In this chapter, I review the literature related to the primary concepts in this study (i.e., PBIS, student discipline, and teacher perceptions of PBIS). Prior to exploring the major concepts in the paper, the literature search strategy and the selected theory that was used to guide this study are discussed.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The majority of the literature reviewed for this chapter were scholarly documents, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and theses and dissertations. Additionally, I reviewed websites from reputable sources and news articles as these sources provided information that was not otherwise available. News articles were especially important in providing information about student discipline and PBIS use in Jamaica as there was a paucity of academic literature on the topic. One challenge in gathering literature was the dearth of information regarding PBIS outside of the United States. As such, the literature related to PBIS, including teachers' perceptions of PBIS, was exclusively based on literature from the United States.

The scholarly documents reviewed were from academic databases including EBSCOhost, SAGE, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. In searching these databases, I searched using phrases related to the concepts under study. Thus, in seeking to understand PBIS, the term "PBIS" was searched. Similarly, in searching for literature to improve my understanding of critical theory, I typed "critical theory" as my search term. However, during the search for the critical theory, the aim was to locate the

seminal theory and the review of the initial articles was aimed at finding the original literature regarding the critical theory. When these were found, the article and book titles were searched for instead of the term.

After being satisfied with my understanding of the theory, I sought to discern criticisms and relevance of theory. To discern the criticisms of critical theory, I searched databases and Google using terms like “criticisms of critical theory,” “critiques of critical theory” “challenges to critical theory,” and “weaknesses of critical theory.” For the relevance of critical theory, I searched using terms like “critical theory in student discipline,” “critical theory and school discipline,” “critical theory and teaching,” “critical theory and PBIS,” and “critical theory in Jamaica.” Articles were reviewed until it was found that continued searching only yielded irrelevant articles.

Unlike the search for the critical theory and the PBIS, search for other content was limited, as far as possible, to literature within the last five years. Thus, in the literature regarding student discipline, except for the definition of student discipline and the evolution of student discipline practices, filter was set so only articles published for 2015 through 2020 were provided. It is noteworthy that in some cases, the heading emerged after reviewing some articles. One example was “the evolution of student discipline practices” where “student discipline,” “definition of student discipline,” and “student discipline practices” were the searches that were used. However, on reviewing the literature, the evolution of discipline practices emerged. After the heading emerged, additional literature was reviewed using phrases consistent with the heading. For example, “changes in student discipline practices,” “emerging student discipline practices,” and older student discipline practices.

## Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is an important component of any study, whether the study is mixed, qualitative, or quantitative (Lederman & Lederman, 2015). Grant and Osanloo (2014) asserted that the theoretical framework acts as the blueprint of the doctoral study and is necessary at each stage of the study's development.

Accordingly, there should be no aspect of the study that falls outside of the theory which forms the theoretical framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Conversely, Lederman and Lederman (2015) explained that for journal articles, there is the need for the study to fit comfortably within the framework; however, for doctoral dissertations and especially for qualitative studies, a theory can serve to frame the understanding of the study and the literature and guide the discussion of the findings. According to Lederman and Lederman, a theoretical framework need not be too restrictive that it overwhelms the study and the doctoral candidate. In this section, I outline the selected theoretical framework and explain its relevance to the study and the reason for its choice.

To guide this study, I used critical theory (Horkheimer, 2002). In explaining critical theory, Horkheimer (2002) explained that traditional theorists, depicted researchers as separated from their study such that they are able to report their findings from the perspective of an unbiased onlooker who can study social institutions without being a part of it. Such research is challenged because researchers fail to understand or review social institutions from a historical, experiential, or critical perspective (Horkheimer, 2002).

To correct the challenges with traditional perspectives, Horkheimer (2002) proposed that in researching social structures, there is the need to fully understand the

institutions from a holistic perspective. Horkheimer asserted that the aim should be to understand the structure or institution's ideals and history. Additionally, there is the need to understand competing philosophies about the institution and critically question these philosophies based on existing knowledge as well as an understanding of what the utopian view of these institutions would be (Horkheimer, 2002). From this perspective, the aim is not simply to understand the institution in its current form but to understand how the institution has evolved over time and how the institution can reach its most perfect state (Horkheimer, 2002).

### **Relevance of the Critical Theory**

Critical theory is a sociopolitical theory that posits the critique of social structures, frameworks, and institutions from an idealist perspective while considering historical perspectives (Bolaños, 2013; Fuchs, 2015; Kellner, n.d.; Thompson, 2017). In criticizing the institution, reviewers should take an anthropological view, being aware of the historical reality of the situation as well as the ethical perspectives which guide the understanding of the institution (Fuchs, 2015). Within education, the educational framework should be reviewed against its goals as well as the level of oppression involved, while considering the viewpoints of the participants and the historical context within which the framework and institutions exist (Dell'Angelo et al., 2012).

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

#### **Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)**

**Overview of PBIS.** PBIS is defined as a framework in which the social, behavioral, emotional, and academic competencies of students are supported along a multitiered continuum (OSEP, 2019a). PBIS has also been referred to as an applied

science whose practitioners use educational and systems change methods to effect behavioral change in students (Carr et al., 2002). According to Carr et al. (2002), the educational methods are used to expand the behavior repertoire possessed by the individual while the systems change methods are used to adjust the individual's living environment so that an improved quality of life can be achieved and the problem behaviors minimized.

PBIS can be directed in a systematic way by the school administrators so that there is a school-wide system of support provided (OSEP, 2019b). When implemented in this manner, the framework is referred to as school-wide PBIS or SWPBIS. In this study, the focus was on the implementation of PBIS within the classroom. PBIS, when implemented in the classroom, is referred to as classroom PBIS (OSEP, 2019c).

Over time, various characteristics of PBIS have been noted. Carr et al. (2002) indicated nine characteristics: comprehensive lifestyle change and quality of life, lifespan perspective, ecological validity, stakeholder participation, social validity, systems change and multicomponent intervention, emphasis on prevention, and flexibility with respect to scientific practices. Conversely, more recent literature points to a maximum of four characteristics. Sugai and Simonsen (2012) pointed to student outcomes; the adoption of evidence and research-based practices; the establishment of a continuum of behavior support practices and systems; and the effective, efficient, and relevant use of data or information to guide decision-making. Alternatively, Olsen (2015) established three major characteristics: practices, systems to support teacher implementation, and relevant outcomes. Finally, OSEP (2019c) suggests four main characteristics: outcomes, systems, data, and practices but points

out that the outcome is the result of the integration of the systems, data, and practices and the joint actions of the various stakeholders (i.e., classroom teachers, family members, school district leadership team members, coach or facilitators, and school administrators).

Sugai and Simonsen (2012) and OSEP (2019c) asserted that outcomes are central to the selected practices, systems, and data used in the PBIS framework. OSEP asserted that the systems, data, and practices are integrated to promote desired outcomes while Sugai and Simonsen postulated that the desired student outcomes are central to the selection of the practices and data collection and guide how the framework is evaluated. It is expected that the implementation of an effective PBIS framework will result in positive outcomes for both the students and the teachers (OSEP, 2019c). For the student, it is expected that there will be improvements in the academic and social outcomes on an individual and group basis (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Additionally, the literature reveals an increase in on-task behaviors and engagement and a reduction in disruptive behaviors. For the teachers, there is a reduced need for disciplinary referrals, higher levels of self-efficacy, and an improvement in emotional well-being (Olsen, 2015).

Practices refer to the interventions that are used to achieve the desired outcomes (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). PBIS promotes the use of research- and evidence-based approaches that can be implemented as packaged programs (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Although class teachers may decide to implement approaches that differ from the school, it is suggested that the approach adopted by the classroom teacher reflect those adopted by the school as the added support within the school system increases the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes (OSEP, 2019c). In

carrying out the intervention, teachers should focus on the design of the classroom's physical environment, establish classroom routines, establish classroom expectations, teach classroom expectation within classroom routines, reinforce expectations, respond to problem behaviors, and engage students.

OSEP (2019c) referred to the next characteristic of PBIS as systems. However, Olsen (2015) and Sugai and Simonsen (2015) referred to it as systems to support teacher implementation and behavior support practices and systems respectively. Systems are characterized by the implementation of evidence-based systems which proactively and efficiently support the teachers' implementation of PBIS (OSEP, 2019c). Systems and support practices should include monitoring and evaluation of the procedures which should be universally accepted as beneficial to the desired outcomes (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Sugai and Simonsen asserted that important features of this component are continuous professional development, oversight, and systems-based competence. Olsen explained that support is usually provided by an expert in PBIS implementation (usually a PBIS coach or an individual with expertise in the area). As such, effective oversight, evaluation and consultation can be provided to the teacher (Olsen, 2015).

Finally, the use of data is an important component of the PBIS (OSEP, 2019c; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Data are defined as the observable, specific, and measurable information about a school, the students, and the educators (OSEP, 2019c). Data are necessary all throughout the implementation and execution of PBIS. Sugai and Simonsen asserted that data is important in identifying and prioritizing needs, selecting the appropriate intervention to address the needs, evaluating the selected research-based intervention strategies, evaluating how the students respond to

the intervention as well as the outcome, evaluating the likelihood that the selected intervention will prove beneficial, evaluating the social and ecological validity of a selected intervention, and whether and how a selected intervention should be adjusted for effectiveness (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

Despite the development, relevance and success of various intervention strategies, there has been wide adoption of PBIS in the past two decades (Horner & Sugai, 2015). Horner and Sugai suggested that the wide-scale adoption of PBIS could be attributed to the four primary characteristics of the PBIS. The authors asserted that by employing evidence-based strategies that have been validated over time, schools that employ PBIS are able to achieve the desired outcomes. By ensuring that effective supports are in place to sustain the effective practices, schools which employ PBIS ensure that the gains made through the implementation of PBIS are maintained. However, the authors explained that these support systems also need maintenance in the form of continued training and support, provision of resources, and data-driven adaptation.

The collection and use of data, as a separate factor is also of great importance as the data drives PBIS (Horner & Sugai, 2015). Horner and Sugai explained that when using PBIS, data collection includes more than just identifying the non-conformant students. It requires gaining an understanding of the circumstances and the environment surrounding the students' behaviors. Therefore, data collection should be detailed so that successful intervention strategies to support positive outcomes for the student can be implemented. Data collection is also used to measure the effectiveness of the program and make adjustments as necessary. Finally, Horner and Sugai, like OSEP (2019c), explained that the most successful PBIS



implementation strategies are those that are supported at the highest levels. The case of Jamaica is one where the implementation of PBIS is a national drive instigated and supported by the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF (UNICEF, 2018). Therefore, success should depend on the effectiveness of the support, the use and collection of data, the emphasis on core features and evidence-based strategies, and whether and how systems that support and sustain effective practices are implemented and maintained (Horner & Sugai, 2015; Olsen, 2015; OSEP, 2019c; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012) and the teachers' perceptions about these factors will be explored in this study.

**PBIS criticisms and challenges.** Despite the widespread acceptance of PBIS and its promotion as a successful and valid alternative to harsh discipline methods (Horner & Sugai, 2015; OSEP, 2019c), some authors have criticized PBIS. In a direct response to Horner and Sugai (2015), Loukus (2015) asserted that the authors might have overestimated the validity of PBIS. According to Loukus, there are in fact some aspects of PBIS that have been validated as many researchers have spent time and effort in validating the findings related to behavioral theory. The challenge is that PBIS incorporates some theories that are not ascribed to by behavioral theorists. However, Horner and Sugai suggested that all of PBIS is centered on behavioral theory, and therefore the practice as a whole is valid (Loukus, 2015). Loukus asserted that to ensure that the public is presented with accurate information, information about the areas of PBIS that reflect behavior analysis and explain the validity of the other sections should be disseminated; thereby providing users with complete information about the validity of PBIS.

Wilson (2015) also criticized Horner and Sugai (2015) directly and asserted that the PBIS framework is limited regarding data collection practices and sociocultural values. For sociocultural values, the author explained that a top down approach is usually taken resulting in administrators selecting the outcomes to be achieved. The outcomes selected are usually representative of the school's culture which may be dissimilar to those of the student body (Wilson, 2015). To support the assertion, Wilson pointed out that within the United States, there is a disparity between the percentage of minority students when compared to minority teachers. As such, the minority sociocultural values are likely to be underrepresented in selecting the behavioral outcomes since the main deliberators will be of European heritage (Wilson, 2015). It is worth noting that while the cultural mix, based on ethnicity, may have implications for the integrity of PBIS in the United States, the implications for Jamaica may not be as significant since the majority of Jamaicans, regardless of race, are simply identified as Jamaicans without much emphasis being placed on ethnicity (Graham, 2012; World Population, 2019).

Another criticism of PBIS is that PBIS treats a symptom and that individuals who may have challenges but do not display a specific range of symptoms may not receive needed help (Wilson, 2015). The shortcoming is also reflected in the data collected, where data on negative behaviors is collected without much attention being paid to positive behaviors or the overall well-being of non-disruptive students (Wilson, 2015). In reviewing how PBIS is implemented, much flexibility is given to schools and districts and while the impact of intervention on the achievement are of specific interest, the review also seeks to understand the overall impact of selected strategies (OSEP, 2019c; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Furthermore, Horner and Sugai

(2015) outline the importance of continual upgrade in the knowledge of PBIS users and the need to highlight deficiencies so that PBIS can be optimized and maintained within the schools, for the benefit of all stakeholders.

From a practical standpoint, the positive impacts may be overstated (Eckes, Russo, & Osborne, 2012; Flanders & Goodnow, 2018). In fact, in some instances, PBIS resulted in negative results for some groups of students (Flanders & Goodnow, 2018). Flanders and Goodnow collected data regarding more than 2,000 schools for a period of four school years and utilized statistical analysis to investigate whether PBIS implementation at schools in Wisconsin impacted suspension rates, academic performance in math and reading, and whether PBIS implementation impacted student attendance. The study yielded mixed results related to suspensions as the authors found that in schools with less than 10% African American enrolment, suspension increased with the implementation of PBIS while the number suspensions decreased in schools where the African American population was above 10%. With respect to academic performance, Flanders and Goodnow (2018) found that there was a 1% decrease in academic performance in English language and mathematics related to the implementation of PBIS. No relationship to demographic factors were stated.

Flanders and Goodnow (2018) indicated that their study was unable to investigate the effect of tier 3 implementation of PBIS because the sample size was too small to produce statistically significant findings. While also asserting that it is difficult to evaluate the impact of tier 3 PBIS implementation Eckes et al. (2012) asserted that the reason is that at the third tier, intervention methods are so specific to the individual student that they are too diverse to investigate. It is noteworthy that in both cases, the authors asserted that there are challenges in quantitatively

investigating the impact that implementation of tier 3 PBIS would have on student behaviors.

In their study, Flanders and Goodnow (2018) admitted that if the aim of PBIS was to reduce suspensions among African Americans, PBIS achieved its purpose in Wisconsin schools. Of note, the authors started their study by indicating that the reason for the Federal push to implement PBIS in schools was the perceived disproportionate suspensions and expulsions faced by African American students. Furthermore, OSEP (2019c), Olsen (2015), and Horner and Sugai (2015) explained that desired outcomes of PBIS must be defined by the district and by the individual schools and research-based programs developed to achieve the specific desired outcomes. Given these criticisms, the teachers' perspectives related to the documentation of implementation within the selected schools was explored in this study.

### **Student Discipline**

UNESCO (2015) defined student discipline as “the practice of teaching or training a [student] to obey rules or a code of behavior in both the short and long term” (p. 20). An important feature of discipline is the goal for the long-term development of the child's behavior (Bear, 2010; UNESCO, 2015). Discipline is not simply about correcting behaviors but about helping the child to develop self-control such that learning can take place and the child can live up to his or her full potential (UNESCO, 2015). Similarly, Bear (2010) explained that discipline within schools has two major goals: (a) the creation and maintenance of a safe, orderly, and positive environment where learning can occur and (b) the teaching and development of self-discipline. Bear further explained the first goal requires the use of discipline to correct

misbehaviors and usually represents a short-term solution while the second seeks to develop the student's autonomy towards becoming a responsible citizen.

UNESCO (2015) cautioned against conflating punishment and discipline. Similarly, Alsubaie (2015) asserted that one major issue in student discipline is the belief that discipline, and punishment are synonymous. Alsubaie pointed to studies highlighting that discipline and punishment are different and that discipline is a teaching strategy where negative behaviors are corrected and positive behaviors are reinforced through various strategies, some of which may only be effective in certain situations. As such, teachers must exercise patience and use techniques which correct behaviors while maintaining mutual respect (Alsubaie, 2015). Essentially, the difference between punishment and discipline is that punishment seeks to control behavior while discipline seeks to develop the child's behavior. In this study, I explored teachers' understanding of the differences between punishment and discipline and the incorporation of these concepts into their classroom management strategy.

Bear (2010) argued that not only punishment, but any extrinsic motivation can counteract the teaching of self-discipline. Instead of teaching students to anticipate external rewards or to fear punishment, self-discipline relies on the student's intrinsic motivation towards embracing social and moral behaviors. Nelsen, Lott and Glenn (2013) in proposing their theory of positive discipline postulated that instead of utilizing punishments and rewards to manage behaviors, students should be involved in the behavior management process and be taught to develop solutions to behavior problems. However, Bear argued that inculcating self-discipline should be a part of the curriculum activities, should include the provision of multiple models of social

and moral problem-solving, provide students with the opportunity to apply moral and social problem-solving skills, and challenge self-centered thinking.

**The evolution of student discipline practices.** Effective student discipline is necessary for the creation of an optimal positive learning environment (Bear, 2010). Over time the idea about what constitutes effective discipline has been challenged either by ideology (UNESCO, 2015; Barber, Carnegie, Jonkman, Reilly, & Winter, 2012) or by the need to address a social problem (Bear, 2010; Welsh & Little, 2018). Despite the evolution in discipline practices in some countries, others continue to use methods that are considered abusive by the international community (Gershoff, 2017).

UNESCO (2015) pointed out that internationally, there is an increased recognition that children have rights. In support of this reality various countries have either moved towards or have implemented laws which protect the rights of the child. As such, harsh punishments in schools, such as corporal punishments, have been either banned or restricted in many countries (UNESCO, 2015). In a review of literature related to student discipline in Canada, Barber et al. (2015) concluded that the changing culture of Canada has indeed affected the practice of student discipline. The authors contended that the recognition of the rights of the child and the negative psychological and social effects that harsh punishments can have resulted in a ban on harsh punishments and the adoption of more individualized methods of treating student indiscipline. The authors further asserted that the change in ideology from a focus on student compliance to a focus on student rights has resulted in laws which seek to protect the children's rights while leaving teachers with limited choices in how to maintain student discipline.

