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Teachers' Experiences Concerning the Rise in Student Aggression

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Doris Works

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2014

Abstract

Teachers' Experiences and Perspectives Concerning the Rise in Student Aggression in Public Schools

by

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MEd, Columbia College, 1999

BA, Benedict College, 1981

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

This research study addressed the problem of aggressive and disruptive behaviors for kindergarten through Grade 12 students in a school district located in Southeastern United States. The study examined classroom teachers' daily lived experiences with student aggression. Using a phenomenological design and guided by the frustration aggression theory and the social learning theory, the research questions explored teachers' responses to what can be done to help with disruptive and aggressive students and how social learning could help students with these behaviors. Data were collected from interviews with 5 individual teachers who had experienced aggressive and disruptive behaviors; data were also gathered from a focus group of 6 to increase credibility of the final interpretations. Both interview and focus group data were color-coded and thematically analyzed. Emergent themes revealed that aggressive disruptive behaviors included extreme disrespect toward teachers with physical and verbal abuse, and low teacher efficacy. The results indicated that social learning, through positive modeling, was needed to help aggressive disruptive students change their behavior. Teacher recommendations included professional training on social learning strategies, reducing class size, instilling a zero tolerance policy, increasing administrative support, and providing social learning programs for aggressive students. These recommendations could lead to social change by implementing constructive measures to reduce aggression and nurture positive teacher-student relationships by which students are empowered to learn and grow.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wonderful husband, Marcus, and our loving son, James Alden. I would like to make a special dedication to the loving memory of my parents, James and Rev. Louise Massey, my sisters Peggy and Pam, my mother-in-law Juanita Coe, and my father-in-law Thomas Works. To my best friend, Leslie Marie Scott, who encouraged me to pursue this degree: I dedicate this paper in your loving memory.

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I would like to thank my family for their loving support and for making sure that I had everything that I needed and always being there for me. To my husband Marcus and son Alden, my sisters Anita, Linda, and twin Dorothy, thank you very much for your prayers and encouragement. Thank you also to Carolyn and Minnie for nurturing my confidence and being the best friends anyone could have, and to Dr. Maryanne Longo and Dr. Daniel Baer for the continued professional guidance needed to complete this study. Much appreciation, also, to colleagues, extended family, and friends for the best motivational support. Most of all, I give thanks to my heavenly Father for the inspiration to envision this dream.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Classroom teachers are facing a difficult challenge in dealing with problem behaviors (Alberto & Troutmand, 2009). This qualitative, phenomenological research study was designed to explore teachers' lived experiences and perspectives in dealing with student aggressive disruptive behaviors in public schools.

There are many reasons for aggressive behaviors. Petsch and Rochlen (2009) suggested that children were coping with stressors before, during, or after parental incarceration. Schmid (2012) addressed negative peers, and Carrell and Hoekstra (2008) found that children from troubled families exhibited significant increases in misbehavior. Grigg (2012) cited frequent school changes were associated with poor outcomes with disruptions in important social ties. This study identified teachers' shared experiences in dealing with student aggression and may help in developing practices or policies to assist teachers and administrators deal with these behaviors and address school climate issues.

Public schools are currently investigating the phenomenon of student aggression as it relates to maladaptive social outcomes in the school setting (Grumm, Hein, & Fingerie, 2011). Suspensions are used to decrease problem behaviors (Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, Shane, & Rime, 2012); however, although punishing aggressive acts may seem to be effective, understanding and implementing ways to deal with the problem would yield long-term results (Gilhuly, 2011). Founding theorists of the frustration-aggression theory, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1949), posited that all aggression is the result of frustration. According to Bandura (1977), positive social and observational

learning through modeling could modify disruptive behaviors in students while also helping with the self-efficacy or confidence of the teachers.

In this study, self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) was used to understand teachers' personal experiences in terms of the day-to-day struggles taking place in schools and how these experiences have affected their confidence or self-esteem. Self-efficacy theory, as interpreted by Bandura (1994), suggests that individuals who tend to lack faith in their own capabilities are slower to restore their sense of self-efficacy or effectiveness after experiencing failure. Mansfield and Woods (2012) discussed teacher efficacy as personal traits—their effectiveness, beliefs, or self-perceptions. These traits have become an important field of research today.