Both UNESCO (2015) and Barber et al. (2012) explained that the ideologies were changed based on research. UNESCO pointed out that more than two decades of research showed that harsher punishment methods were less effective in creating a disciplined and balanced individual than more positive methods of discipline. Moreover, student achievement and safety were threatened through more zero-tolerance approaches. Barber et al. (2012) indicated that some advocates for change in the administration of student discipline, having come to the realization about the ills of harsher punishment methods advocated based on a deep conviction that their past actions had wronged numerous children.

Despite numerous researches stating that harsh methods of student discipline have more negative effects and fewer positive effects than more positive and individualized methods (Barber et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2015), corporal punishment in schools continues to be legal in 35% of countries internationally (Gershoff, 2017). Additionally, student corporal punishments have been reported at rates as high as 90% in some countries where it is banned. Gershoff concluded that only through greater education, advocacy and the provision of suitable and effective alternatives can the practice of corporal punishment be totally eradicated.

Welsh and Little (2018) asserted that harsher student discipline policies were initially adopted to manage the increase in school violence. As time elapsed, the challenges with zero-tolerance approaches were substituted so that student discipline could be objectively tackled (Welsh & Little, 2018). However, many of the disparities and challenges related to student discipline have not been addressed and teachers are finding themselves with more limited options to achieve optimal student discipline (Barber et al., 2012; Welsh & Little, 2018). Welsh and Little opined that for optimal

discipline to occur, there needs to be sufficient balance between respecting the rights of the students and effective discipline strategies which are supported by empirical data.

**Student discipline in Jamaica.** Various challenges affect discipline within the Jamaican schools. One challenge is the prevalence and types of student indiscipline (Cammock-Gayle, 2015; Loop News, 2017; Miller, 2018; Riddell et al., 2013).

Cammock-Gayle asserted that if the behaviors of the students, while on the Jamaican roads were an indication of the behaviors in the classroom, then teachers would spend a lot of time maintaining discipline. Citing her own experience at a high school during two workshops, Cammock-Gayle recounted that a great amount of time was spent trying to get the attention of the participants who were engaged in undisciplined behaviors such as not paying attention, using their phones or engaging in confrontations.

Riddell et al. (2013) stated that indiscipline in the schools threaten the safety of students and staff as there existed a high prevalence of indiscipline within the schools. Riddell et al. pointed to research which shows that in Kingston, 90% of students worried about violence within the schools. The authors explained that the fears are justified as 22% were victims of violence from other students. For bullying the figure is much higher as the Caribbean Policy Research Institute and UNICEF (2018) reported that 64.9% of children are bullied at school. Additionally, 21% of students had physically attacked teachers in urban schools in Jamaica (Riddell et al., 2013). Recent reports suggest that it is not only in urban areas that members of staff are victims of assault from students as Loop News (2017) and Burke (2016) reported that students were suspended after fighting teachers in rural schools.



The Ministry of Education in Jamaica is clear about what tools are available to teachers and school administrators to maintain student discipline within schools. Definitively, corporal punishment is banned in all schools (Caribbean Policy Research Institute & UNICEF, 2018). Instead, the Ministry of Education promotes the use of positive discipline methods (Ministry of Education, 2011). In promoting positive discipline, the Ministry of Education has piloted SWPBIS in 56 schools across Jamaica starting in 2014 (UNICEF, 2018) and rolled it out to public schools in Denham Town in Kingston (Gleaner, 2018; Linton, 2018).

While the Ministry of Education has, in policy, banned corporal punishment in schools and pushed for the utilization of positive discipline methods in schools, there has been insufficient monitoring to ensure that this rule is followed (Caribbean Policy Research Institute & UNICEF, 2018) and some teachers continue to utilize this form of punishment, asserting their disregard for the Ministry's policy (Wilson-Harris, 2019). PBIS was instituted in September 2014 and no official reviews have been published regarding its success. As such there is no data regarding its success or the adherence to policy by teachers. However, it is expected that its implementation would create a safer and more positive learning environment (UNICEF, 2016). In this study, I documented how PBIS was understood and implemented by the teachers at specific schools and provided insight into whether and how teachers' views and use of corporal punishment have changed since the implementation of PBIS in their schools.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support**

Although there exists a paucity of research related to teacher perceptions of PBIS in Jamaica, an abundance of literature was found related to perceptions of PBIS in the United States. The literature reveals that teacher perceptions may be subject to

change over time; teachers believed that they understood PBIS; there were various factors that determined success of PBIS; PBIS had challenges; and PBIS improved student discipline, school climate, and student outcomes. It was also found that differing views were held regarding training.

**Changing perceptions of PBIS.** In the review of literature two studies were found which highlighted how teachers' perceptions of PBIS changed over time. Amegin (2018) utilized a mixed methods study to investigate the teachers' perceptions of PBIS at a middle school in the United States. With a total sample size of 41, all of whom were surveyed while twelve were interviewed, the author found that the perceptions of PBIS had changed over time. Specifically, Amegin found that while the interviewees initially perceived PBIS as just another discipline methodology which would eventually fade away, they developed more positive beliefs about it as they learned more about the framework. The teachers said that both the training and the experience with PBIS was what improved their perceptions.

Cawthon (2016) conducted a purely qualitative case study at three elementary schools in the state of Georgia in the United States with the aim of understanding how teachers and administrators viewed the influence of SWPBIS on school climate. Cawthon found that teacher buy-in to the SWPBIS was not immediate and that such factors as loyalty to older methods of discipline and a lack of belief in the positivity of the program hindered initial buy-in. However, as the framework was implemented and the positive results were seen, an increasing number of teachers bought into it. This was beneficial as the greater the success, the more the acceptance by teachers (Cawthon, 2016).

**Teachers' understanding of PBIS.** In addition to finding that teachers' perceptions of PBIS changed over time based on experience and increased knowledge of the framework, Amegin (2018) found that there were high levels of understanding of PBIS among teachers. Amegin found that only 24.4% of the teachers believed that their understanding of PBIS was insufficient. Conversely, 39.1% of the respondents perceived themselves as either knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about PBIS.

Gibson (2018) conducted a study at an urban middle school, interviewing and observing ten teachers, with the aim of examining teachers' perspectives of school training on the implementation of PBIS systems. Gibson found that the training received by teachers made them feel knowledgeable about PBIS and prepared to implement it in their classrooms. Similar findings were reported by Hiles (2015). Hiles utilized a mixed methodology study to examine the knowledge and attitudes of secondary teachers towards PBIS. The majority of Hiles' participants reported that they knew how to use PBIS in their classrooms.

**Teachers' perceptions of PBIS training.** Various studies highlighted the perceptions of PBIS training that teachers held regarding training in PBIS. Martin (2013) conducted a mixed methods study to examine the teachers' perceptions and satisfaction with PBIS. Having interviewed and surveyed teachers from a primary and an elementary school, Martin found that teachers considered the training they received for PBIS as satisfactory. This differs from the findings of Anderson-Saunders (2016), Bowling (2018), and Gibson (2018) who found that there was a need for more frequent trainings if PBIS was to be successful. Similarly, Martinez (2017) and Scott (2018) found that teachers believed that more training was necessary for PBIS to be as successful as possible. Specifically, Martinez (2017) found that teachers believed that

more and more comprehensive training would be necessary for successful implementation of PBIS. Nonetheless, Gibson (2018) found that some teachers reported that training was one of the reasons they felt prepared for the implementation.

**Positive perceptions of PBIS.** Multiple authors indicated that teachers viewed PBIS positively. Martin (2013) indicated that teachers were satisfied with the results received from the implementation of PBIS. Hiles (2018) found that teachers believed that through the implementation of PBIS, students can leave school and become contributing members of society. Consistent with Hiles (2018), Bowling (2018) and Martinez (2017) found that teachers believed that the implementation of PBIS led to improvements in academic performance.

Martinez (2018) found that teachers realized that PBIS had a positive effect on classroom management. PBIS was considered successful in reducing indiscipline in students (Anderson-Saunders, 2016; Bowling, 2018; Cawthon, 2016; Gibson, 2018; Martinez, 2017; Mitchell, 2017). Hiles (2018) further pointed out that teachers reported PBIS to positively impact attendance and student attitudes. Additionally, school climate has been found to improve as a result of PBIS (Cawthon, 2016; Martinez, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; Periman, 2017).

**Factors perceived as contributing to positive outcomes of PBIS.** The literature points to multiple factors which teachers believe impact the success of PBIS. Amegin, (2018) and Cawthon (2016) reported that teachers highlighted consistency as a factor which impacts the success of PBIS. Alternatively, support impacts the success of PBIS (Amegin, 2018; Anderson-Saunders, 2016). Amegin (2018) specified administrative support as the factor which was positively correlated

with teachers' perceptions of PBIS. However, Anderson-Saunders (2016) pointed out that teachers believed that support from the students' homes was very important.

Alternatively, success of PBIS was also reported to be a result of consistency (Amegin, 2018; Cawthon, 2016). Conversely, Anderson-Saunders (2016) pointed out that some teachers believe it is the how and the when that affect the success of PBIS. Specifically, PBIS is only successful if it is properly implemented. Also, PBIS should be implemented at a young age to reap optimal success in the inculcation of positive student behaviors (Anderson-Saunders, 2016).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I outlined the literature related to the primary concepts in this study and described the theoretical framework which guided the study. The theoretical framework selected was the critical theory (Horkheimer, 2002). The theory highlights the need for investigating social institutions and structure through a holistic and critical lens, understanding the history and evaluating it according to a utopian view. The critical framework is ideal for this study as it supports and encourages the use of the phenomenological approach to reviewing educational frameworks while encouraging holistic critiques in examining the views and experiences of teachers (St. Mary et al., 2018).

The literature also reviewed PBIS as a framework and the literature related to teacher perceptions. The literature related to teacher perceptions highlight a range of positive perceptions including that PBIS reduces student indiscipline, improves class management and enhances school climate. It was also found that teachers believed that that for PBIS to be successful, there is the need for support from the home and from the school's administrative body. Additionally, training would have to be

sufficiently broad to ensure that teachers fully understand how to apply the framework to optimize success.

Within Jamaica, PBIS is still in its pilot phase and while there have been news articles written about its implementation and the effects on school discipline, no academic or official studies about the Jamaican experience with PBIS was found. In this study I seek to address this paucity by focusing on the teachers' implementation of PBIS within the classroom. Specifically, I sought insights from the teachers about their understanding of PBIS, their implementation of PBIS and their perceptions about its effectiveness relative to other forms of discipline and or punishments.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

I examined the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Region 4 in Jamaica regarding the pilot program to implement PBIS. In this chapter, I describe the methods that I used to achieve the aims of the study. The first section of the chapter includes a discussion of the research approach and the rationale for utilizing the approach. Thereafter the researcher's roles are reviewed, followed by a discussion of how data were collected. Finally, the ethical procedures that were followed during the study are outlined and a summary of the chapter provided.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The major concepts reviewed in this study were classroom management, punishment, PBIS, and student discipline. I used the qualitative approach to collect and analyze data for this study. The reason for using the qualitative approach is that the primary aim of the study was to understand, from the teacher's perspective, how PBIS has been working. I did not aim to provide numerical results, as is the norm for quantitative studies (Creswell, 2014). Instead, I sought to understand the lived experiences of teachers and how they interpret their experiences, thus supporting the use of the qualitative approach (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Numerous qualitative traditions exist (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). For this research, I used the phenomenological tradition. Admittedly, the phenomenological approach cannot produce theory that allows researchers to explain systems or interactions (Vagle, 2016). However, phenomenological research provides researchers with plausible insights that enhance their understanding of the world (Vagle, 2016). As such, the phenomenological

approach was best suited for this study which focused on the PBIS, which is currently being piloted in 56 schools across Jamaica, and was undertaken to understand how the framework was introduced, how it was utilized by teachers, how it was viewed by teachers, and the reasons teachers viewed the PBIS as they did. As such, I sought to answer the following RQs:

RQ1. How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS?

RQ2. How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica use PBIS?

RQ3. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS?

RQ4. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS?

### **Role of the Researcher**

In conducting this study, I took on an “observer as participant” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 144) role. As such, I introduced myself to the group and explained the research and my role as the researcher. In this role, I had access to various participants as well as a wide range of information. However, I was limited to the information provided by the participants.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that it is important to understand and state what the researcher’s role is if a good quality qualitative research is to be executed. According to the authors, it is important that in defining his or her role, the researcher explains to the participants the reasons for the research and its importance. As such, I was responsible for recruiting participants, explaining my role as the researcher, and explaining how the research might be beneficial.



In reporting, the researcher must also be honest about the power dynamics and the relationships that exist between the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In line with this expectation, I selected sites at which I had no authority. I am a teacher but did not use my school as one of the participating schools. Additionally, I had no authority over any of the individuals at any of the schools selected. Furthermore, the participants who were observed were teachers. Though students' behaviors were observed, the observation was secondary as the emphasis was on the teachers' handling of student behaviors.

Yin (2016) stated that in collecting data, the researcher acts as the primary tool of data collection. Yin added that data are filtered through the mind of the researcher and have to be interpreted by the same researcher in preparing the report. Thus, the data are both internal and external, and the researcher's beliefs and biases must be considered in the interpretation and presentation of findings. As a teacher, I have beliefs about teacher and student relationships that may be reflected in the interpretation of findings. I sought to overcome those potential biases by presenting the data in as pure a form as possible and by interpreting findings based solely on the data. When discussing the findings, multiple possible interpretations were explored using the literature to substantiate the conclusions. I also used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure consistency and minimize bias.

## **Methodology**

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

I began data collection after gaining approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (approval no. 05-15-20-0538039). Schools in Jamaica fall into one of seven regions (Jamaica Information Service, 2009). The region that was

selected for this study was Region 4. According to various experts (Creswell, 2012; 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2009; 2016), qualitative researchers should purposively select samples. One purposeful method of selecting the sample is through convenience sampling. Creswell (2014) described convenience sampling as a form of purposive sampling where participants are selected because of ease of access and their willingness to participate. As such, the schools were selected based on their proximity to me.

Region 4 consists of 22 secondary high schools, and there were 1,452 teachers within the region at the time of the study. Of the 22 schools, five participated in the PBIS pilot. Within these schools, there are 376 teachers. Of the five, three schools were selected. The schools were selected on a convenience basis (i.e., based on the willingness of the schools to participate). A total of 26 teachers were interviewed, 13 from School A, six from School B, and seven from School C. The number of teachers selected was dictated by saturation and willingness to participate and because the aim was to understand, as fully as possible, how PBIS is utilized at each school and the experiences of the teachers within the schools piloting PBIS.

In selecting the teachers for participation, I sought equal numbers of upper-school teachers (Grades 10 to 13) and lower-school teachers (Grades 7 to 9). However, because most of the teachers taught both upper and lower schools, segmentation by grade proved overwhelmingly difficult. To qualify for participation, the teachers should have been teaching for a minimum of one year and must be permanent members of staff. Selecting teachers who have been teaching for one or more years means that the teachers would have had sufficient experience with PBIS to

form opinions about it and to provide sufficient depth of information relevant to this study.

I recruited participants in three stages. First, the Ministry of Education was recruited. To recruit the Ministry of Education, I delivered a letter requesting permission to conduct the research to their Region 4 office. Once I received permission from the Ministry of Education, I recruited the three schools. (Appendix B contains the request letter and the subsequent approval from the Ministry of Education.) To recruit the schools, I called and solicited participation from the administrators. During the call, I explained the proposed research and expressed my desire to include teachers from the school as participants. Upon receipt of a verbal authorization, I sent a formal permission letter (see Appendix C) to the school.

Because of the pandemic in existence at the time of data collection, snowballing had to be utilized to recruit participants. As such, I approached key persons at the school (i.e., a guidance counsellors and vice principals) for assistance with recruiting. These persons were informed of the criteria for participation and requested participation my behalf. Once introductions were made by the key persons, I discussed the purpose and the significance of the study with the teachers and invited them to participate. I informed all participants of their rights as participants (see the “Ethical Procedures” section later in this chapter), my role as the researcher and answered all questions related to participation and the relevance of the research..

### **Instrumentation**

Phenomenological studies seek to gain insight into everyday experiences and provide a deeper understanding about the world being explored (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Vagle, 2016). In this study, I sought to gather in-depth

information using the interviews. In this section, I outline the rationale for selecting the interviews as the method of collecting data and how the instrument was validated.

I used interviews because it is the best way to gain information about individuals' experiences (Creswell, 2012; 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). Specifically, the face-to-face interviews using Zoom were utilized. Creswell (2012, 2014) explained that interviews can be either unstructured or semi structured. I developed a specific set of questions that I posed to all interviewees. As such, semi structured interviews allowed consistency among all the interviews allowing greater ease of comparison across interviews (see Creswell, 2012). Despite the using an interview protocol, I asked additional questions so that all necessary information was captured.

Yin (2016) explained that in collecting data, the data passes through the researcher before being reported and that researchers must be careful, even during data collection, that their bias does not affect the integrity of the report. To ensure that there was minimal bias in the recording of the data, I, with the consent of the participants, recorded all interviews were recorded on a digital recording device and subsequently transcribed them verbatim.

**Validity and credibility.** Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that validity is of great importance in qualitative research. However, the authors accepted that within qualitative research, the word credibility is more applicable. To ensure the credibility, I used member checks. In other words, I shared the data with some of the participants to confirm that their statements were correctly interpreted and reported.

I also used contradictory explanations to validate the findings. In other words, where emerging findings exist, I reviewed the data for contrary explanations or ways

of presenting the data. Where there were multiple explanations, I presented all explanations. However, where the data were more supportive of one finding, such were noted.

Finally, the findings were validated using audit trails, wherein the supervisor of this research acted as an auditor or a peer reviewer. What this means is that the supervisor reviewed the proposal prior to the execution of data collection and provided feedback as to the soundness of the methodology and suggested amendments where necessary. Thereafter, I provided the supervisor with a detailed report of the steps taken in the research to ensure adherence to proposed methodology and the completeness and accuracy of the research report and specifically, the methodology. I also shared the transcripts of the interviews with research supervisor to ensure that the findings were properly and completely reported and that there was objective reporting.

### **Procedures for the Pilot Study**

I completed a pilot study among four individuals who were family and friends that are teachers with experience using PBIS. The four participants were interviewed, and the analysis completed to confirm whether interviewees understood the questions, whether the responses provided were able to sufficiently answer the RQs and to understand what further changes could be made to the interview protocol to improve it. No changes were found to be necessary.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis was done based on Creswell's (2012) six steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data. In the first step, the data were prepared and organized for

data analysis. To prepare and organize the data, the recordings from the interviews were transcribed and labelled.

In the second step, exploring and coding the data, the transcripts were read to get an overview of the responses. Thereafter, the transcripts were read for coding purposes. This was completed in three phases. First, the transcripts were read individually and key words and phrases from the responses recorded. The responses were then assembled, and similar responses were grouped, highlighting the respondents with the same or similar responses. After grouping responses, they were reviewed to see if there were any redundancies (i.e., words or phrases that mirror other responses) and the redundancies were grouped with similar responses; thereby condensing the findings.

In the third step, the codes were used to build themes. In this step, the findings were grouped based on the RQs. In other words, the condensed findings were grouped based on the interview questions they were answering and related to the RQ which the interview question sought to answer. Aligning the responses to the RQs, the responses were explored to identify which responses had multiple respondents. Such responses constituted themes.

In the fourth step, the findings were reported. The findings were reported using a discussion of the themes. That is the themes were provided and the participants' responses related to the theme discussed. Thereafter, the findings were evaluated against the literature and personal reflections. Finally, the findings were validated using audit trails. That is the findings and the raw data were provided to the research supervisor who provided feedback to the researcher who addressed them as necessary.

## **Issues of Trustworthiness**

### **Ethical Procedures**

When conducting research involving human subjects, it is imperative that the rights of the human subjects be preserved (British Psychological Society, 2014). Additionally, it is important that all cited works and instruments used be properly credited (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010). In this study, I developed the instrument used and therefore, there was no need to cite a source. Nonetheless, various works were used throughout the study, many of which contributed to the development of the interview protocol. All works were cited and referenced according to the APA publication manual (APA, 2010).

With reference to human subjects, the British Psychological Society (2014) asserted that the rights to informed consent, autonomy, privacy and confidentiality and freedom from harm should be respected by all researchers. To ensure the right to autonomy was protected, I only selected participants if they expressed a willingness to participate. After they expressed willingness to participate, I informed them of their right to withdraw from participation during or after the interview, should they so desire. This information was provided orally and in writing via the informed consent form.

I ensured that the rights of the participants to informed consent were protected by telling every participant about the research before participating. I provided a forum to ask questions about the research, the interview and how the information would be used and stored. Much of this information was also provided in the informed consent form. As evidence that the participants provided informed consent, a statement was placed on the informed consent which explains that if the participants had read and

understood the study enough to make the decision to participate, they would respond to the e-mail with the words “I consent”.

The participants’ right to privacy were protected in various ways. First, no names were mentioned in the study. Instead of the name of the school, a pseudonym which did not reflect the name of the participating site was used. Similarly, a pseudonym was used instead of the individuals’ names. However, the gender of the participants was not hidden. The interviews were also private as although they were recorded, only I had access to the recordings as they were uploaded to a password protected google drive account and would be deleted five years after the approval of the research. While I submitted the transcripts to the research supervisor, if the interviewee stated his or her name, the information was replaced with a pseudonym in the transcript.

### **Summary**

I examined the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Region 4 in Jamaica regarding the pilot program to implement PBIS. The qualitative approach was used to collect and analyze the data. Specifically, I used phenomenological tradition because this tradition is most beneficial when seeking to answer questions of how and why and this research sought to understand how teachers used PBIS, how they felt about PBIS and why they felt as they did about PBIS.

In collecting the data, I assumed the role of an observer as participant. In this role, I solicited participants and collected data using face-to-face interviews. The face-to-face interviews were used because this method is best suited for gaining information about the experiences of individuals. In collecting data, the rights of the



participants were protected. Specifically, the right to privacy and anonymity, the right to autonomy, the right to informed consent and the right to not be harmed.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

In this phenomenological study, I examined the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Western Jamaica regarding the pilot program of PBIS. I developed four RQs to assist with the examination:

- RQ1. How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS?
- RQ2. How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica use PBIS?
- RQ3. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS?
- RQ4. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS?

This chapter includes the findings from the data collected.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I describe the context of the study. Specifically, the setting of the study and the demographic characteristics of the participants are illustrated. In the second section, the data gathering process is outlined. Included in the second section are details about the use of the data collection instruments, the recording of the data, changes that were made to the data collection plan presented in Chapter 3, and unusual circumstances encountered during the data collection phase. Additionally, I present the details of how the data were analyzed as well as evidence of the trustworthiness of the data analysis. In the final section, the results are presented and a summary of the major findings provided.

## Setting

In this section, I present the setting in which the study was executed as well as the demographic characteristics of the participants. For the setting, attention was paid to the organizational and personal factors that could have affected the outcomes of the study. Additionally, only demographic factors relevant to the study are presented.

I selected three schools from the Ministry of Education's Region 4 based on their proximity to me and the availability and willingness of the schools to participate in the study. The three schools selected were part of the original PBIS pilot program of the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF, and all had reported significant behavior challenges prior to the implementation of the SWPBIS. In addition to challenges with discipline, the schools are also focused on improving educational outcomes and use the PBIS framework (UNICEF, 2019) to assist with this goal.

I collected data for this study in May and June, 2 months after the Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (2020). As such, access to teachers was limited as schools had limited operations and teachers mostly taught from home. Because of this, I used the snowball technique to recruit participants as this was the most efficient manner for obtaining teacher participation. However, it was possible that the teachers who were selected for participation in this study were all members of a particular clique and shared similar personalities or views. Another potential outcome from using the guidance counsellor was that the teachers referred might have been those with the greatest contact due to student indiscipline. Alternatively, the guidance counsellor may have chosen teachers at random based on availability. The findings were interpreted without concluding either possibility, but

contradictory findings were noted so that conclusions could be drawn based on the totality of the findings and not speculations about teachers' motivation for responding.

### **Demographics**

In this study, five demographic characteristics were highlighted: age, sex, tenure, teaching experience, and grade level taught. These demographics are represented in Table 1 and a summary presented in Table 2. Table 1 and Table 2 show that the age distribution among the participants was fairly even and that almost all the participants were between the ages of 21 and 50. Conversely, the sex distribution was significantly one-sided as men comprised less than 20% (19.23%) of the participants in this study. Half (50%) of the participants were teaching at the school for 2 to 5 years. The table also shows that only one participant was at the school for 1 year or less; similarly, only one participant was at the school for 20 years or more.

Despite the tenure of the teachers at the school being predominantly 2 to 5 years, Table 1 and Table 2 show that the teaching experience was more evenly distributed. Table 1 shows that although the plurality of teachers had 2 to 5 years of experience, this was less than one third of the total number of participants. The table shows that the majority of the participants (73.1%) had 2 to 15 years of experience. The majority (62.5%) of the participants taught both upper and lower school. The table also shows that the greater minority of participating teachers taught lower school only. The number of teachers teaching both upper and lower schools versus either upper or lower school is important because the initial aim was to use equal numbers of lower and upper-school teachers. However, with the majority teaching both levels, most participants were assumed to be speaking from their experience with both grade levels.

Table 1

*Demographic Data of Participants*

Participant	Age (yrs.)	Gender	Tenure at institution (yrs.)	Teaching experience (yrs.)	Grade level taught
T1	31-40	Female	2-5	2-5	Upper, lower
T2	31-40	Female	11-15	11-15	Upper, lower
T3	41-50	Male	11-15	16-20	
T4	31-40	Female	> 20		Upper
T5	31-40	Male	2-5	6-10	
T6	41-50	Female	16-20	16-20	
T7	21-30	Female	2-5	2-5	
T8	21-30	Female	2-5	6-10	Upper, lower
T9	41-50	Female	6-10	11-15	
T10	41-50	Female	6-10	6-10	Upper, lower
T11	21-30	Female	> = 1	> = 1	Upper, lower
T12	21-30	Female	2-5	2-5	Upper, lower
T13	21-30	Male	2-5	2-5	Upper, lower
T14	21-30	Female	6-10	6-10	Upper, lower
T15	51 and over	Female	2-5	6-10	Upper, lower
T16	21-30	Male	2-5	2-5	Upper, lower
T17	31-40	Female	2-5	2-5	
T18	31-40	Female	2-5	11-15	
T19	31-40	Female	11-15	11-15	
T20	41-50	Female	2-5	>20	Upper
T21	31-40	Female	6-10	6-10	Upper
T22	31-40	Female	6-10	11-15	Lower
T23	21-30	Male	2-5	11-15	
T24	31-40	Female	11-15	16-20	Upper
T25	21-30	Female	2-5	2-5	Lower
T26	31-40	Female	11-15	16-20	

*Note.* Yrs. = years.

Table 2

*Demographic Data of Participants: Statistical Summary*

	Participant	Age	Gender	Tenure at institution	Teaching experience	Grade level taught
N		26	26	26	25	16
Min.	T1	21-30	male	1 year or less	1 year or less	Upper School Only
Max.	T9	51 and over	female	more than 20 years	more than 20 years	Upper and Lower School
Std. Deviation		.845	.402	1.167	1.282	.885
Mean		2.92	1.81	2.81	3.32	2.38

### **Data Collection**

I completed the data collection over a 4-week period. Data were collected from three schools. Fifty percent of the participants were from School A. There was almost even distribution between School B (23.08%) and School C (26.92%). This distribution differed from the data collection plan as it was anticipated that participants would have been evenly distributed across schools. The reason for the difference was twofold. First, there was a limited number of willing participants in one school. Additionally, saturation occurred more quickly at School B and School C, than at school A. Because of the gatekeeping vigilance at School B, more time was spent than expected during the participant recruitment phase since recruitment of participants was dependent on gaining permission for entry and getting assistance from administrative staff.

As identified in Chapter 3, I collected data using interview protocols. For all interviews, permission was sought to record the Zoom meeting and store the audio for transcription purposes. Permission was granted by all participants and all interviews were recorded and transcribed in preparation for data analysis. Only teachers were included in this study and the same instrument was used with all participants to ensure consistency and ease of analysis across participants and schools.

### **Effect of Covid-19 and Social Distancing on the Current Study**

I originally intended to recruit participants in part by visiting schools and after gaining permission to attend staff meeting in order to recruit teachers by giving a brief overview of the study. However, in light of the current health risk and social distancing, I asked principals of the 3 schools to send out e-mail invitation to teachers to volunteer to participate in the study. The e-mail (see Appendix D) contained my

information so that teachers could contact me privately, if they wished to participate in the research.

Additionally, any further recruitment and communication with participants was done via e-mails or other virtual platforms such as Zoom. I also intended to carry out face to face interview but instead utilized Zoom audio interview. I used an audio interview because the interview was recorded and due to ethical reasons video interview were not used.

### **Data Analysis**

To ensure respondents were easily identifiable without disclosing their names or the names of their institutions, they were coded based on the school to which they belonged and the order in which they were interviewed. Thus, the first participant interviewed from School A, was coded as TA1, the second as TA2, and sequentially thereafter to TA13. Similarly, the first participant interviewed from School B was coded TB1, the second TB2, continuing sequentially to TB6. The coding followed the same pattern for participants from School C who were coded as TC1 through TC7.

To decipher themes, I scrutinized the data repeatedly to identify similarities within the responses. Where similarities were found among two or more respondents, I determined that a theme was emerging and coded accordingly. I then reviewed the themes and matched to the RQ which they answered. Thus, themes related to training were highlighted as responding to question 1, except where the training received was either a benefit or a challenge for the success of the PBIS.

While I considered all responses that were given by two or more participants to be themes, only those given by teachers from all schools were considered major themes. Despite this consideration I reported on all themes and contradictions so that



a full understanding of the teachers' perspectives could be gained. I also reported responses that were unique to individual participants to ensure that there was no bias in presentation and to ensure that all views were provided as they summarize the overall experience of teachers using PBIS.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Three strategies of credibility were outlined in Chapter 3: member checks, the use of contradictory explanations, and audit trails. In this study, member checks were completed after the completion of the report. After the report was completed, all participants were asked to review the findings. Each participant was provided with their individual participant code and asked to scrutinize the transcript and the presentation of results to determine whether what was written corresponded to what was meant by what was stated in the transcript. In all instances where there were discrepancies, the report was altered accordingly.

For the results, contradictions were noted within the thematic presentation so that alternative views could be presented from which conclusions could be drawn. The contradictions were either discussed as separate themes or were discussed within themes, if the contradiction was a unique response or if the theme could be merged without negatively affecting the ability to fully explore either theme. Finally, within Chapter 5, multiple interpretations of the findings based on the major themes were discussed to ensure proper justification of any conclusions drawn.

I presented the findings and discussions to my dissertation supervisor alongside the transcripts for all the participants. In this way the supervisor was able to scrutinize the report while having the raw data. In so doing, the supervisor was able to provide views about discrepancies and request correction. Wherever such

discrepancies were found, unless the supervisor's requests would contradict the participant's assertions about what was meant, the report was altered to reflect more consistent findings. Where the supervisor's request could not be accommodated without disregarding the meanings highlighted by the participant, I discussed the issue with the participant and sought clarification. Changes were then made based on alignment between both the supervisor's comments and the participants' response.

### **Results**

The findings are presented in this section. The findings are presented based on the RQs. As such, the RQs are stated, and the corresponding themes presented. Where unique responses were found, the unique responses are noted under a related theme.

#### **Research Question 1**

RQ1 was, How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS? Three themes emerged in response to RQ1.

**Theme 1: PBIS Education From External Source.** Eight teachers indicated that education about PBIS was external to the school. Two teachers, each from different schools, stated that their education of PBIS was not received within the PBIS program implemented at the school or by the Ministry of Education. TA2 stated that except for the knowledge gained during his degree program, he knew nothing else about PBIS. TA2 further explained that when he asked at school, he "heard it's a program that the guidance counsellors are doing." TB6 also stated that she did not receive any training in PBIS through the program instituted at the school or from the Ministry of Education. TB6 recalled that PBIS was introduced to her at a staff meeting but that she "did a little bit of extra reading to what it entails."

Teachers also indicated that some teachers were educated at workshops outside of the school. TA4 recounted: “we went to different workshop[s], well some persons.” TA4 described the workshops as “informative” and explained that “it has open[ed] my eyes to certain cultures that some school are practicing that we can use to uplift our schools.”

TA4 indicated that some persons went to the workshops. TB3 stated that at her school selected persons went to the training and that the selected persons “would have come back to school and would have formed the SWPBIS team.” TC4 did not suggest that the persons who went to the workshop were selected but highlighted that only “a group a [group of] teachers went to a workshop to learn about the framework” and that these persons were “lead by the guidance counsellors.”

TB1 expressed that she was not among those who went to the training but indicated that she was introduced to PBIS by “the guidance counsellor and a few other teachers who went to the training.” Conversely, TB2 stated that she received the training and was able to describe aspects of the training. However, TB3 seemed to imply that it was only the guidance counsellors who received formal training. TB3 stated: “the guidance counsellors, who were trained formally, trained the rest of the staff.” On the contrary, TB5 asserted that it was “only the teachers that deal with students with behavioral problems” that received training but opined that “it should be a course that all teachers of the schools [complete].”

**Theme 2: Teachers Received Internal Training.** TA4 pointed out that “in the workshop the teachers get into groups put their ideas together and present it to everyone and then return to school and train everyone.” Similarly, almost half

(46.15%) of the participants indicated that teachers learnt about PBIS through internal training. Two subthemes emerged from this theme.

*Teachers participated in staff development activities and/or internal workshops.* TB1 corroborated TA4's statements that teachers returned to the school and trained everyone but explained that instead of the teachers only, it was the teachers and the guidance counsellors who received the training who conducted training activities. TB1 explained: "I know the guidance counsellors and some other teachers went to a training, and when they came back, we had a meeting like a staff development." TB1 described the attitude of the guidance counsellors and teachers who conducted the staff development as "very positive about the whole thing" and expressed that the "staff development [taught] us how to use PBIS to change the students' attitude and behavior."

Unlike TA4 and TB1, TC1 did not indicate that it was the teachers who received training that provided training for the other teachers. Instead, TC1 pointed first to the special education teachers and then to the guidance counsellors as the ones who provided training. According to TC1,

I remember a group, where we have staff development in a workshop setting where we have some persons from special ed. They were helping the general staff to deal with students with disability the different ways to motivate students using incentives to continue to behave or continue to portray a positive behavior.

TC1 further expressed that the guidance counsellors held occasional workshops. TC1 stated: "from time to time, the guidance department, they have workshop with the

general staff and briefing as it relates to how to motivate and get the students performing and get their attitude together.”

TC2 explained that the trainings were not ongoing but were “done at the initial stages of the implementation.” TC2 pointed out that the workshops “occurred after school” and described them saying: “we sit in [the] department and discuss what work and some staff meeting with the entire staff. We were reminded of what we could say and do but [the] workshops were not long.”

TC3 corroborated TC2’s recollection that the training only occurred during the initial implementation but stated that there was only one workshop. According to TC3, “there were no training[s] since the implementation. It was a one-off thing.” TC3’s description of the workshop also differed from TC2. TC3 recalled:

the workshop lasted for 4 hrs. We were shown other school that it worked for and what they did in a positive sense. Basically, guideline that we can do to ensure that our framework is successful so we were given a grid, it had um, basically ask us to outline what the core values would look like for students as well as members of staff.”

TC6 differed about whether the training was ongoing. TC6 did not “remember any formal training per se after that first” but stated: “we are reminded to continue utilizing the strategy.” Being more specific, TC6 stated: “It is encouraged. At some intervals we’re encouraged, whether in department or general meeting.” Additionally, TC6’s recollection about the number of trainings was more aligned with that of TC2 than TC3. According to TC6: “When it just started, we did, I don’t remember what the number was, but we did do adequate training.” Similarly, TC7 recalled that there were three workshops but did not state that there was ongoing training. Instead, TC7

recalled that “they come back to the classes to check on the effectiveness of the program and offer suggestions.”

TA1 and TA3 pointed to their personal experiences also playing a part in their development regarding PBIS. TA1 asserted that “it was on the ground learning” because “you were just thrown into the situation and you learn as you go along.” TA3 rated his experience with PBIS as a positive where the training was concerned. According to TA3, “the fact that you are seeing it daily helps you to learn it.” TA3 also opined that “even if I had gone to a training, I might not retain it but seeing it every day is helping me to retain it, so if I don’t remember something I can look back at the information as a reminder.”