Mills and Carwil (2009) explained that the prevalence of aggressive acts, such as teasing and bullying, has grown in recent years and has triggered increased intervention programs for educators and for parents. With aggressive behaviors, school districts are facing many challenges that need much attention. A school's learning climate is affected by incidents of student-student or student-teacher fighting or yelling; it hinders students' academic success (Price, 2012). With the increase in these types of behaviors, many schools across the country have implemented behavioral programs to help weaken and diminish uncooperative behaviors (Scott, Park, Swain-Bradway, & Landers, 2007). This study is expected to add to the body of knowledge on student aggression, which school boards, school districts, teachers, and administrators can examine.

Problem Statement

An award-winning school district in the Carolinas is faced with student aggression and disrespect toward teachers. Currently, school resource officers from the local sheriff's department are assigned to a particular cluster of schools. They help maintain school order because these aggressive, disruptive behaviors hamper student learning and produce fear and intimidation among the students, thus disrupting the school climate. But their presence is limited because they are serving multiple schools and because many teachers are reporting disciplinary incidents. Singh (2010) expressed a pressing need to understand the reasons for these aggressive behaviors. Possibilities include lack of personal guidance, anger or frustration, dysfunctional family, or simply callous and unkind behavior. This phenomenological study adds to the current literature by exploring teachers' lived experiences, as well as their perspectives and suggestions about addressing the problem. The significance of their experiences may inspire policy makers to revisit their disciplinary programs and procedures.

Nature of Study

To help determine the cause of student aggression, this phenomenological study used a constructivist design to explore teachers' lived experiences and their perspectives (Creswell, 2003). During the interviews, the participants were asked to describe their experiences as well as any disciplinary steps they took.

Interviews using key questions about incidents provided a holistic picture of participants' knowledge, views, understanding, and experience dealing with student aggression. Five participants were included in the criterion sample. Data obtained

through face-to-face interviews were analyzed to develop patterns and relationships among meanings. A focus group of six participants offered additional perspectives to compare with the criterion sample. To ensure validity the collected data were triangulated via the criterion sample, focus group, and member checks. To avoid personal bias in accurately interpreting participants' lived experiences, bracketing (Husserl's *epoche*; 1999) was used and included written notes, taped conversations, and interviews.

Research Questions

This research study was guided using the following research questions to support obtaining in-depth and meaningful data by which to understand the essence of the experiences and perceptions of the participants:

1. What can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive aggressive students?
2. How can social learning help students with aggressive disruptive behaviors?

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this phenomenological study was to gain understanding of the experiences, perspective, and meaning with regard to ggressive, disruptive student behaviors as perceived by the classroom teachers who have experienced them. These behaviors are a growing concern for education stakeholders (Kindiki, 2009). School districts are revisiting their corrective policies and procedures and increasing the number of programs that target aggressive student behavior (Bradshaw, Koth, Beavans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008). In the Carolinas, the legislature passed the Safe School Climate Act in order to improve school learning environments (Troy, 2010). In 2008, schools across the

country, realized the need to put into place support programs to facilitate prosocial behaviors (Pfleger & Wiley, 2012). As part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the Partnerships in Character Education program was implemented to urge and promote positive behaviors in all schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Another purpose of the study was to determine whether teacher self-confidence (or efficacy) was at risk. Garegae (2001) suggested that teachers feel disempowered when disciplinary problems among students are numerous; with continued behavioral problems, their emotions and self-confidence are disrupted.

Education has historically narrowed its attention to academic testing and did not give much attention to the other developmental needs of children (Campbell, 2011). To educate the whole child, schools need to find ways to to develop well-rounded, emotionally stable, and independent thinkers by teaching prosocial behaviors as well as academics (Stone, 2007). All the dimensions of children, including social and moral characteristics, should be taught (Simmons & Campbell, 2008).