***Guidance counsellors provided training.*** TA1, TA3, TA10, and TB3 explained that the guidance counsellors were the ones who provided the training. TA1 recalled liaising with the guidance counsellors “cause the guidance persons or the guidance counselors are the ones who I think did the training and came back to school to do whatever with us.” When asked to describe the training received, TA1 replied: “they gave us note, hand out, sheet with whatever the program was about. And also, they had held meeting with the supervisors and then the supervisors tell us what and how.” When asked the same question, TA3 responded, “I was sensitized in staff meeting, so the guidance counsellor on my shift would talk about it some more.” TA10 also indicated that guidance played a part in training the teachers. TA10 expressed “I didn’t get any training, but guidance got the training and came back and train the teachers.” Similarly, TB3 said: “the guidance counsellors who were trained formally trained the rest of the staff.”

No Training Received. Eight of the 26 participants (TA1, TA2, TA5, TA6, TA7, TA8, TA11, TA12, TB6) indicated that they received no training regarding PBIS. It is noteworthy that of the eight participants, seven were from school A. As such, 53.85% of the teachers from School A asserted that they did not receive any training regarding PBIS.

## **Research Question 2**

RQ2 was, How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica use PBIS? Eight themes emerged in response to RQ2.

**PBIS as a school-wide effort.** TA1 reported that the PBIS program at the school was referred to as SWPBIS suggesting that a school-wide model of the PBIS was being used. This section outlines the school-wide effort indicated by the teachers who support its success. Ten subthemes emerged from this theme.

***School redecorated for PBIS.*** Seven teachers pointed to the school being redecorated for the PBIS program. In describing her overall experience with PBIS, TA3 talked about a mural and its utility. TA3 stated: “I don’t know if the mural are a part of PBIS, so they have the mural so the kids know what to expect, so they don’t need to see a teacher to tell them what to do or expect.” TA7 and TA8 did not mention a mural but said that seeing the guidance counsellor put up posters was among their first experiences with PBIS. Likewise, TA10, without referring to murals pointed out that “it [PBIS’ core values] is written in various part of the school.”TA9 expressed that “around the school compound, there are different mural[s] so we can visualize the core values that they are trying to cultivate in students and teachers alike. At School B, TB1 remarked that “we put up the writing over the school, murals on the wall.” TB1 explained that the writings and the murals existed as a reminder which

reinforced positive behaviors. TB2 referred to the actions as “trying to target the aesthetics of the school” and “making the physical environment more appealing.” This included “putting posters [and] talking about values like be cordial, be respectful.”

***Support received from administration.*** Most of the participants (69.23%) reported that administration was responsible for the management of PBIS and played various roles in attempting to ensure its success. TA9 asserted: “Admin. enforces the PBIS and ensure that it is implemented.” TB1 also stated that admin “enforce PBIS in the devotion and they ensure that there is a PBIS segment in the staff meeting where the guidance department and dean address matters concerning PBIS.”

TC2 stated that “admin. assess[es] the success.” TB2 believed “the role of admin is very important because if they don’t buy into it, it won’t be effective.” Similarly, TC5 explained: “It is important for admin to be on board with other stakeholder for the framework to be successful.”

TA1 pointed out that it was the administrators who redecorated the school with murals and erected positive quotes in line with the PBIS objectives and TC4 stated that administrators “place murals over the school.” Conversely, TA7 asserted that the administrators “allow the information to be posted around the school compound.” TA8 further asserted that the administrators “ensure that the murals are displayed to remind students of the core values of PBIS.” However, TA11 stated that the “admin. provide the materials, getting the flyers and posters.”

TA8 pointed to the direct role of the administrators as they “talk about PBIS at devotion and help with the incentives for the students.” TB1 opined that “the admin ensure that there is a budget for PBIS mural and incentive for the student.” TA5



pointed to the principal and stated that “the principal has come up with a systematic way to pay for rewards and publicly reward students in devotion, so he has a budget for positive reward system.” TC1 explained that the administrators “source the incentives at time[s]... provide special lunch[es] for kids who behave well... [and] provide token[s].”

TC2 asserted that the role of the administrators regarding PBIS is to “help to talk about it with the students in devotion, selling it to the students.” TA9 stated that the principal talks about it [PBIS] at devotion and provide[s] the token while explaining how the behavior will help them [students] for life. Similarly, TC4 believed that one role of the administrators was to “provide token and take time out to talk about the framework in devotions.” TA13 pointed to the vice principal and grade supervisor, stating that they “visit the classes and share ideas about what you can do to manage behavior.”

The administrators also liaise with external stakeholders. TC1 pointed out that administrators “reach out to parents... [and] the business community to source token for the kids to be used as incentives. TA1 indicated that it was because of the administrators that “CDA persons come in the school to give counselling.” TC5 showed that administrators had to both pass along information and promote conformity among external stakeholders. TC5 explained:

admin was charged with communicating the PBIS framework to parents. We also had to speak to vendors. The students were late because they stop at a vendor’s stall and hang out there and came late to class. So, admin had a meeting with the vendors to explain that the students’ lateness was due to them hanging out at the stalls.

TC5 asserted that the administration was “responsible for introducing and driving the heart of the framework.” TC6 pointed out that the administrators, after encouraging the children, reminded the teachers to continue doing likewise. TC4 expressed that the administrators “hold us accountable.” Additionally, the administrators “will monitor the progress of the plan that they have implemented” (TB4).

Overall, “the administration supports the teachers” (TA13). However, TB6 asserted that the administration did not do enough though “occasionally they will check in.” TC1 postulated that the administrators “need to have regular meetings with the students to motivate them to get students on board.” TC7 concluded that: “administrators play a major role, they are the watch dog of the program, and they let you know what is expected of you.”

**Meetings.** TB3 explained that PBIS meetings, like other meetings are scheduled monthly and termly. At these meetings, the team meets to look at the effectiveness of the plans when they are implemented and seek to improve the program. TC2 also recalled meetings. Similarly, TC2 explained: “we went to the meeting to express if it was working and what changes were needed.”

**The centrality of the guidance counsellors.** Most of the participants (69.23%) highlighted the centrality of the guidance counsellors’ roles in the PBIS program. TB2 reflected that “working with the guidance counsellors” was one of the ways of implementing PBIS. TA4 expressed that since the implementation of PBIS, “guidance is more involved.” TA2 heard that the PBIS “was a program that the guidance counsellors are doing.” Similarly, TA8 stated that PBIS “more aligns with the guidance; they implement it.” TA9 explained that “the guidance counsellors

implement it and talk about it in devotion.” TA10, highlighted that introductions to the program was done through a variety of means and that the guidance counsellors actively participated in the execution of the PBIS program. According to TA10, “they [guidance counsellors] introduce it at staff meetings and devotions, and they talk about it at class devotion, gender devotion and general devotion. They give out brochures and it is written in various part of the school.” TA10 further added that, “in devotion the guidance and other teachers call up students and reward them for returning items like lost phone” .

TA1 indicated that the guidance counsellors were very important as a source of information because they were the ones who received the training in PBIS. As such TA1 “had to liaise with the guidance office.” TA3 highlighted the various aspects of the program with which the guidance counsellors were involved. TA3 pointed out that the guidance counsellors were involved in introducing the program and training the staff, seeing students referred for some infractions, and providing overall support. TA4 reported that “there were some forms that they [guidance counsellors] formulate[d] that teachers could use as it relates to discipline.” Furthermore, under PBIS, there is “more work going to guidance” (TB3).

TA8 corroborated TA3’s position that the guidance counsellors provided support stating: “I feel supported; the dean and guidance help where they can.” Likewise, TA11 expressed, “I can call on the dean and guidance for support.” TA10 pointed out that even where there is insufficient support overall, “the guidance counsellor[s], they are trying, I see where they encourage you as the teacher.” TB1 explained that “the guidance counsellors will make time; PBIS is their baby.” TB4 explained that “the guidance department stand[s] ready to assist where we fall short.”

As “one good thing,” TA4 stated that she has “seen where the students now have a kinda better relationship with the guidance counsellor.” TA12 reported that “it is a 50/50 in some cases when some students go to the guidance counsellors and others that it don’t impact them at all.” However, the guidance counsellor’s intervention within PBIS is not limited to the school:

Sometimes there is abuse going on at home by parents or other family member[s]. Guidance does home visit[s] and intervene to let parents know the consequences of the abuse and pulling parents into schools to talk to them so that the child can get a better environment both at home and at school (TC1).

***Support through data collection.*** Despite five of the participants (TA4, TA5, TA9, TB6, TC6) stating that PBIS at their schools was not data driven, 57.69% of the participants gave reasons why they believed that it was data driven and how the data helped.

TA1 explained how data is necessary in PBIS to ensure that the correct disciplinary measure was used with each child. TA1 stated that PBIS is data driven because, “even if you have two situations that are similar, you may have different factors that cause it to be a little bit different.” TA1 also suggested that individually, data is collected during interaction with the program which allows better future decisions to be made. According to TA1, “as you’ll go, you’ll learn and know how to deal because no two situations are alike.”

Though expressing initial uncertainty when asked if PBIS is data driven, TA3 concluded that “it can be data driven because from time to time they mention that we not having so much fights so things like that.” Similarly, TA10 asserted that “records are there” as “the Dean normally records the information.” However, TA10 was not

certain what data was recorded or how it was used. TA12 corroborated TA10's statements by stating: "when you report [to] guidance or to the dean['s] office, they will want a report to be give[n] so in essence yes if a student has the same behavior over and over it will be noted as a pattern." TA13 indicated that the vice principal actively sought data "because there is a form that the teachers use to record the results and the vice-principal actually move around the school and ask about it in each class to manage behavior." Thus, participants from School A pointed out that teachers used data in the disciplinary measures utilized and the administrators collected data.

Similar findings were noted for School B where all but two of the participants indicated that PBIS was data driven. TB1 stated: "the vice principal is a data person and she make reference to the data and encourage various aspect of PBIS as it seems to be working." Additionally, "any meeting, or activity or new rule implemented will be documented and we evaluate it to see the progress of it to see if nothing [something] needs to change and then we work towards improving that plan" (TB4). TB2 pointed out that there was evidence that PBIS was data driven starting from training. According to TB2, "based on my recollection, they showed us some data at the workshop." TB2 also posited that "looking on the number of suspension and some specific class[es] with large number of students displaying negative behavior and determining how to address the situation is showing that it is data driven."

TB3 asserted that the data driven strategy is the reason for the improvements that occurred at the school. TB3 explained: "we [have] improved as a school and that is because we gather the data and use it to assess the way forward collaborating with guidance." Additionally, "the data is there to show how many goes to the dean vs guidance." TB3 also commented that there is the need to improve the data analysis

capacity, “so we are seeking the technology to help us analyze the data as we collect it.”

For School C, all the participants except TC6 reported a belief that PBIS was data driven. TC1 did not state any reason for believing that “more than likely some data was collected before PBIS was implemented” or that data collection was ongoing except “I would want to believe that.” Conversely, TC2 asserted: “we have data in terms of looking at specific students and how their behavior has change[d] from one class to another in a positive way. Additionally, we look at the decline in suspension.”

TC4 indicated: “the guidance department collects data and assess the framework’s effectiveness.” TC7 recalled that “there is a form that the teachers use to record the results. TC7 further stated “the Vice-Principal actually move around the school and ask about it in each class to manage behavior.”

TC5 reported evidence that PBIS was data driven and successfully so. According to TC5,

I was by default responsible for late line. There was a 100 students lined up for late line but we took the data and give it to the classroom teachers. After PBIS we noted a decline in the number of lateness as the teachers use the data to put in their measures.

TC3 explained that the school is still in the data collection phase and have not yet implemented the PBIS. TC3 justified the belief by stating: “I was consulted on what the behavior should look like a little while back so I am not sure if they have empirical data to support this new idea so I will assume that they are collecting data.”

***Support from the MoEYI.*** Half of the participants indicated that the MoEYI (Ministry of Education, Youth and Information) was involved in the PBIS at the

school. Specifically, the Ministry is responsible for training, supervision, and implementation of the program. TB5 explained that the PBIS “is their initiative,” that “they sold it to guidance counsellors’ department as well as administration,” and “did all the initial training to the guidance counsellors, then they come in and trained the teachers.” TC6 asserted that in addition to selling PBIS to the guidance counsellors, it is the MoEYI’s responsibility “to get us on board with this thing.” According to TB5, “they own the program pretty much” and they, “have been, for a while, rolling it out in different schools. It is not widespread across all the schools in Jamaica but there are specific schools that they have been introducing it to” (TC5). TC2 expressed that the MoEYI “was responsible for the implementation.” Similarly, TA8 stated: “The ministry is responsible for implementation of PBIS” adding that the MoEYI “say what is going to be done.” Thus, the guidance counsellors were chartered by the MoEYI to introduce the program to us to improve behavior” (TB6). At the same time, the MoEYI provided updates “as to what the program entails” (TB6).

TC3 remarked that “the initial training was put on by the Ministry.” TA1 stated that the MoEYI “would keep workshops and so forth.” TB2 asserted that “the guidance counsellor[s] have their contact in the ministry who set up the workshops and training session with guidance department so the counsellors can implement it.” TA4 described the initial training as good and stated that at the initial training, the MoEYI “implemented it [PBIS].”

TB2 stated that it is the job of the MoEYI to “monitor the implementation.” TC7 said that “to get us on board with this thing TA1 pointed out that the MoEYI would “send other persons out ensure that the intervention is actually being carried out in the schools and in the classroom, to ensure that it is really working.” TB1

corroborated TA1's statement, expressing that "the education officer for our school will talk about what is happening with PBIS." TA1 explained that the MoEYI reviews the suspension records kept at the school and "compare with each year, we suspended them on that suspension. They would check and tell you that, look, if you give out too much in that particular time frame, the suspension is still too high." In such instances, "the ministry may complain that the school is giving too much suspension" (TA1). TA3 explained that "based on what we know from ministry there should be no corporal punishment" and that "if someone should do something to a child then they would call the ministry and they would act accordingly."

***Teachers feel supported in PBIS.*** More than 60% (61.54%) of teachers expressed that they felt supported. TC1 stated: "I feel supported." TB1 remarked: "I feel well supported," adding "it is school-wide, and everyone is speaking the same tune." After stating that she feels supported, TA7 pointed out that "as teachers we are ask[ed] to look out for positive behavior so that they can be awarded publicly in devotion." TA1 explained that there were practice teachers who decided to work at the school based on the support they received during their training.

TA3 was specific regarding the support she received, stating, "I can always call on the guidance department" pointing out that they indicate "if there is an issue please let us know." TA10 expressed that even though she believed the support could be better, "the guidance counsellor, they are trying." TA10 continued "I see where they encourage you as the teacher." TB5 pointed out that the guidance counsellor offered support where there was a lack of knowledge. According to TB5, "if we have questions, we have support; the guidance department stand[s] ready to assist where we fall short."



TA8 highlighted that both the dean of discipline and the guidance counsellor, pointing out that “the dean and guidance help where they can.” TA11 perceived “100% support” but only spoke about the guidance counsellor and the dean of discipline, stating: “I can call on the dean and guidance for support.” Instead of the guidance counsellor or the dean of discipline, TA9 pointed to the vice principal, opining that “the support I am getting is based on the passionate way the VP feels about it.” TC2 indicated that the support from the guidance counsellors and the administration resulted in her not feeling isolated. TC2 saw “where admin and guidance counsellor give support.”

TA12 perceived all-round support and stated “I do feel supported from administration and my other colleague[s]. They show their support in terms of the framework because once we all work together in trying to accomplish one common goal.” Similarly, TC4 felt “supported by admin, guidance department, and my fellow colleagues,” adding, “I can call on them for assistance.” TA13 reported feeling “encouraged and motivated,” relating that her strategy was highlighted in a staff meeting and other teachers sought to implement it. TA13 added “there is also teamwork and exchange of ideas.” TC6 reported “if we say there are kids, we want to highlight at different intervals we do get funding to help with purchase of tokens. If we have any ideas the audience is there.”

***Lessons from training implemented.*** Two teachers stated that to use PBIS, they implemented the strategies learnt during training. TB2 stated that at the training he attended, the PBIS framework was introduced and the focus was on respectful interactions and the proper ways for students to address each other. TB2 explained that at his school, the core values of PBIS are mounted on the walls and he is

“constantly reinforcing them.” TB3 was not specific but stated: “We employed the strategies from the training in the disciplining of students.”

**Students segmented.** Two of the teachers from two separate schools indicated that students were segmented as a part of the PBIS framework. TB5 recalled that when PBIS was introduced, “students weren’t introduced as a whole group. It was introduced to students identified as problem students.” TB5 recalled that “the guidance counselling department as well as the classroom teachers that were responsible for those students, they used the program to see if the students will respond in a positive way.”

TC1 stated that students at her school were segmented based on academic strength and treated accordingly. According to TC1 “intervention is also done for the weaker students academically by the special education unit at work. Students are streamed and given extra classes on weekend to cater to their categories of needs.” Thus, it was found that although segmenting was perceived at School B and School C, the method of segmentation and the treatment were different.

**Teachers use areas of focus and/or themes as part of PBIS.** Eight of the participants indicated that they used themes, areas of focus, or core values in implementing PBIS in their classrooms. TC3 described PBIS as promoting core values within the institution and asserted that “students respond to that in that they know what the core values are and what they represent.” In explaining TC3 stated “at one point the core values were divided among departments and each department were given a core value that they were supposed to promote during their interaction with students.” TC3 further stated that the teachers at the school “were expected to include it in lesson plan.”

TA8 stated that despite the fact that he did not “really press PBIS,” he encouraged the core values. TC5 gave the creation of the core values as an example of an element that made the implementation of the PBIS “fun” and “vibrant.” From the classroom, TB2 explained that he is “consistently pointing out the core values, constantly reinforcing them.” TB4 also spoke about the existence of core values at her school. While not describing their implementation as fun, TB4 stated that the core values “has to do with behavior issues.” TB4 further stated that “students are aware of SWPBIS and they are aware of the core values, so be the case and they decide that they want to be disruptive they know the consequence that follows.”

TA1 described the areas of focus as an expected constant in the lives of the students. TA1 explained that the area of focus was a specific behavior that the students would focus on for the week and that the behavior was stated at devotion and students were expected to practice the behaviors “in the classroom towards the student and at large to family members, our community.” At TA1’s school the area of focus was called a “tenet” TA1 described how the tenet was factored into the practice of PBIS. According to TA1, “you would focus on whatever tenet they’re doing for the week and if that problem come along now, you would remind the students of it, they should remember that.” Teachers were also encouraged to “make posters, to support PBIS and put them up in our classrooms with the tenets and let the students write about what they think about that tenet that they are focusing on.” As a personal example, TA1 pointed out “if a student did say, for example, steal something then you want to point out to them, remember that the focus of that week is honesty and that is not allowed.”