Conceptual Framework

This research study was viewed through the conceptual lens of social learning by association and frustration aggression theory. These frameworks informed the study of aggression through perceptive measures (i.e., ascertaining the perceptions of participants) that lead to aggression and proposed actions of shifting negative behaviors through modeling. The rationale for basing this study on these concepts are indicators of aggression caused by frustration, and the situations affecting these attitudes in children.

Bandura's (1977) *social learning theory* explains how people learn through modeling and observational learning. According to Bandura , there are three models for the occurance of observational learning: the live model, the verbal instruction model, and the symbolic model. The live model is used to describe when an individual shows or reveals the behavior that is desired to be achieved. Verbal instruction refers to providing a detailed verbal description of the desired behavior and how to engage in this behavior. The symbolic model involves modeling occurrence through different media sources, which may include TV or film, literature, radio broadcasting, or internet sources. The social learning theory was used in this study to assist in understanding the experiences and perceptions of the participants and how aggressive behaviors are learned and can be addressed.

One example of the symbolic modeling of social learning theory is contained in the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) Ready, Set, Respect toolkit (2012), which can be used by teachers to support student feelings that they are respected by the students, safe, while also further developing attitudes and behaviors in the students that are respectful. It uses live teachers and fictional characters to cover topics in name-calling and bias. The tool kit provides teachable moments that model appropriate behaviors and encourage students to participate. Another example of symbolic modeling was provided in Baker, Lang, and O'Reilly's (2009) review, which reported video modeling as an effective intervention for challenging students and could possibly be an intervention resource for schools.

The modeling process involves attention to learn, retention to remember, reproduction to replicate (or reproduce) what is modeled and motivation (or incentive) to do what is learned (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1962) used an inflatable Bobo doll to test the affect of modeling and observing behaviors for children. Three separate groups of children watched adults interact with the doll. The child participants observed aggressive behaviors through verbal and physical attacks; gentle, kind, passive behaviors; and the control group was not exposed to any adult modeling. When the children got the chance to play with the Bobo doll, they imitated the behavior they had seen (Bandura, 1962). This study demonstrated how modeling and observation had power and influence over the behaviors adopted by children.

According to Dollard et al.'s *frustration-aggression theory* (1949), aggression is viewed as a response, reaction, or consequence of the emotional responses of frustration; frustration is the condition, or situation, that exists when a goal-response (i.e., one's effort to obtain a goal) is hindered. According to Raffaele Menedz, Hoy, Sudman, and Cunnigham (2011), early childhood is a crucial time to learn how to control emotions such as frustration and dissatisfaction. Children playing together on the playground display their emotional growth. Although not all children exhibit frustration-aggressive behaviors, those who do need to develop well-balanced emotional responses. Split, Koomen, and Thijs (2011) articulated the importance of teacher-student relationships. Aggression can occur if the teacher-student relationship is strained.

Operational Definitions

Providing term definitions for use in the study offers a level of precision to the study (Firestone, 1987). Creswell (2003) suggested giving definition to fewer terms in the early part of the proposal as more terms may arise during data collection. The following terms are defined operationally for use in this study.

Aggression: A negative response that follows frustration (Dollard et al., 1949).

Efficacy: Personal beliefs about oneself and one's capabilities that determine how one thinks and feels, is motivated and behaves (Bandura, 1994).

Prosocial behaviors: Personal actions that serve some benefit to others or the general society (Twenge, Ciarocco, Baumeister, & Bartels, 2007).

School climate: The nature of or sense of tone within the environment or workplace in a school (Cohen et al., 2009).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

Assumptions

The assumptions in this phenomenological study were that the participants answered questions honestly, rated situations truthfully, and that the feelings and thoughts of the focus group were related to professional classroom experiences (i.e., related specifically to the teaching profession).

Limitations

The sample size for this study was limited to a small population of teachers who teach within one school district. This small sample size limits generalizability of the findings to the sample population. Another limitation of this study was the teacher-

student relationships of the study participants. These limitations represent a weakness in the study, but the random focus group of six participants used to determine additional perspectives in comparison to the criterion-sample of participants supported the credibility of the findings.

Scope and Delimitations

The study took place at each participant's school through rotating meetings. Elementary, middle, and high school classroom teachers who had experienced aggressive student behaviors were interviewed. A focus group of random classroom teachers from the same schools was developed.

The study was delimited to one school district and only teachers from those schools were interviewed. Due to purposive sampling, the study is not generalizable to all teachers.

Significance of Study

The significance or importance of this phenomenological research study was to gain deep meaning, understanding, and perspective about student aggressive, disruptive behaviors, as perceived by classroom teachers, who have experienced these behaviors in an effort to support further understanding and future strategies to address these behaviors in the classroom. This study could be applied to the problem of understanding student aggression by presenting teachers' lived experiences to policy makers so they might recognize the effects that student aggression has on teacher efficacy and the overall school climate. Some students desire popularity at school and will display unwanted behaviors to receive it. These behaviors might influence other students to imitate the

negative behaviors in order to fit in or feel popular (Garandeau, Ahn, & Rodkin, 2011). Garandeau et al.'s research study revealed that aggressive students tended to be more popular, were better liked in the classroom, and had higher social status in elementary grades. The findings of this research study on student aggression support the need for school districts and educators to reexamine and address student aggression and try to understand the imperative need for teacher support to maintain authority in the classroom. It is critical to realize that if this problem is not addressed, it could possibly lead to further disciplinary problems.

Within the context of social change, education is seen as a significant catalyst for societal transformation (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This phenomenological study has implications for social change. It could improve the climate of schools, foster constructive teacher-student relationships, and thus cultivate prosocial behaviors. By building character, teachers can help students become productive citizens.

Summary

Evidence points to the connection between classroom disruptions and lower student achievement and this is true for both the offender and the observers (Lannie & McCurdy 2007). This section provided an introduction to the problem of student aggression in our schools and its effect on teacher efficacy, student learning, and the overall school climate. Research has shown that school-based behavior or character education programs can significantly help to limit destructive, aggressive and violent behaviors (Basch, 2011).

The constructivist design used in this study serves to contribute to the literature and general knowledge needed to address student aggression by exploring teachers' lived experiences, perspectives, and suggestions to address this problem. This phenomenological exploration supported an indepth understanding of the issue through the eyes of 11 participants who are teachers in the school district chosen for the study. The significance of these experiences could inspire policy makers to revisit disciplinary programs and procedures. The conceptual frameworks of social learning and frustration-aggression theories are the foundation of insightful measures of factors that lead to aggression and actionable ways of shifting negative behaviors through character education programs that model and teach the desired behaviors.

In Section 2, the literature review covers the following topics: understanding student aggression, the importance of sustained teacher efficacy, the impact of negative behaviors on student learning and the climate of the school. Section 3 includes detailed information concerning the methodology of the study, explaining the study design and rationale for the use of the design, the sample population, data collection and analysis, and ethical issues relevant to conducting this study. Section 4 provides a presentation of the data collected and the results of the data analysis. Finally, Section 5 offers the implications of the findings and recommendations for practice and future research stemming from these findings.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand classroom teachers' daily lived experiences with aggression. This literature review explores school climates, teacher-student relationships, student aggression, efficacy, and social learning. The literature examines the use of different methods of understanding aggressive, disruptive student behaviors in the classroom

The literature review will be used to describe and understand how school climate is shaped by day-to-day incidences. More recently, increases in the development of intervention programs are evident (Mills & Carwile, 2009), but these programs vary dramatically. This review discusses a variety of suggested programs.