TA7 also pointed to a focus but indicated that the focus was daily but stated that she incorporated the focus in the lesson. TA7 explained “if we are doing a lesson, I try to in-cooperate it in there; remember what we were doing this morning. I teach Spanish, so if we are doing something about caring I will in-cooperate it in the class.” Though belonging to a different school, TB1 recounted similar methods but indicated that the theme was practiced monthly. According to TB1, “if we were doing cooperation this month, the devotional theme would be based on different aspects of cooperation. The teachers are asked to reinforce it in the classes.” Likewise, TC6 stated “for the subject I teach, when we do vocabulary at times, we try to give them words such as kindness, words that promote positiveness.”

TA9 also pointed to the use of core values but did not indicate that these were used in any set period. Instead, TA9 stated “I use the core value and when students display undesirable behavior, I discuss it with them and help them to see where they went wrong.” TA9 also referred to murals “around the school compound... so we can visualize the core values” and explained that “they are trying to cultivate” the core values in teachers and students.

**PBIS implementation included multiple stakeholders.** TC1 and TA4 pointed out that multiple stakeholders were included in the implementation of PBIS. TC1 pointed out that the program design was “from the guidance and the different departments at school.” TA4 pointed out that at her school in addition to the interaction of internal stakeholders, meetings were held with “stakeholders such as taxi driver and vendors as to how they can have their input in the program.”

**Focus on positive behaviors.** The majority of the participants (69.23%) indicated that they focus on positive behavior in implementing PBIS. TA2 stated that

at her school, “PBIS cause us to look at how the kids are behaving.” As a result, the staff members “get a chance to look at how students [respond] to a little praise.” TC6 believed that PBIS “is another way to deal with students’ behaviors that might not necessarily be appropriate for a school context.” To achieve this,

your focus is not so much I am going at the behavior itself, it is more I am highlighting the positives that come with this child as a way to get them to increase the positive behaviors and get them to decrease the ones that are not appropriate for schools. (TC6)

TA13, showed that positive behaviors were not viewed in isolation in the PBIS program. For her class, she asked “the students to put coins in the bad behavior jar when they do something bad and put coins in the good behavior jars when they do the right thing.” TB1 also showed that negative behaviors are noticed by the teacher. However, “because we are conscious of PBIS we don’t just come out and reprimand the children, instead we compliment them for trying, for example good try but maybe next time you may want to.” TB1 explained that “we use every opportunity to push in a little compliment to make them feel good.”

TC6 “exaggerates” the positive behaviors of “a child that is normally a troublemaker” to communicate that “hey, I see you, you do not need to do the bad things, I see the good.” Similar sentiments were expressed by TB2 who stated “if we have a problematic student and that student displays a positive behavior then we reward that behavior and create less focus on the negative.” TC6 further indicated that all children in her class are told something positive at intervals.

TA13 pointed out that students “ask for rewards” in addition to reminding the teachers to implement the PBIS. TA8 stated that students were awarded in devotion.

TC1 also gave tokens but explained that these tokens were linked to students' behaviors. TC1 reported: "if I have a student who normally behaves well then that student will be highlighted and would be given a pencil or a pen or token." The number of tokens distributed in a day would be determined by the number of well-behaved students. The rationale behind the giving of tokens is "when others see that, then you get the whole class and maybe just one or two not in order. It motivate[s] everybody to do well because they want to be highlighted. They like the praise, they like the spotlight." However, "if you repeat the same token over and over, they get tired of it, so you have to change the token."

Similar responses were provided by TA9, TA10, TA12, TB5, TB6, TC2, and TC4. TA9 stated, "I also give them incentives when they do the right things and praise the behavior which encourages the good behavior." TA10 "praised them in the class publicly" for exhibiting positive behaviors and "sometimes give them token[s] like chocolate or lunch for the good behavior." For TB6, "whenever they are doing positive you try to big them up at that point, I think it actually works because they enjoy praises. In addition, I try to get little certificates." TC2 created a system where those who maintained good behaviors throughout the week were rewarded. In TC4's classroom, the students help to come up with the rules and the rewards. TB6 pointed out that in addition to praising good behaviors in her class, she ignored the bad behavior.

TA12 explained that she gave rewards for positive behaviors because "when you encourage it, they would model it. Even if they only model it at school, with time there can be overall changes in the students." TB2 explained: "we try to reward positive behavior. Additionally, "the reward system is a very important factor in

helping to change behavior among the children” (TB2). TA8 explained that the encouragement of positive behaviors replaced previous punishment used. According to TA8, “I stop giving the things like lines because the ministry against that, so I find ways to encourage the positive behavior by giving awards and praise.”

**Discussions used in PBIS.** Eight of the participants explained that discussions were used as a part of PBIS. In describing her overall experience with PBIS, TC3 spoke about how PBIS was promoting core values and said, “they are good in that they promote discussion.” Similarly, TA9 expressed: “I use the core value and when students display undesirable behavior[s], I discuss it with them and help them to see where they went wrong... I discuss it with them and help them correct the behavior.” TA9 pointed out that the discussions with the students are used “instead of sending them to the dean to be punished.”

TA1 explained that “PBIS now telling us instead of dwelling on or giving the students punishment or something for the lack of positive behavior, you would now try to allow the students to say or to see that whatever.” As an example, TA1 said: “if a student and a student were fighting, as the classroom teacher, you try and listen to each of them and the conflict that is there between them and then, come to some form of solution.” TA1 pointed out that it is necessary to have discussions with the child as they are sometimes unaware that what they are doing is wrong. As an example, TA1 recalled an incident of theft which occurred because of the “finders keepers, losers weepers” norm that existed. TA1 explained the benefits of having the discussion with the students. According to TA1,

when you sit that student down and say this is not the way to go about doing certain things and you need to know that X, Y, and Z, then they will now

appreciate that you explain to them that, um, this is why I'm going to do this.

And maybe this may cause for this, um, consequence and everybody will have a consequence.

TA12 explained that “In PBIS, [it] is all about respect and attentiveness, also dealing with teenagers they act like adults and you can speak with them.” As such, “if I asked a question and a student is answering but another student is talking while the one answering is talking, I tell the student that is speaking while the other one is talking that it is quite disrespectful.” Likewise, TA10 stated “if they [students] slip up, I explain to them the right thing like apologize, say sorry, general respect for each other, when [I] am teaching or talking, don't shout, raise your hand.” When asked to describe the steps taken to introduce and implement PBIS, TA13 responded “at the beginning I give them an overview of what is expected... They discuss bad behavior and relate to the positive behaviors that they should be doing instead.” Outside of the previously stated reasons for discussions, TA8 posited that “some students really need someone to talk to, so they know you care.”

TB1 reported that she allowed students to “talk it out and reason and find a solution.” Thereafter, they will apologize.” TB1 further reported that there are times when the students will resolve the conflicts themselves. TB1 recounted:

They had an argument off the compound, and they came to school and you could tell that there was some tension. The group came together and decide that they were going to resolve the issue and I could hear them reminding each other of the rules.

**Some teachers do not believe punishment is supported in PBIS.** Almost half (42.31%) of the participants opined that punishment is not supported in the PBIS



framework. When asked: “Is there a Place in the PBIS environment for punishment?” TB4 replied: “I don’t know of any sanction[s] [that] have been implemented by the SWPBIS team.” TA8 responded more pointedly saying “PBIS does not encourage punishment.” TB4 explained that “we have been focusing on positive behavior” and opined that “punishment will make the behavior worse since a lot of them are going through stuff at home.”

TA3, TA4, and TA5 expressed a desire to move away from punishment. TA3 reasoned: “ideally, we want to move away from punishment like suspension because we are losing instructional time.” TA3 reported that most frequently, the strategy of “calling the parents and finding out what happened” was utilized. On other occasions, the student “might be sent to the guidance counsellor” (TA3). TA4 echoed the sentiments of TA3, stating: “PBIS is moving away from punishment, moving to counselling, getting to the root of the issues.” Similarly, TA5 believed that “PBIS is moving away from punishment as punishment sometimes does more harm than good.”

TC2 stated that “punishment is not the focus, but students must take responsibility for their action, so they go to both private setting and group setting for counselling.” TC2 thereafter offered the more specific statement that “punitive punishment is not encouraged in PBIS.” TC3 based her rationale for the belief that under PBIS, there is “no place for punishment” on “how it was presented in training.” TA13 explained that although students “do detention,” there is “no punishment or suspension.” Instead, students “learn from the process how to manage their behavior.”

***Punishments utilized in PBIS.*** Despite the large number of participants who indicated that punishment was not supported by PBIS, 50% stated that they continued

to use punishment. TB1 posited that “there is always a place [for punishment] because students will learn from their mistake.” TC4 recognized that “punishment is minimize[d] as we seek to focus on the positive behavior” but opined that “it is necessary to curtail certain behavior[s] that persist.” TA8, suggested that punishment is “necessary since that is all some students will respond to.” Reasons for punishment outlined by the participants were: “so they can adapt to the framework” (TA12), “to reduce the likelihood that the action will be repeated” (TA12) and “the need for an immediate response” (TA3).

While positing that there is always a place for punishment, TB1 indicated that the “form of punishment” matters. TB1 stated that in the PBIS framework, the punishment is more rehabilitative, a sentiment shared by TC6. TC6 postulated that “with PBIS, punishment is more like a rehabilitation; I’m going to try and help the child, and this is one of the things unfortunately”. TC6 expounded: “[It] is punishment but it is you acknowledging the child...; hey I did something wrong, but this is what I could have done better, and I’m not hated I just need to do better.” TB1 proposed that:

you don’t want to give them any form of punishment that is going to take them away from their lessons and put them in the public to embarrass them. If they do something that deserve punishment you have to punish them but with dignity and ensure some reformation.

TB5 differentiated between positive and negative punishments and stated that “positive punishment is acceptable in the PBIS program but negative punishment like corporal punishment, verbal abuse that kind of thing it not accepted in the PBIS environment.” Punishments utilized by the participants were referrals to the dean of discipline or principal (TA12) and prescribed methods of discipline agreed on by the

teacher and the students (TB6). Regardless, the punishment should fit the offence (TA3, TB6).

TA3, TA4, TA11, and TC4 indicated that punitive measures need to work alongside PBIS methods. TA3 put forward the example of a stabbing and stated that such an incident would need to be dealt with. However, TA3 explained that “if we continue to use PBIS then we won’t get to that stage where we have that problem.” Conversely, TA11 expressed concern that “in some ways they want to take advantage of it. If they are not going to be sent home, they tend to do things.” At the same time, TA11 admitted that PBIS “encourage them to behave positive.” TC4 concluded that “both are equally effective when use[d] as is needed where necessary. PBIS helps students take responsibility for their actions and so it may be more effective.”

**Some teachers’ use of PBIS is limited or unintentional.** Of the participants, 19.23% stated that they did not use or did not intentionally utilize PBIS in their classroom. TA6 stated: “I have never been engaged in PBIS.” TA8 differed from TA6 as instead of stating no use of PBIS, he stated limited use of PBIS. According to TA8 “I don’t really press PBIS.” However, TA8 reported that he encouraged the core values.” TC3 expressed similar sentiments saying:

Frankly, I don’t necessary[ily] ascribe to the model in my everyday class situation. However, there was[were] instances where the core value was respect, having a group discussion and if some students believe[d] that one person’s opinion is invalid and ac[ed]t disrespectful[ly] to peers then I use[d] the opportunity to discuss respect as a core value. But I would not say that is something I practice on a daily basis in terms of the framework

Unlike TA6, TA8, and TC3 who described limited to no use of PBIS, TA5 and TA2 indicated ignorance of whether they utilized PBIS. TA5 explained: “I would not say that I paid special attention to it. Sometimes teachers use a lot of strategies unknowingly.” TA5 described the method she used in disciplining students:

The method that I normally use is talk to them because sometimes it is psychological, then we try to get the parents involved... Sometimes we encourage that they change environment, change shift or class with different teachers and students... Sometimes I try to get the child to reflect on their behavior and how to put the right behavior in action. Sometimes they just need guidance. So that is my method without involving the dean.

TA2 also expressed ignorance as to whether he used PBIS but differed from TA5 about the reason. TA2 remarked “because I didn’t receive any training, then I don’t know what it is, so I don’t know if I am using it.”

### **Research Question 3**

RQ3 was, What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS? Twelve themes emerged in response to this RQ.

**Some teachers perceive of PBIS a good initiative.** TA9, TA10, TA12, TB2, TB3, TB5, and TC5 indicated that they perceive PBIS as a good initiative. Of the PBIS program, TA10 said “what I have seen is very good.” TB3 explained that she fully embraced PBIS and have worked with the implementation team “because attitude is critical in transforming a[n] individual.” Likewise, TA9 described PBIS as “an excellent program” but stated that its excellence depended on how it is implemented. Similarly, TC5 remarked “after learning about it I was excited because I

believed that this type of initiative is important in education overall. However, the implementation style of it has been difficult on many fronts.” TA12 and TB5 also added qualifying remarks to their positive sentiments about PBIS. TA12 stated “the experience is not bad it’s just the children that need to adapt to the framework... but overall, the framework it is a good one” and TB5 reported “the PBIS program is a good program but children weren’t responding to because they are used to corporal punishment but I think it is a beautiful program.” Despite the lack of student responsiveness, TB5 opined that PBIS “has great potential” for enhancing student discipline at the school.

**Adequate, good, or beneficial training received.** Six participants, five of whom were from the same school, indicated that the training they received was either good, adequate or beneficial. TA9, stated that the training was “good” but stated that this good was contingent on whether “all stakeholders play their part and accountability is ensured.” TA9 described the training as “regular workshop[s] where classroom control and behavior management is discussed” and opined that “through workshop[s] concerning behavior management control,” teachers were provided “with tools and strategies that can be used in order to get the behavior desired by students.” TC2 justified her perception that the training was good by pointing to the results. TC2 reported: “I think my training is good because I see where it is stemming some of the issues.” TC2 further added “we are also learning from institutions who are using it well.”

TC4 simply stated that the training was “adequate.” Similarly, TC6 remarked: “when it just started, we did, I don’t remember what the number was, but we did do adequate training. Thereafter, it is just occasionally we are reminded to continue

utilizing the strategy” (TC6). TC5 explained that “the level of training received was paired with how far our program had gone at the time” and that she “was happy with the training” received. Conversely, TC7 related “it could be better. It’s adequate but greater support is needed.” TC7 further described the training by outlining that “[the] SMART strategy is used to help foster these attributes. Safety inside and outside, motivated, accountable, responsible and trustworthy.”

**PBIS gets to the root of undesired behavior.** Five of the participants indicated that the PBIS gets to the root cause of undesired behavior. TA4 stated that PBIS “help[s] me to get to the core of the problem with these few students that are disruptive.” When asked: “What positives have you witnessed with PBIS?” TA1 replied “the positive aspect of it is just that you get to the issue, the root cause what is causing it.”

According to TA8, “PBIS is more effective in that it address[es] the root cause of the issues and help students reform their behavior.” Similarly, TC1 opined that “PBIS most time helps you to find out on the spot why the child is behaving like that and you can find a solution to it and so forth.” TB3 asserted that “because the students are different now... You have to get to know the background.”

**PBIS targets behaviors and the whole person.** Of the 26 participants, 19 stated that PBIS targets behavior. Of these, eight believed that PBIS targeted specific behaviors. The behaviors targeted with PBIS include disruptive behavior (TA4), littering and respecting of other people’s property (TA7), dishonesty and rebellious behavior (TA9), violent or aggressive behaviors (TB1, TB6), smoking (TC1), and lateness and safety (TC5). TA9 explained that in targeting the dishonesty and rebellious behavior, the teachers work toward “cultivating honesty and character

building.” In explaining the targeting of aggressive behaviors, TB1 explained “some of them come from some communities. They come to us, you know they are very aggressive.” TB1 continued:

We know that they come from certain communities and so we want them to see the flip side, you don't always have to have an argument, you don't always have to win the argument. You can have discussion and debate you don't always have to win and it's ok to walk away.

The 11 participants who asserted that PBIS targets behavior but did not identify specific behaviors indicated that PBIS targets overall behavior. When asked the question, “do you think that PBIS targets a specific behavior issue in students?” TB1 replied “it focuses on overall behavior.” Similarly, TA12 opined that “it is in regard to all behavior in terms of mannerism, deportment and it's an all-rounder program; it doesn't target one specific behavior.” TA1 responded: “they're not specific. They look at all negative behavior[s], try to make the students better citizen[s].” Likewise, TC2 commented: “there is no specific student behavior, just focusing on core values and helping students to be better human beings.”

TB3 asserted that it is not the behavior but the persons “who lack cooperation, and discipline overall” that are targeted. Likewise, TA13 stated “it targeted troubled students who were not responding to punishment and other behavior management.” Conversely, TB4 explained “we target mostly the behavior... We do focus on everything, shape behavior, stop conflicts and promote positive relationship among staff and students.”

TA3 justified not targeting specific behaviors by saying “specific based on what we are looking at in the mural. We talk about respect, cleanliness, so it's not a

specific behavior.” “It targets positive behavior” (TA8). Similar sentiment was offered by TC3 who expressed “I think it aims at modelling for them socially accepted behavior[s] or behavior[s] that are accepted within a particular space.” Likewise, TC7 stated “they want to bring out positive behavior in the kids, accountability, work ethics, positive behavior, respect, making the child a better person overall.”

TC6 highlighted the individual behaviors that were targeted but pointed out how targeting the specific behaviors was beneficial for the whole person. According to TC6:

Behaviors like tardiness, taking responsibility. It’s not just the behavior part it’s the whole person. You are a student, as a student I should be prepared for class so when the child comes and they have their pen you say hey good job, I am proud of you! So, we want them to be responsible overall as students. It goes for conflict resolution because at times they can have difference of opinions and the conversation with the difference of opinions might not turn out well. It targets aggression, it targets how they express themselves; how they filter their emotions.

**Improved behavior.** Almost 85% (84.62%) reported that there was improved behavior since the introduction of PBIS. Two subthemes emerged.

*Students respond positively to PBIS efforts.* Eleven of the participants indicated that students responded positively to the PBIS framework. TA5 and TC2 highlighted that under PBIS there was a focus on changing negative behaviors. TA5 explained that since the introduction of PBIS, the classroom management technique she employed was “talking to them and helping them reflect on what they did wrong



and how they are going to change the behavior.” TC2 utilized a similar method. TC2 explained that she would “encourage them to reflect on where they went wrong and find solutions.”