To locate the literature for review, the following databases were used: Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Y, and Z. The following keywords were used: *teacher efficacy, school climate (or environment), student teacher relationships, peer interactions, and student aggressive, disruptive behaviors*

School Climate

School climate refers to the nature of the school environment (Cohen et al., 2009). Many factors contribute to a productive school climate, such as respectful teacher-student relationships, order and discipline, constructive classrooms, and parental involvement. A productive school climate helps to ensure student success: Students from schools with healthy learning environments tend to score higher on standardized tests (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch 2009). In 2008, over 7,000 schools across the nation used behavioral

incentive programs to support positive student behaviors (Bradshaw, Koth, Beavans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008) and in 2012 14,000 more schools nationwide implemented incentive programs (Debnam, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2012). To reduce disruptive behaviors, these schoolwide incentive programs promoted prosocial principles and behaviors among the students (Scott, Park, Swain-Bradway, & Landers 2007).

Teacher-led interventions, which can be customized to the specific needs of individual students, can be used to revitalize the school setting and improve the climate as well as the quality of student-teacher interactions (Rhodes, Camic, Milburn, & Lowe, 2009). Chen and Weikart (2008) made it clear that disorder in the school negatively affects academic achievement, indirectly and directly; therefore to maintain school order, teachers and administrators must work together to play a significant role in creating a positive and productive school climate. Combing a positive school climate with necessary security controls was the mission of the Carolina's legislature in passing the Safe School Climate Act, June 2006, with the intent to protect the health and welfare of children by improving their learning environment (Troy, 2010). The need for law enforcement, such as school resource officers (SROs), to serve as part of the safe school implementation plan has been shown to be more accepted in school communities (Department for Children, Schools, and Families, 2008), but James (2009) reminded us that the laws may be applied differently in the schools than in the community. Dannahey (2009) explained SROs are a significant resource in teaching parents and school staff regarding awareness of harmful behaviors, such as theft, drugs, and bullying. Johnson (2009) encouraged the SRO and school to work together to define policies, goals, and objectives for a safe

school environment. Prinsloo (2007) and UNICEF (2009) state that these collaborative contributions enable student learning and also foster positive relationships.

Teachers who value student opinions, welcome diversity, and encourage respectful behaviors promote a healthier classroom environment, as well as encourage the belief that American society is just and fair (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Fairness, trust, and equity are powerful elements in creating healthier school climates (Shirley & Cornell, 2012) and disparities obstruct equality and justice for all students. Productive school climates are inclusive, with fairness and equality. All students, regardless of background, must feel welcomed and valued before academic success can be accomplished.

According to Ediger (2009), classrooms that show evidence of effective classroom management, respect, and positive teacher-student relationships help in creating a productive learning community, which contributes to a positive school climate. A community of learners emphasizing cooperation in developing the learning enviornment creates an environment that supports opportunities for optimal student achievement in a variety of skills from academic and social, to psychomotor skills. Classroom climates in which teacher–student interactions tend to be more positive and supportive in nature promote improvement of students' self-regulation and conflict resolution skills to help reduce student aggression (Wilson, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2007). However, students with negative aggressive behaviors can influence and interrupt positive classroom order (Farmer et al., 2007).

Lannie and McCurdy (2007) explained that continued classroom disruptions connect with decreased achievement levels among both the offending students and their classmates or peers. This means students who exhibit negative behaviors not only impede learning for themselves, but for other students as well. Thomas, Bierman, Thompson, and Powers (2008) found that classrooms containing a large number of disruptive, aggressive students diminished overall classroom learning quality by creating social environments that reinforce aggressive reactions from students. This study examined 194 first grade classrooms in 27 schools, which were selected based upon enrollments in high-crime neighborhoods. It was noted that the majority of these students were from extremely economically challenged schools, where 80% of the students were classified as low socioeconomic status, defined by qualification for free or reduced-price lunch. A high incidence of aggressive disruptive behaviors were noted at school during the first grade year. The schools were located in geographic areas of Pennsylvania, Washington, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Forms for parents and teachers to rate behaviors at home and in school were used to assess students.

The findings of the study by Thomas et al. (2008) suggested low-quality classrooms and increased low SES school populations demonstrated associations with increased rates of disruptive behaviors. Preventive measures suggested improvement in teacher training in classroom management, distributing aggressive students throughout different classrooms, and implementing learning tools where students could engage in prosocial behavior interactions.. Gregory and Weinstein (2008) argued that teacher styles

in classroom management, discipline, and effectiveness can also contribute to student attitudes and behaviors.

Class-size reduction (CSR) enables management of disruptive behaviors and has emerged as a policy approach for closing the achievement gap (Burch, Theoharis, & Rauscher, 2010). Its initiatives have demonstrated affirmative results, both short-term and long-term, in the elementary grades (Tienkan & Achilles 2009). Graue and Rauscher (2009) stated that a total of 40 states as well as the federal government had implemented various types of CSR, some of which are mandated for all schools. Tienkan and Achilles (2009) conducted a nonexperimental, longtitudinal, explanatory study of CSR influence on writing. The analysis indicated CSR had a statistically major influence on the achievement of students who benefitted from CSR for 3 consecutive years (n=38) when compared to students who received it for one year (n=42) and to students who did not received at all (n = 43) (Graue & Rauscher, 2009).

Parental involvement always contributes to a successful school climate (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Pomerantz et al. (2007) articulated the positive effect enhancement of student achievement afforded with increased parental involvement through nurturing motivation, encouraging positive perceptions about school, and guiding students'participation. Education is highly valued by our society and school success ensures many lifelong benefits such as higher socioeconomic status, health, and well-being (Oreopoulos, 2007).

A study conducted by Wang and Selma (2010) explored how student perceptions of school affected frequency of problem behaviors. This environmental framework used

677 participating students from the sixth through eighth grades. Study results showed that a decrease in problem behaviors was related to increased positive school perceptions (Wang & Selma, 2010). How students and teachers demonstrated respect towards each other was associated with the possibility of challenging behaviors, which also affected the school's climate (Wang & Selma, 2010). These findings suggested mutual respect was a significant element that aided in altering disruptive behaviors and that developing these kinds of relationships beforehand could be a preemptive strategy in preventing problem behaviors before they occur, rather than focusing on the occurrences later. Students who demonstrate disruptive or challenging behaviors often create a situation in which teachers must dedicate a significant amount of instructional time on classroom management, taking time away from student instruction and impacting classroom learning (Murphy, Theodore, Aloiso, Alric-Edwards, & Hughes, 2007).

Teachers must also spend extra time reporting behavioral problems through disciplinary forms known as office referrals, which depend on teacher fairness. Many schools adopt these forms to record the incident, date, time, teacher comments, and disciplinary actions taken by the principal. Skiba et al. (2011) conducted a study on the discipline practices in schools by reviewing referral patterns in a total of 364 schools, elementary and middle level. These schools had already engaged in a reform process for school disciplinary policies and practices for at least 1 year. The study purpose was exploratory, on a national level, in terms of cultural disparities related to disciplinary action and reporting within elementary and middle schools.

Skibaet al. (2011) referred to the gaps in ethnic disparities in school discipline as having no indication of understanding or recognizing students' various backgrounds, emotional needs, or exposure to community violence, which influence these behaviors. The data included a summary of reported referrals seperated by ethnicity indicating that African American, and to a lesser extent Hispanic, students demonstrated an increased rate of incidence of disciplinary actions than Caucasian students with the same or comparable behaviors. The researchers pointed out extensive gaps in the literature exploring ethnic disparities and recommended further studies. The summation was that appropriate behaviors should be clearly defined, actively engaged, and consistently acknowledged for each student regardless of ethnicity. Students with troubled backgrounds tend to be more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors.

The National Gang Intelligence Center (2009) associates community violence with the negative influences of aggressive behaviors in the classroom, now reaching schools even in suburban communities. For many years suburban youth were assumed to be at low risk of exposure to community violence, but a study by Bradshaw, Rogers, Ghandour, and Garbarino (2009) revealed that students from suburban schools, when exposed to environmental violence, even low levels, also can be affected negatively.