Eleven of the participants indicated that students were responsive to PBIS. TC3 stated “students respond to [the framework promoting core values] in that they know what the core value is and what they represent.” TC7 explained that the behavior modification do[es] work but if you do one thing for too long they won’t work anymore so you have to keep adding new dynamics to improve it. TA5 described her strategy of writing “their name[s] on a board for a[n] honor roll” and reported that “everybody work[s] to be on the board.” Relating to her strategy of putting coins in a “bad behavior jar,” TA13 reasoned that because the students “didn’t want to put things in the bad jar and they loved getting the rewards,” she realized less disruptive behavior. TC1 recalled that “before PBIS I would be like talking, talking... Sometimes I don’t get the student[s] to complete the work. Before PBIS I was experiencing some more challenges but since PBIS come in, it has made it more easier for me.”

In addition to being responsive to the rewards, TA1 opined that the students were responsive because of an aversion to the corrective measures in PBIS. TA1 pointed out that as a part of the school’s PBIS program, students are sent to counselling instead of being suspended. In such instances, the student is at counselling during the schooltime. Additionally, those students who are caught with marijuana are subject to regular drug tests. TA1 believed that “they don’t want to be exposed to those things so early. So, they would probably stop or limit the negative behavior that they would portray.” It was further expressed that the effects are far-reaching so much

so that not only the perpetrators conform, but some other students limit their negative behaviors because they witness what is done with disruptive students and “don't want to go through that again” (TA1).

Students were also reported as responsive without the attachment of consequences. TA8 stated that “when you sit and talk to them, they respond positively.” TC3 explained that “just praising and focusing on positive behaviors in a classroom overshadowed a lot of negative activities.” TC3 further stated that students are “realizing now that if I am doing something negative to receive attention, I won't necessarily receive the type of attention I would want” because “the attention is given to the positive behaviors..., the desirable behaviors.”

TC6 illustrated that it is the change in the environment that the students respond to. According to TC6:

Yes, it has, it has! It has changed the entire atmosphere. One of my classes, I find that the atmosphere is so calming. Kids are more expressive, they come to you, talk to you, they are more relaxed. And even when there is one or two kids who do something, I don't even have to do any strong reprimand. Just give a little side eye and the child will be like “sorry Miss” and I will be like “Thank you for apologizing” and we move on. I think it is good and it is something that makes the kids feel as if you actually enjoy them because nobody likes [it] if you are always just berating them. Whatever they do you compliment them. I think it's working, and other people say it is working for them.

***PBIS positively influences students' behavior.*** Twenty-one participants reported that PBIS positively influenced the behavior of the students. TA3 opined that

school life had improved “based on what I heard [about the] history of the school I am at.” TA13 stated “I haven’t been teaching for a long time however I see where it’s working with the students,” noting, “I can see the changes in their behavior.” TC1 noted that although the PBIS efforts “has a positive impact on the results that we are getting back from parents and students,” it is not 100%. Nonetheless, “it’s getting there” (TC1).

Specific behavior changes were also noted by the participants. TC1 stated: “Students come to class on time. They complete their assignments, they are more interactive in class, and they participate more.” TC5 did not specify the type of lateness but opined that lateness was an issue and was an issue that was reduced since the introduction of PBIS. TB4 reported finding that “more students are completing the assignments” since the implementation of PBIS.

TB1 explained that “students are not as aggressive as they use to be.” TB1 further explained: “the fighting has almost disappeared, once upon a time you would have the fights right in front of you. It’s almost nonexistent.” TB4 corroborated TB1’s conclusion that fights have almost disappeared. According to TB4, “since I have been here, I have only experience[d] one fight.” TA10 remarked that students “are more calm and receptive to learning and the rules.” TA10 credited the change in behavior to “the anticipation of being rewarded or praised.” TB5 commented that since PBIS, “the students tend to be more responsive and focused.”

Some of the participants are of the view that overall student behavior was improved through PBIS. TA1 explained: “it is now, um, preached around the school and everywhere and the communities. Now, it is that we come in the new norm, like you need to do this.” TB5 stated “the SWPBIS team has impacted students’ behavior

in a positive way.” TC6 remarked, “I know it has cut down the number of gross indiscipline in my classroom,” and TC7 commented: “I am happier now with my students’ maturity.” TA1 stated that since PBIS, “little by little you see the change as the positive behavior become wider spread.” TC6 indicated “when from the beginning you create that environment where you are always complimenting them, the indiscipline is less frequent.” TC6 explained that she is “not writing as many of those documents when you send to the Dean.”

Two participants commented that bad behavior reduced after PBIS implementation. When asked: “How has PBIS impacted your classroom management?” TA13 responded “I have less disruptive behavior.” TB4 stated “since I have been here, I have only experience[d] one fight.” TB4 added “we don’t see a lot of fights or arguments or anything. I have never experienced any argument.”

**Improved student attitudes since PBIS.** In addition to behaviors, teachers reported experiencing improved student attitudes since the inception of PBIS. According to TB3, “the attitude of students improve[d] with cleanliness and respect.” Similarly, TC7 stated “children are much more orderly, they are more respectful.”

TA12 reported that for some students, providing rewards “boosts their confidence levels so they become competitive with other students in wanting to answer question[s].” TB5 noticed a “paradigm shift” as “the students are more responsible.” As evidence, TB5 said “one thing that they have done is set their own class rules, so they set rules and maintain it.”

**Students more accountable after PBIS implementation.** TC2 stated “students are more accountable for their behavior.” According to TA9, “students are able to see the need to comply, they can see for themselves what they have done

wrong. They are coached into the right behavior, so they are better behave[d] and hold themselves accountable.” TC6 recognized that “you don’t even have to do any punishment. They themselves acknowledge that yea I did something wrong.” TB5 implemented a system where students “track their behavior by putting a smiley face when they do positive thing and a sad face when they do the wrong thing.”

TA10 and TC4 pointed out that students “hold each other accountable.” TA3 observed “students are more accountable and are making others more accountable, so they will say oh is john brown leave this paper here so it’s making students more accountable.” In TC4’s classroom “students help to come up with the rules and the rewards and also the punishment, so they hold each other accountable.” TC4 believed that “the fact that students are more accountable for their actions” is one feature or characteristic that contributes to the success of the PBIS.

**Improved teaching since PBIS.** Eight of the participants indicated that there was improved teaching since introducing PBIS. TC4 asserted that one reason for the implementation of the PBIS was “so that teachers are able to get more from the curriculum so the teaching learning outcome[s] will be better.” TC1 reported that since PBIS, “more work is done... ’cause they want to be praised and they want to receive their token at the end of the class.” TC1 also reported “I get to complete my lesson and the student stay[s] in class until class ends [be]cause they want to be rewarded.”

TA5 recounted that since PBIS, “I get more work done.” TA3 stated “with the framework, instead of taking time out of instruction to say we are cleaning up the place... you now get to go straight into the lesson.” Thus, “it gives me more time to impart knowledge or for us to learn more about the content.” TA1 stated: “just

definitely spend more time teaching than disciplining.” TC4 reported “I am definitely talking less and getting more instruction in.” Almost mirroring TC4’s response, TC2 related that “there is less talking and more instruction time.” TC6 expressed “overall it is really a good way to create a climate that is conducive to learning.” TB5 explained “I don’t have to stress a lot when I’m teaching anymore, I am more concerned about delivery of content rather than managing classroom behavior. I have greater content coverage because I have more time and students [are] more focused.”

**Improved learning or learning behaviors.** Eight of the participants indicated that improved learning or learning behaviors occurred after the implementation of PBIS. TA10 stated “the students are more calm and receptive to learning and the rules in anticipation of being rewarded or praised.” TA13 asserted that with PBIS there is “more focus[ed] learning, more fun learning, and less problems.” TA13 further asserted that since the introduction of PBIS, “children feel happier being at school because learning is more pleasant.”

When asked “What benefits have you witnessed since the implementation of PBIS?” TC1 responded “the attendance has improved, more interest in schoolwork, the students don’t want to stay home.” In response to the same question, TA1 replied “class control improved, academics and behavior has improved.” TB3 pointed out that “at a greater level students are sitting in class but not exactly where we want it to be” and TC2 explained:

I find myself having students that would not normally talk are now talking...  
The students are more willing to express themselves and teamwork is happening... and students don’t leave the room as often. They are doing more assignment[s]. Less students are outside during class time.

Additionally, “students are more willing to complete assignments as they work towards the rewards” (TA5). Also, “students have become more disciplined; they stay on tasks for longer periods... That is out of the ordinary” (TB3).

**Better relationships since PBIS.** After PBIS implementation, there has been “better teacher-student relationships” (TA13). TA4 reported “it has helped me to develop a better relationship with the kids.” Similarly, TA5 expressed “I have a better relationship with the students” and TC4 commented “it is helping me to build better relationship[s] with students.” TB1 explained “I give them my WhatsApp number; we are in a group. They feel free to inbox me when they don’t want to talk in the group. I make myself available to them.” TC6 stated “kids are more expressive, they come to you, talk to you they are more relaxed.” Thus, “they see you as a regular person who can sit and talk to them” (TA1). TC6 stated:

I find that when kids are in an environment that they are comfortable and if they realize their teacher is there to help them, not just to punish them you find that even in instances where the behaviors happen there is no need for the Dean because you can have that conversation with the child yourself.

It was also found that student-student relationships improved after the implementation of PBIS. In the teachers’ experience, “students to students are having more positive interaction” (TA13). TB2 stated “you definitely see improvement in students’ behavior, adjustment in students’ behavior in terms of how they interact with each other.” PBIS “is giving them a new way to communicate with each other” (TC7). Specifically, “students are more respectful to each other and work better with each other” (TA8). Also, “you will have students looking out for each other more, so they collaborate more and having less verbal abuse” (TA7). TB1 noticed that “they

not as selfish as before doing things for themselves, looking out for themselves. I notice the teamwork. They tend to don't want anybody to fail to bring down the class average." As an example, "the class tried to get money to buy stuff for a student who couldn't afford to do the practical because they didn't want her to fail" (TB1). Similarly, TC2 reported "I find myself having students that would not normally talk are now talking, with less bullying. The students are more willing to express themselves and teamwork is happening" (TC2).

Referring to the PBIS, TB1 stated "it not only impact students but also staff." TB1 elaborated that "the teachers are working together more as well across department. Admin is always willing to give their support, school climate has changed, and there is a level [of] comfort in talking to admin about issues." Similarly, TB3 cited "greater level of cooperation as staff" among the benefits experienced in PBIS.

**Improved school climate.** TC6 stated that in "one of my classes I find that the atmosphere is so calming." TA1 observed that in the new PBIS environment, "everybody now, feel comfortable." TA3 reported "I have seen where the school improved, as it used to be brutal." TB1 noted "a calmness in the school" and asserted that "it is a direct result of the program." Previously, "you see huge fights on YouTube with School B students that you are not seeing anymore." TC6 explained that "it's actually causing a better feel."

**Suspensions declined after PBIS implemented.** Three participants indicated that suspensions declined after PBIS was implemented. Although TC3 expressed disbelief that PBIS "help[s] the students to be better behave[d], she asserted that "it reduces the number of suspension since I have been there." TC3 repeated the response



when asked to “describe the benefits, if any, that you have witnessed since the implementation of PBIS.” According to TC3, “the number of students suspended were reduced but the challenges that we are presented with have not decreased.” Conversely, TA1 stated “even though the number of suspension[s] generally declined, the kids are behaving better.” TA4 also recognized a reduction in suspensions but was “not sure if PBIS can be credited.”

**The aims of PBIS contribute to its success.** TB4 and TA7 opined that the aims of PBIS contributed to its success. When asked “What are the features of PBIS that make it successful?” PBIS responded:

The fact that we are trying to shape behavior, stop violence and promote safety for staff and students. I think that has actually contributed a lot by trying to improve the school culture and climate by encouraging positive behavior in students, staff and all stakeholders.

Similarly, TA7 cited “the aim” of PBIS as the response to the same question.

#### **Research Question 4**

RQ4 was, What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS? Nine themes emerged in response to this RQ.

**Teachers uncertain of MoEYI’s role.** TA5, TA9, TA10, TA11 and TA12 reported that they were uncertain of the MoEYI’s role. In response to the question, “What role does the Ministry of Education (whether from a regional or country level) play in the implementation and use of PBIS in your classroom?” TA5 stated “I am not sure.” Similarly, TA11 replied “I don’t know” and TA12 said “I cannot say that the Ministry plays a role.” TA9 explained “based on what I know it came out of guidance,

MOEY might have sent document about it but I haven't heard anything from the ministerial level." Although TA10 did not know what the MoEYI's role was in PBIS she proposed some things that they should do. According to TA10, "they should have a role, come visit; ensure that it is being practiced and that the behavior is changing, see if it is being used by admin., students. Come in and talk to the students."

**MoEYI not doing as much as they should.** TA10, in reference to the role of the MoEYI, opined that "they can play a better role." TA4, TA13, TC2, TC4 and TC5 also indicated that the MoEYI was not doing as much as they could regarding PBIS implementation and maintenance. TA4 stated "they did not do enough" and pointed out "they implemented it at the initial training and say what is going to be done but they did not follow up." TA4 further stated "it's not being enforced by the Ministry, so you hear about it for a year and then you don't hear anything else about it." TA13 commented that "the MoE did overall assessments" but noted, "I have not seen the MoE assess the program since I have been there." Similarly, TC2 reported "they were responsible for the implementation, but they do not follow up" and TC4 expressed "they implement it initially but could be more effective in follow up." TC5 recounted "they promise their support to communicate what was important to the entire staff, but I am not sure if they did that, so I was not able to see the transition."

**Lack of buy-in.** TC5 opined that you need 100% buy-in from everyone because it is important for it to be a team effort going forward. TC5 further stated that "when persons are adequately trained... and you send them back into the population to get buy-in and to implement and there is even the slightest amount of resistance then that is a struggle... to ensure there is like effectiveness." Four of the participants (TA7, TA10, TA11, TC3) commented that their methods of discipline had not

changed since PBIS. Additionally, 15 participants expressed the belief that there is need for greater buy-in. TB2 cited the entire school buying into the PBIS as one of the features contributing to its success but noted that “everyone not buying into it” is something that may be hindering its success. Likewise, TB3 commented “if everyone does not buy into it then it will fail.”

TA12 pointed to the need for students and parents or guardians to adopt the framework. According to TA12, “it’s just the children that need to adapt to the framework; even when we encourage it in schools, at home they are not necessarily getting the praise that they are longing for.” TB5 pointed out that the initial lack of student buy-in resulted in early difficulty in classroom management. However, “over time they grew to appreciate it and I have seen where it is changing a lot in terms of behavior.”

TA9, TA12, TB3, and TC1 asserted that there was greater need for buy-in from parents. TA9 explained “if you call parents, they think it’s petty but if you say the child getting a suspension they come quickly, so if you want to stem a behavior without suspension, the parents don’t want you to call them”. TA9 continued saying “we need all stakeholders on board.” Similarly, TA12 opined that “the challenges might be at home because they will regress to their behavior at home and when they come back, they would have to adapt back to the changes made at school.” TC1 commented that some parents will not allow students to participate in some programs cause they want the child to go to the country etc.” TA12 concluded “once we can get all stakeholders on board, I think [we] will [not] have any challenges.”

**Inadequate or insufficient training received.** TB1 said training was ongoing “only for new teachers who join the staff.” TC2 stated that “the trainings were done at

the initial stages of the implementation.” TC3 stated that there was no training “apart from the one-off workshop.” Likewise, TC6 commented “I don’t remember any formal training per se after that first training.” TB5 also pointed out that training was not ongoing but identified the guidance counsellors as a source for filling any gap caused thereby.

TA5 related that she did not receive any training. Conversely, TC1 indicated that although training was ongoing it was inadequate because “there is still room for improvement” and “there is still so much more to learn about it [PBIS].” TC3 described the training as “a little idealistic” and “kind of utopic.” According to TC3, the training “did not outline what sanction was to be carried out when the correct behavior is not seen” and it was unrealistic because “it didn’t send the right message about how students were going to function in the real world.”

Despite the belief that the guidance counsellors were there to fill the gaps after training, TB5 did not believe the training was sufficient and desired “a more deliberate training approach.” TC5 pointed out that the training he received was good but pointed to the deficiencies that occur when teachers are not “trained directly.” TC5 explained “it would be better sold if the teachers got training directly. It would be better. I was not able to replicate the training the way it was meant to be. Teachers should be trained directly.”

**Limited or insufficient follow-up.** Four of the participants cited limited or insufficient follow-up as one of the challenges with PBIS. TA4 pointed to the lack of follow-up from the MoEYI, specifying the training received. According to MoEYI, “initially the training was good but needed more follow through.” TA4 explained “there is only one time that I remember anyone from Ministry coming to follow up

with the training even though they said they would come to the school.” TC2 did not point to any specific area but posited that “there is more follow-through, and accountability needed by the Ministry and admin.” Similarly, when asked to “describe the challenges, if any, that you have witnessed since the implementation of PBIS,” TC4 reported that “Ministry does not follow through.” TC1 did not specify a lack of Ministry follow-up but responded, “lack of consistency and follow-up” when asked “What feature of PBIS do you think hinders its success?” TC1 further asserted “we need to follow up to see what should be done or implemented based on the following up and the outcome.”

**Teachers not sufficiently supported.** Some of the teachers (30.77%) reported a need for more support. When asked: “How do you feel about the support received in the use of PBIS in your classroom?” TA1 responded “with the PBIS the support could be better” and explained “it needs at least 80 persons for it to really work; strong backbone.” To the same question, TA10 replied “there is a long way to go, we need way more support for it to work as effective as it should. It feels like it’s just the teacher’s responsibility.” TA5 explained “I don’t feel very supported. The individual teachers come up with their own way of dealing with behavior and giving out rewards.” TA4 commented “I don’t really feel supported because of the way the school is cultured. It’s kinda hard to adopt the PBIS.”

TB4 pointed out that “we need a little more support from the teachers. It should be where everybody is involved whether an ancillary staff or the office staff is.” TC1 provided a rationale for believing that more support was necessary. TC1 asserted “we will need more help as it relates to changing more students’ life as it relates to practices that they do which is considered to be the norm in their home

environment.” Additionally, TB3 stated “we need more parents involvement so we can have home and school working together.” TB3 further stated the problem we are having is when they leave the borders of the school.”

**Lack of consistency.** Lack of consistency was reported as a challenge by four of the participants. When asked: “What feature of PBIS you think hinders its success?” TC1 replied: “lack of consistency.” Likewise, TB5 responded, “the program won’t work on a one trial it needs consistence.” TA10 pointed out that “because it [PBIS] is being emphasize[d] over and over, it work[s].” TA10 continued, “it needs to be consistent. It needs more persons to consistently do it. More people need to be on board.” Similarly, TC6 stated “the success of it is the teachers who are doing it consistently. The lack of success is again teachers who aren’t doing it consistently.”

**Insufficient resources.** TA8, TB1, TB3, TC4, and TC6 indicated that insufficient resources was a challenge to the success of PBIS. When asked to describe the challenges witnessed since the implementation of PBIS, TA8 replied “lack of resources” and explained “they need persons to come in and lend their support. They need more support from community and all stakeholder[s].” TC6 pointed out that “sometimes you want to give them something every day, but you can’t. Resources is a challenge.”

TC4 pointed to “a lack of resources to implement the reward system.” TB1 stated “we don’t have the resources to reward the children as you want. If we had more resources, that we will bring the program much further.” TB1 expounded “you would want to take them some place and teach them social graces, how to dine, things like that. We can’t do [that] because we don’t have the resources to do it.” Pointing

away from monetary resources, TB1 continued, “even if we could do it at school, we don’t have the facilities.” TB3 reported “we have to get funds from the students to get awards for them for good behavior, we want to know that we have other funds. We have big ideas, but limited funds.” TB3 also indicated that the scope of some events was limited by the lack of resources. According to TB3, “we have tried ‘I love you’ day, awarding students for perfect attendance, but you have to limit the number of awards because of limited resources.”

**Time for students to conform.** Some of the participants stated that the time for students to conform is a challenge experienced after implementing PBIS. TA5 asserted that “the students sometimes resist the change.” Explaining that “some students still have the mentality that if they throw something on the floor, they are providing a job for the cleaner” as an example, TA3 commented that “changing the mind-set of those few student[s] is a challenge.” TA4 recalled that “for the students to readjust, that wasn’t easy as well.” TA4 posited that “some students are from volatile areas, so there are some ways they are used to” and pointed to the concerns from teachers that “these students may not respond so well to PBIS because of what they are used to, how they are brought up.” TB4 opined that “it may take a while for students to conform” but suggested “while you push it for it to work, then you will find that little by little they will conform, you just need to conform.”

### **Summary**

I examined the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Western Jamaica regarding the pilot program to implement PBIS. This was achieved by interviewing 26 teachers, the plurality (50%) of whom taught at School A. I posed four RQs to achieve the purpose of this study.

RQ1 was, How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS? I found that teachers received training both internally and externally. The external trainings identified were university training, self-training or reading, and workshops organized by the MoEYI. The internal trainings primarily consisted of workshops and meetings.

RQ2 was, How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica use PBIS? I found that in executing PBIS in their classrooms, teachers used areas of focus or themes, focused on positive behaviors, used discussions, and used punishments. It is noteworthy that while punishments were utilized by 50% of the teachers, 42.31% did not believe punishment was supported in the PBIS framework.

RQ3 was, What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS? The strengths of PBIS were found to be that PBIS is a good initiative, it is a school-wide effort, it gets to the root of undesired behavior, it targets behaviors and the whole person. Since implementation, a number of areas have been identified as improved including student behavior, student attitudes, students' accountability, teaching, learning or learning behaviors, student-teacher and student-student relationships, and general school climate. Contrasting RQ3, RQ4 was, What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS? The weaknesses found were that there exists a lack of sufficient buy-in, there was insufficient training received by the teachers, there was a lack of consistency in the use of PBIS, and there were insufficient resources. Chapter 5 discusses the findings of this study and compares it to the existing literature and the theoretical framework.



## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

In this study, I examined the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Western Jamaica regarding the pilot program to implement PBIS. The qualitative approach was utilized to understand, from the teacher's perspective, how PBIS has been working. Specifically, I carried out the study to understand teachers' education in PBIS, how the teachers used PBIS, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of PBIS. In this chapter, I summarize the key findings before providing an interpretation of the findings. The interpretations are based on a comparison of the key findings in this study with the findings from the literature reviewed. Additionally, the findings are discussed against the theoretical framework to understand the conformity to the theory and provide explanations of differences. Within the discussion is a description of the limitations of the study. Based on the interpretation of findings, recommendations are made to the stakeholders regarding future research. Additionally, the implications of the study are discussed and the conclusions outlined.

Multiple themes emerged in response to the RQs. However, I considered only those responses that were provided by more than 50% of the participants or were given by participants from all schools to be key findings. Additionally, because the study was a qualitative study, relationships between the variables were not the focus of the study. Instead, the findings illustrate the experiences of the participants from which conclusions were drawn. These findings are reported per RQ.

RQ1 was, How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS? In response to this question, participating teachers indicated that they received education from internal and external sources. Specifically,

the participants stated that the Ministry of Education organized workshops in which selected teachers participated alongside guidance counsellors and administrative personnel. Alternatively, almost half (46.15%) of the participants indicated that they learnt about PBIS through internal trainings such as staff development activities and internal workshops. In some cases, the internal training was designed and organized by the guidance counsellors.

RQ2 was, How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica use PBIS? One of the major strengths highlighted by participants was that PBIS was a school-wide effort. As evidence that PBIS was a school-wide effort, the participants pointed out that the school was redecorated for PBIS, administration supported the teachers in their implementation of PBIS, guidance counsellors assisted teachers, and the MoEYI provided support. The recognition of strong support was found among 61.54% of the teachers interviewed.

Another major finding for RQ2 was that participants used areas of focus and/or themes in their implementation of PBIS. In all cases, the core values were created and introduced either by the guidance counsellors or by the administration. Another key finding that emerged in response to RQ2 was that teachers focused on positive behaviors in administering PBIS. Additionally, participating teachers from all schools explained that discussions with students were utilized in the PBIS framework. It is noteworthy that 13 of the participants reported using punishment in the PBIS framework while 11 of the participants did not believe that punishment was supported by PBIS. Some of the participants who reported using punishment stated that they used it out of necessity, but others explained that the punishment used in PBIS was

not the same as that used at other times as the punishment used in PBIS was rehabilitative, not punitive.

RQ3 was, What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS? One key finding in response to RQ3 was that PBIS gets to the root of undesired and that specific behaviors and the whole person were targeted under PBIS. I also found that participants attributed improved student behaviors and attitudes to the introduction of PBIS and perceived students as being more accountable. Participating teachers also commented on positive teaching and learning experiences. Additionally, they pointed to better interpersonal relationships arising after PBIS. These improved relationships included teacher-student relationships, teacher-teacher relationships, and student-student relationships. Finally, some participating teachers believed that the general school climate also improved.

RQ4 was, What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS? The major perceived weaknesses found regarding PBIS were insufficient buy-in, insufficient or inadequate training, insufficient support, a lack of consistency, and insufficient resources. The following section provides a detailed discussion of the aforementioned findings in relation to the literature and the theoretical framework.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

This section includes a discussion of the key findings of this study in relation to the existing literature. The section is organized based on the RQs to allow for a clear presentation and easy understanding.

### **Research Question 1**

RQ1 was, How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS? I found that participants were trained in PBIS either through workshops that were organized by the Ministry of Education or through trainings that were completed at their schools. There is a paucity of research related to the differences between internal and external training. Gibson (2018) conducted a study at an urban middle school, interviewing and observing 10 teachers, with the aim of examining teachers' perspectives of school training on the implementation of PBIS systems. Gibson found that the training received by teachers made them feel knowledgeable about PBIS and prepared to implement it in their classrooms.

In this study, despite 46.15% of participants receiving internal training and 30.77% receiving external training, only 23.08% reported that the training received was either good, adequate, or beneficial. Interestingly, the same number reported that the training was inadequate. Those who reported that the training was good, adequate, or beneficial pointed to either the content of the training, the results of their implementation of PBIS, or the quantity of the training. The participants who believed that the training was inadequate spoke to the scope of the training, the applicability of the training and the PBIS itself, and the training approach. With specific reference to the training approach, TC5 explained that PBIS “would be better sold if the teachers got training directly” and pointed to the feelings of deficiency in attempting to replicate the training “as it was meant to be” suggesting that trainees are not always able to train persons as adequately as they were trained.

In studies, teachers have generally expressed their belief they were knowledgeable about PBIS (Amegin, 2018; Gibson, 2018; Hiles, 2015) and that

training contributed to their perceptions of knowledgeable (Gibson, 2018; Hiles, 2015). In this study, perceptions about knowledge of PBIS were not tested, but the study nonetheless expands the knowledge regarding teacher perceptions about training by highlighting some of the subjective hurdles that trainers must overcome. Additionally, the study indicates that one challenge in training teachers with the expectation that these teachers will train their colleagues is ensuring that the teachers feel ready to train their colleagues. Specifically, trainees need to feel confident in their ability to transmit the training with the same level of effectiveness as their trainers.

An alternative possibility is that some teachers lack sufficient passion to implement PBIS as intended and therefore make excuses for adding to or subtracting from their actions. Evidence of this can be found in such statements as those from TA9 that “the support I am getting is based on the passionate way the VP feels about it” and from statements supporting the use of punishment that are not supported by PBIS. Additionally, TB6 stated that she did not receive any training in PBIS, yet she “did a little bit of extra reading to what it entails” after it was introduced to her at a staff meeting.

The foregoing shows that despite being exposed to similar trainings, individual teachers had differing perceptions about the training received in PBIS. The fact that there are differing responses to the training for different reasons speak to a need for follow-up and supervision to ensure that the training was understood, was transmitted as intended by those to whom the training was administered, and that the training works towards achieving the program’s goals. The literature suggests that ongoing training is beneficial (Anderson-Saunders, 2016; Bowling, 2018; Gibson, 2018). This study found that there was both a lack of follow-up from the Ministry of

Education and a lack of ongoing training. However, ongoing training will likely be most beneficial if it is informed by the teachers' responses to the program which can only occur with sufficient follow-up and monitoring which teachers believe is the role of the MoEYI and the administration, a role which some teachers have asserted is not being sufficiently completed by the MoEYI.

### **Research Question 2**

RQ2 was, How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 Jamaica use PBIS? OSEP (2019b) explained that PBIS can be directed in a systematic way by the school administrators so that there is a school-wide system of support provided. In this study, implementation seems to have occurred on a school-wide basis as teachers reported receiving support from major stakeholders. Sugai and Simonsen (2012) pointed to student outcomes, the adoption of evidence and research-based practices, the establishment of a continuum of behavior support practices and systems, and the effective, efficient, and relevant use of data or information to guide decision-making. Alternatively, Olsen (2015) established three major characteristics: practices, systems to support teacher implementation, and relevant outcomes. Finally, OSEP (2019c) suggests four main characteristics: outcomes, systems, data, and practices but point out that outcome is the result of the integration of the systems, data, and practices and the joint actions of the various stakeholders (i.e., classroom teachers, family members, school district leadership team members, coach or facilitators, and school administrators).

In this study, the practices suggested by Sugai and Simonsen (2012) were found most evident. Specifically, Sugai and Simonsen (2012) asserted that outcomes are central to the selected practices, systems and data used in the PBIS framework.

Within the schools under study, the participants spoke primarily to achieving improved discipline and improving the reputation of the schools. As such, the framework adopted by the school seemed to be aligned to the desire of improving student behaviors. Thus, the schools were redecorated with core values that were expected to be exhibited by teachers and students. Additionally, the support received from administration and the guidance counsellors was aligned with the improvement of student behaviors.

Sugai and Simonsen (2012) also asserted that the systems data, and practices are integrated to promote desired outcomes. These desired outcomes are discussed further in the discussion of RQs 3 and 4. Sugai and Simonsen (2012) also posited that PBIS promotes the use of research- and evidence-based approaches which can be implemented as packaged programs. In this study, the majority (57.69%) of the participants believed that PBIS was data driven and showed that the data provided valuable information. Data was collected by teachers and passed on to the administrators and data was collected by the dean of discipline, the guidance counsellor and the vice principals. Data was used to develop strategies to handle situations that arise while considering the unique situations of each case.

Teachers in this study stated that data is used to discover patterns of behavior so that individual cases can be managed. Additionally, one teacher asserted that training was provided based on the level of the program. However, the teachers did not report disaggregating students based on different tiers or treating them accordingly. Nonetheless, the teachers noted that some cases were reported to the dean of discipline, the SWPBIS team, or the guidance counsellor. As such, it could be concluded that segmentation was not a major part of the PBIS at these schools.

Alternatively, it is possible that the teachers were only included in one tier of the implementation and that tiers 2 and 3 students were managed by the SWPBIS team, the guidance counsellor, the dean of discipline, administrators, or a combination of these. The latter seems more likely as TA1 pointed out that as a part of the school's PBIS program, students are sent to counselling instead of being suspended. In such instances, the student is at counselling during the schooltime. Additionally, those students who are caught with marijuana are subject to regular drug tests. Interestingly, TA1 opined that these measures might have resulted in greater conformity with rules by other students who do not want to be subjected to the same treatment.

Congruent with Sugai and Simonsen (2012) that evidence-based approaches should be utilized, the participants in this study indicated that teachers utilized approaches based on the results. At School A, TA1 asserted that individually, data is collected during interaction with the program which allows better future decisions to be made. At School B, TB3 explained: "we [have] improved as a school and that is because we gather the data and use it to assess the way forward collaborating with guidance" and at School C, TC5 reported that "the teachers use the data to put in their measures."

Wilson (2015) asserted that PBIS treats a symptom and that individuals who may have challenges but do not display a specific range of symptoms may not receive needed help (Wilson, 2015). Wilson also posited that data on negative behaviors is collected without much attention being paid to positive behaviors or the overall well-being of non-disruptive students (Wilson, 2015). The findings in this study contradict those of Wilson (2015) as there is a focus on positive behaviors and among all schools, students were rewarded for positive behaviors and not improvements only.



Additionally, negative behaviors were dealt with using positive methods. Thus, PBIS, among the three schools seemed to adapt the systems change methods promoted by Carr et al. (2002) where the students' environment is sufficiently changed so that an improved quality of life can be achieved, and the problem behaviors minimized. The environment in question is not just the school environment as teachers sought to understand the root causes of behavior, through the use of discussions and in collaboration with the other staff members, especially the guidance counsellors, and guidance counsellors would sometimes encourage parents to adjust the home environment to buttress the attempts at behavior change.

Within the literature on student discipline, a conflation between punishment and discipline has been recognized (Alsubaie, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). Alsubaie (2015), pointed to studies highlighting that discipline and punishment are different and that discipline is a teaching strategy where negative behaviors are corrected and positive behaviors are reinforced through various strategies, some of which may only be effective in certain situations. As such, teachers must exercise patience and utilize techniques which correct behaviors while maintaining mutual respect (Alsubaie, 2015).

In this study, some of the teachers seemed to agree with the assertions of Alsubaie (2015) that punishment differs from discipline and that the aim should be rehabilitation through the reinforcement of positive discipline. On the other hand, some participants suggest that even within the PBIS environment, punishment is needed. However, the punishment excludes harsher punishments such as corporal punishment. Instead, more rehabilitative punishments were utilized.

### Research Question 3

RQ3 was. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS? Sugai and Simonsen (2012) postulated that the desired student outcomes are central to the selection of the practices and data collection and guides how the framework is evaluated. It is expected that the implementation of an effective PBIS framework will result in positive outcomes for both the students and the teachers (OSEP, 2019c). For the student, it is expected that there will be improvements in the academic and social outcomes on an individual and group basis (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Additionally, the literature reveals an increase in on-task behaviors and engagement, and a reduction in disruptive behaviors. For the teachers, there is a reduced need for disciplinary referrals, increased levels of self-efficacy, and an improvement in emotional well-being (Olsen, 2015). Conversely, some authors asserted that from a practical standpoint, the positive impacts may be overstated (Eckes et al., 2012; Flanders & Goodnow, 2018). Additionally, Wilson (2015) criticized PBIS as only treating symptoms while ignoring individuals who need help because they do not display a specific range of symptoms.

This study directly contradicts the findings of Wilson (2015) as teachers from all schools indicated that PBIS gets to the root of the problem. In fact, TB3 asserted that “because the students are different now... You have to get to know the background.” Thus, while there might be a focus on students exhibiting specific behaviors, the aim is not simply to treat the symptom but to “address the root cause of the issues and help students’ reform their behavior” (TA8).

While it might be true that within the PBIS framework, teachers identify symptomatic behaviors and try to reform the students identified with the specific

range of behaviors (Wilson, 2015), this study suggests that the framework increases the possibility of identifying other students who may need help. This occurs because the student-teacher relationships improve with PBIS. Within this study, teachers expressed greater accessibility to the students and indicated that some students utilized this accessibility. For example, TB1 stated: “I give them my WhatsApp number... They feel free to inbox me when they don’t want to talk in the group. I make myself available to them” and TC6 explained: “Kids are more expressive, they come to you, talk to you, they are more relaxed.” The students “realize their teacher is there to help them, not just to punish them.” Such relationships do not automatically result in identification or treatment of other challenges held by students who do not exhibit the negative behaviors targeted by PBIS. However, it is evidence that teachers are not simply looking for symptoms to treat but addressing the students as a whole; thus, contradicting Wilson’s criticism of PBIS as only treating symptoms while ignoring individuals who need help because they do not display a specific range of symptoms.

A more direct contradiction occurs in the teachers’ response to whether PBIS targets specific behaviors. Indeed, eight of the teachers suggested that PBIS targeted specific behaviors. However, 11 teachers stated that PBIS targeted the overall behavior of the students. In explaining, the teachers pointed out that what was done with PBIS was the cultivation of expected behaviors rather than the targeting of unwanted behaviors. As stated by TC2, “there is no specific student behavior, just focusing on core values and helping students to be better human beings.” While these responses offer a more direct contradiction to the criticism of PBIS as only treating symptoms while ignoring individuals who need help because they do not display a

specific range of symptoms (Wilson, 2015), the fact that some teachers believed in targeting some behaviors is worth noting and the criticism by Wilson (2015) should perhaps serve as a only a warning as schools continue with their implementation of PBIS. In this study, it is found that PBIS is multifaceted and has sufficient positive responses, including behavioral improvement and improved student-teacher relationships which allow for a greater likelihood of students reporting other problems.

Academic outcomes were not reviewed in this study and cannot be commented on as teachers did not indicate improved academic outcomes. At the same time, in line with the assertions by Sugai and Simonsen (2012), teachers in the study revealed that behaviors improved and that students showed improved learning behaviors. The teachers noted various improvements including increased punctuality, the completion of assignments, reduced aggression and fighting, and overall behavior. Additionally, teachers commented that there was improvement in the student attitudes and that students held themselves and their colleagues accountable. Also, teachers explained that because there was less time spent focused on discipline more time was spent on teaching. Moreover, students exhibited improved learning behaviors. Thus, they were more attentive, more enthusiastic about school, and more engaged.

Interestingly, the literature identified consistency, support and buy-in as the main factors influencing success of the PBIS program (Amegin, 2018; Anderson-Saunders, 2016; Cawthon, 2016). Of these, only support was reported by a majority of the teachers. However, the support received was primarily support from the school's administration, including the guidance counsellors and the deans of discipline. As such the study lends credence to the findings of Amegin (2018) that administrative

support was positively correlated with teacher's perceptions of PBIS. In addition to finding that the teachers were supported in their efforts as implementing PBIS, it was also found that the students were very responsive to the methods utilized. Specifically, the rewards, the discussions, the reinforcement of positive behaviors, and the rehabilitation. This study found that teachers believed that the rehabilitation methods also acted as a deterrent to other students.

The study found a difference between the findings in the literature and the responses received from the teachers regarding the reasons for the success of the program. One possibility for the difference might be the level of support received within the school. Sugai and Simonsen (2012) indicated that school support for individual Classroom PBIS (CPBIS) is generally greater when the teachers' methods align with those of the schools. In this study, the teachers reported completing activities in line with what was expected by the school. Thus, the teachers referred to the murals, implemented core values into lessons when so instructed, had discussions with the students and reported their findings to the administrators who desired it.

One possibility is that the teachers' behavior encouraged support from the administration who believed that in supporting the teacher's goals, the school's goals was being met. Alternatively, it is possible that the teachers, staff and students gradually worked towards mutually beneficial outcomes and as the results increased, the support increased continually. Either possibility is likely as the teachers did not point to significant differences between the plans the teachers stated that they followed and the school goals they reported. Also, the student buy-in is reported to be a response to the teachers' use of the PBIS.

#### **Research Question 4**

RQ4 was, What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS? In this study teachers reported that there existed a lack of consistency, a lack of buy-in, and a lack of support in the implementation of PBIS; factors found to be necessary for its success (Amegin, 2018; Anderson-Saunders, 2016; Cawthon, 2016). Despite reporting that they were somewhat lacking in these areas, the teachers pointed to multiple positive results for their implementation of PBIS.

It is possible that the teachers overemphasized the success of the PBIS in their schools (Eckes et al., 2012; Flanders & Goodnow, 2018). Conversely, it is possible that the participating teachers overestimated the weight of the challenges highlighted. The latter possibility seems more feasible because some participants reported the need for 100% buy-in, high levels of community and parental support. However, the literature indicates that some success is possible despite hindrances, some of which are reduced as the success of the PBIS increases (Amegin, 2018). As such, teachers should expect some hindrances to the success of the PBIS but continue working towards success since these hindrances will decrease over time as the program's success increases.

#### **Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework**

The critical theory was selected as the theoretical framework for this study. The critical theory suggests that there is a need to understand the structure or institution's ideals and history (Horkheimer, 2002). Additionally, there is the need to understand competing philosophies about the institution and critically question these philosophies based on existing knowledge as well as an understanding of what the

utopian view of these institutions would be (Horkheimer, 2002). From this perspective, the aim is not simply to understand the institution in its current form but to understand how the institution has evolved over time and how the institution can reach its most perfect state (Horkheimer, 2002).

In promoting positive discipline, the Ministry of Education has piloted SWPBIS in 56 schools across Jamaica starting in 2014 (UNICEF, 2018) and rolled it out to public schools in Denham Town in Kingston (Gleaner, 2018; Linton, 2018). The schools in this study are a part of the first set of schools in which the PBIS was piloted (UNICEF, 2018). In all schools, student discipline was viewed as one of the challenges that impacted the schools and impeded the ability to improve educational outcomes, which remains one of the primary goals of public schools (Thwaites, 2014).

From the perspective of the Ministry of Education, one of the main goals of PBIS would be the improvement of student discipline and a reduction in the reliance on harsh punishments such as corporal punishments and suspensions. Evidence of these goals were found within this study as teachers reported that the Ministry of Education monitored the level of suspensions within the schools. Additionally, the teachers indicated that corporal punishment was not to be utilized.

This study did not seek to identify relationships between the implementation of PBIS and student outcomes but to understand the experiences of teachers since the implementation of PBIS within their schools. However, the school reported generally positive results. The teachers reported reductions in negative behaviors, adoption of positive behaviors, the adoption of positive attitudes, more positive interactions among students, improved student-teacher relationships and improved relationships

among staff members since the implementation of the PBIS framework. Teachers also pointed to improvements within the classroom, including greater student engagement, improved punctuality, improved participation in classes, and improvements in the completion of assignments.

Ideally, the PBIS framework involves all stakeholders and requires that the stakeholders are consistent in their approach (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). In this study, the teachers recognized that success required the buy-in of all stakeholders and identified lack of buy-in and support as challenges. The fact that the teachers who utilized PBIS recognized the need for 100% buy-in and support is consistent with the critical theory and should not be seen as an unreasonable expectation since this would be the ideal. The fact that there is still lack of buy-in within the school supports the teachers' claims that there needs to be greater support from the MoEYI and the administration. However, with the continued practice of the PBIS and its continued success, it is likely that buy-in will improve over time (Amelgin, 2018).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Initially, I expected that there would be equal participation from each school and that a minimum of eight participants per school would be achieved. However, because of the Covid-19 pandemic all teachers were not available. Additionally, many teachers from School B and School C elected not to participate. As such, saturation was not reached at all schools.

Because only one data collection method was utilized, there were limitations in the trustworthiness as there was total reliance on the interviewees. Nonetheless, attempts were made to present contradictory findings so that an array of experiences and interpretations were presented. However, in some instances, there was a lack of



contradictions. While the lack of contradictions may be considered proof of honesty, there is a lack of verification since only teachers were interviewed. Thus, only teachers' perspectives are provided.

Creswell (2014) explained that research can be limited because of the methodology chosen or because of human and resource limitations. This study was qualitative and utilized a small sample of 26 participants. Additionally, the study focused on three schools within one Region of Jamaica. Because of the relatively small sample size, the study is not generalizable.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from this research, the limitations of this research and the literature reviewed, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The review of literature revealed that the implementation of PBIS resulted in beneficial outcomes for students. In this study, the teachers reported that teacher-student and student-student relationships improved after the implementation of PBIS. Other benefits that students reportedly experienced were improved learning behaviors, and increased accountability. Despite these findings, it is not discernable whether these improvements were exclusively related to the implementation of PBIS. It is recommended that in the future, a quantitative study could be completed to determine associations between the aforementioned factors and the implementation of PBIS.
- Because the sample was small and is therefore not representative, the findings are not generalizable. It is recommended that this study be replicated, and a more representative sample selected such that the

findings of this study can be confirmed or refuted within the rural area.

Additional studies could also be done within the corporate areas to provide a full understanding of teachers' perceptions of PBIS within Jamaica.

- I found that teachers felt supported regarding the PBIS while finding areas where they desired greater support and believed that lack of support was a hindrance to the success of PBIS. Similarly, the literature points to studies suggesting that higher levels of support lead to greater perceptions of the success of PBIS. A future study could be designed to determine the association between types of support and teachers' perceptions of PBIS.

### **Implications**

This study focused on PBIS, a method of behavior modification that has been referred to as an applied science which utilizes educational and systems change methods to effect behavioral change in students. The study found that PBIS attained many successes, one of which was an increase in the positive behavior of students. The social implication for this finding is that the application of scientific methodology can bring about positive behavior changes.

Despite this, the implication that the application of scientific methodologies can bring about change must be taken in context. This study focused on secondary school students who were in an environment where those implementing the changes were recognized as having authority over them. As such, it should not be taken for granted that the study implies that behavior can be modified in all demographics. Nonetheless, the study highlights that students in a school setting are susceptible to change given the right conditions.

Another implication of this study is that successful social change requires cooperation and leadership. It is true that in this study, it was found that teachers perceived that there was a lack of monitoring from the schools' leaders, including the MoEYI. However, in all the schools, it was found that the school was redecorated towards PBIS, that the leaders showed support for the PBIS program through their actions at devotions and during school hours and through the provision of rewards. This implies that in a social system, where there is sufficient support from the leadership, change can be affected, even in the absence of sufficient monitoring. As such, a third implication is that the primary role of leaders in enacting social change should be support for the process.

A fourth implication is that optimal success requires the participation of all stakeholders. As stated previously, it was found in this study that PBIS brought about various changes, despite not having consistent support from all stakeholders. However, the teachers asserted that not having consistent support hindered the success of PBIS. This implies that with sufficient buy-in from all stakeholders, more successes would be witnessed.

The findings from this study suggest that positive behavior change is possible for students. To achieve this requires the support of all stakeholders. At the same time, the leaders and those who are the main actors in the behavior change strategy (i.e., the teachers) must be consistent. Additionally, the leaders must provide sufficient support and finally, parents and all other stakeholders must take an interest in and support the efforts of those trying to make the change.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers at three high schools in Western Jamaica regarding the pilot program of PBIS. I sought to answer four RQs:

RQ1. How were teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica educated in the use of PBIS?

RQ2. How do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica use PBIS?

RQ3. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the strengths of PBIS?

RQ4. What do teachers from three schools in Region 4 in Jamaica who use PBIS believe are the weaknesses of PBIS?

The study concluded that except where there were extenuating circumstances (e.g., the teacher was absent at the time of training), teachers were either trained by the Ministry of Education or at the school. Despite the training being provided, more needs to be done to ensure that the teachers continuously receive updated information and consistently have an avenue to access and discuss their experiences with PBIS. Specifically, teachers need to have ongoing training and access to personnel who can assist. In this study, the guidance counsellor was a consistent point of reference. However, there is need to expand this to a team as suggested by OSEP (2019a).

Another conclusion is that those teachers who use PBIS utilize positive discipline methods. In other words, instead of being dependent on punishments, the teachers focus on supporting positive behaviors. Thus, the teachers reward positive behaviors, sometimes ignore negative behaviors, highlight positive behaviors of generally disruptive students as well as generally well-behaved students, and have

discussions with students to understand their behavior and guide them towards acceptable behaviors. At the same time, there are mixed responses to punishment as some teachers believe there is always a place for punishment. Despite the differences in opinions, punishment is not the first resort. Thus, in PBIS, teachers should utilize punishments only when positive approaches are insufficient and, in those cases, the punishments should be rehabilitative and not punitive.

It is further concluded that while PBIS is implemented by teachers in the classrooms, the Classroom PBIS (CPBIS) is an offshoot of the school-wide discipline approach. Thus, teachers' classroom discipline complements the school-wide efforts. As such, the school's leadership, including the MoEYI plays a role in the implementation and they have a duty to monitor and evaluate the PBIS implemented by teachers. It is noteworthy that OSEP (2019b) and Sugai and Simonsen (2012) indicated that PBIS is not always supported by the school. However, because the authors also pointed out that success in PBIS is dependent on a conducive environment and requires the buy-in of all stakeholders, it is best implemented in conjunction with the school. From this study, it is recognized that the teachers perceived successes within the PBIS while recognizing that there was a school-wide effort to implement PBIS.

Finally, it is concluded that the strengths of PBIS are best realized in an environment of maximal support and buy-in from all stakeholders. In such an environment, students realize significant behavior modification such that positive behaviors and attitudes become the norm. Where there is a lack of buy-in and support, while success is possible, the degree of success experienced may be dependent on the extent of the lack of buy-in and where the lack of buy-in and support exists. In this

study, all the schools implemented PBIS school-wide. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers within SWPBIS environments can achieve success despite a lack of buy-in from some stakeholders.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

**SECTION A - DEMOGRAPHICS**

Age:

Gender:

Years of tenure at institution:

Years of teaching experience:

Grade level taught:

Level of Education:

**SECTION B**

1. Please describe your overall experience with PBIS.
2. Please describe the steps taken to introduce and implement PBIS.
3. Please describe the training, if any, that you received regarding PBIS.
4. Please state whether and how you were trained in PBIS since its implementation.
5. Please state, with explanation, your beliefs about the training or trainings received regarding PBIS.
6. Please explain PBIS.
7. Please describe how you have implemented PBIS in your classroom.
8. How has PBIS impacted your classroom management?
9. How has PBIS changed the way you discipline your students?
10. How is punishment regarded in the PBIS environment?
11. How effective do you believe PBIS is when compared to other disciplinary methods?
12. How, if at all, has PBIS impacted student discipline in your classroom?
13. Do you believe that PBIS is data driven? Please explain why or why not.

14. What role does administration play in the implementation of PBIS in your classroom?
15. What role does the Ministry of Education (whether from a regional or country level) play in the implementation and use of PBIS in your classroom?
16. How do you feel about the support received in the use of PBIS in your classroom?
17. Please describe the benefits, if any, that you have witnessed since the implementation of PBIS.
18. Please describe the challenges, if any, that you have witnessed since the implementation of PBIS
19. What specific student behavioral challenges do the PBIS programme target in your high school?
20. What are the features/characteristics of PBIS that you consider to have contributed to or inhibited its success in the classroom?

## Appendix B: Permission Letter Sent to the Ministry of Education and Approval

September 6, 2019

Personal Address  
Personal Address  
Personal Address  
Personal Address

Ministry of Education  
2-4 National Heroes Circle  
Kingston 4

Dear Sir,

**Permission to Conduct Interviews at Three Schools in Region 4**

My name is Corlett Pinnock; I am a student of the Walden University and I would like to conduct a research to examine the perception of teachers at three high schools in Region 4 Jamaica as it relates to the pilot program that implement positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS). The study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a Doctor of Education programme at the Walden University. I am therefore seeking your consent to conduct interviews with teachers at three schools in Region 4.

Each interview is expected to last approximately 35 minutes. To ensure that the rights of all participants are observed and protected, participants will be informed about the purpose and reason for the study and will be given the opportunity to choose not to participate. Participants will also be informed of their right to opt out of the study at any time without consequence. Anonymity of the participants will be maintained since the researcher will not use the names in the report. The researcher will provide each participant with an informed consent form which they will be asked to sign prior to participating in the interview. The participant will not be asked to record his or her name on the form.

I am available to answer any questions and clarify any issues relating to the study. I may be contacted by telephone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted].

I look forward to discussing this with you further.

Yours Sincerely,

---

Corlett Pinnock (Miss)



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,  
YOUTH & INFORMATION

Reply or subsequent reference to this communication should be made to the Permanent Secretary and the following reference quoted:

2-4 National Heroes Circle  
Kingston 4, Jamaica  
Tel. 876-612-9840  
Fax: 876-948-7755  
[www.moe.gov.jm](http://www.moe.gov.jm)

April 16, 2020

Miss Corlett Pinnock  
Student  
Walden University  
100 S Washington Ave #900,  
Minneapolis, MN 55401, United States

Dear Miss Pinnock:

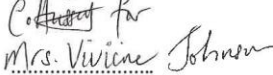
**Re: Permission to Conduct Research**

This serves to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence requesting permission to conduct a research project on "*Teachers' Perspectives on Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) in the Classroom*". The Ministry has approved this request on the condition that the administration of the selected schools are in agreement. Approval is also granted with the understanding that confidentiality and anonymity are maintained.

The Ministry will be notifying the administration of the institutions of its approval for the research to be conducted and henceforth you will be treating with the institutions.

Kindly acquaint yourself with the guidelines for conducting research in the Ministry's institutions which can be found at [www.moey.gov.jm](http://www.moey.gov.jm) under "Information Resources".

Sincerely,

  
Mrs. Vivienne Johnson

Vivienne Johnson (Mrs.)  
Senior Director  
Planning and Development Division  
for Permanent Secretary



## Appendix C: Permission Letter Sent to School Principal

September 6, 2019

Personal Address  
Personal Address  
Personal Address  
Personal Address

PBIS School 1  
[address redacted]  
[parish redacted]

Dear Sir,

**Permission to Conduct Research**

My name is Corlett Pinnock; I am a student of the Walden University and I would like to conduct a research to examine the perception of teachers at three high schools in Region 4 Jamaica as it relates to the pilot program that implement positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS). Your high school is one of three high schools which are being solicited for this multi-site case study. The study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a Doctor of Psychology at the Walden University. I am therefore seeking your consent to conduct interviews with teachers at your school.

Each interview is expected to last approximately 35 minutes. To ensure that the rights of all participants are observed and protected, participants will be informed about the purpose and reason for the study and will be given the opportunity to choose not to participate. Participants will also be informed of their right to opt out of the study at any time without consequence. Anonymity of the participants will be maintained since the researcher will not use the names in the report. The researcher will provide each participant with an informed consent form which they will be asked to sign prior to participating in the interview. The participant will not be asked to record his or her name on the form.

I am available to answer any questions and clarify any issues relating to the study. I may be contacted by telephone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted].

I look forward to discussing this with you further.

Yours Sincerely,

---

Corlett Pinnock (Miss)

## Appendix D: Letter/E-mail for Recruiting Teachers

Dear Teachers,

My name is Corlett Pinnock; I am a student of the Walden University and I would like to conduct a research to examine the perception of teachers at three high schools in Region 4 Jamaica as it relates to the pilot program that implement positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS). Your high school is one of three high schools which are being solicited for this multi-site case study. The study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a Doctor of Psychology at the Walden University. I am therefore seeking asking you if you would like to be a volunteer in this study by allowing me to conduct an interview with you via zoom, using audio. The audio interview will be recorded but will remain confidential and your identity will not be published and will remain anonymous.

Each interview is expected to last approximately 55 minutes. To ensure that the rights of all participants are observed and protected, participants will be informed about the purpose and reason for the study and will be given the opportunity to choose not to participate. Participants will also be informed of their right to opt out of the study at any time without consequence. Anonymity of the participants will be maintained since the researcher will not use the names in the report. The researcher will provide each participant with an informed consent via email and if you wish to participate you can respond to the email by typing the words 'I consent'. The participant will not be asked to record his or her name on the form.

I am available to answer any questions and clarify any issues relating to the study. I may be contacted by telephone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted].

I look forward to discussing this with you further.

Yours Sincerely,

---

Corlett Pinnock (Miss)