Rusby, Taylor, and Foster (2007) shared the importance of disciplinary referrals as information that could be used in early detection and monitoring of disruptive behavior that negatively affected the school's climate. The information gained could help to track disruptive and defiant behaviors by collecting data on continued disruptive students. Clonan, McDougal, Clark, and Davison's (2007) article focused on how reported

discipline data could be advantageous in supporting informed decision making by school administrators; however, no reference to ethnicity or socioeconomic backgrounds were communicated.

Teacher-Student Relationships

One necessary component in developing a productive school is student-teacher relationships, which helps to lessen aggressive behaviors through mutual respect (Way, 2011). Teacher and student attitudes, gestures, and tone of voice all contribute to building a strong positive relationship. In a comparative case study of two behaviorally and academically challenged middle school students, Anderson (2011) revealed that caring and supportive relationships between teachers and students can have encouraging outcomes. In one student, positive behaviors increased while negative behaviors decreased as a result of engaging in a supportive relationship with the teacher, while the other student demonstrated similar results, but was less consistent. The students demonstrated the use of a dialogue journal to help with effective communication and both teacher and student yielded to the other's concerns with respect.

Most teachers believe all students have a need to belong, and that they should be valued and given the opportunity to learn (Reagan, 2009). Teacher beliefs and relationships with students are very important to the way they relate to their students (Giles, 2011); however, this relationship is often in the background and is largely taken for granted. The teacher-student relationship should be taken more seriously and cultivated with the utmost care and concern. Positive and encouraging teacher-student relationships can ensure the success of a student (Geng, 2011). Teachers must know their

students and should use best practices to connect with them in order to form a productive relationship. Both verbal and nonverbal communication are very important when interacting with or giving directives to students. Teachers should always refer to students by their names, as Galey (2007) suggested, especially for students with attention deficit disorder, who may need name reference regularly. In addition, the teacher should stand close when giving directives, using direct eye contact, always treating students with respect, which helps to develop a rapport with the students.

Teachers and students must join together through mutual respect in order to form a positive relationship. This connection might also include the school counselor, who works with students and has the opportunity to influence and help to facilitate positive student-teacher relationships. Helker, Schottelkorb, April, and Ray (2007) explained that the quality of this relationship between the student and the teacher affects many aspect of a student's experience, not only academically, but through social and emotional development. There are patterns of successes that support positive student teacher relationships, such as academic and pleasant behavior. In contrast, negative relationships may set a pattern for disruptive school behaviors problems.

Clement (2010) described caring teachers as those a student sees and knows to be caring, kind to everyone, and fair about discipline, as well as those who are non-biased to students, who communicate well, have high expectations, and motivate students to be their best. These perceptions are a form of personalization (Hallinan, 2008) because students who show emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement in school and in their learning demonstrate fewer feelings of alienation, while report feeling more

connected to the school. Effective personalization, from the view of the students, represents a fair relationship, in which they feel as if they belong in school, and feel they are in a safe and respectful climate (Yonezawa & Jones, 2007).

Exploring how students feel and perceive things presents the opportunity for new ways in which teachers can connect with them (McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010). Teachers need to know the perceptions of their students in order to create a positive working relationship. When a student feels the teacher is unfair, this sensitivity interrupts a positive teacher-student relationship. Student perception of differences lends itself to later levels of conflict. Mercer and DeRosier (2010) investigated a participant group of 1,104 fourth grade students to explore their perceptions about teacher preferences or favoritism for some students. The participants indicated that, because the teacher showed these traits, they did not have respect for the teacher, which caused a problem in their relationship afterwards. Results indicated teacher preferences ended with decreased perceptions of support and increased perceptions of conflict (Mercer & DeRosier, 2010).

In addition, students can lose teacher trust and feel discriminated against. Lee (2007) examined the student-teacher trust relationship using data from 318 seventh-grade Korean students. Findings suggested that student-teacher trust relationship contributed to the motivation of students socially and the performance of students academically (Lee, 2007).

A teacher's preconceived or predetermined ideas or opinions of students can be disadvantageous to building a positive relationship. DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho (2011) examined *lookism,* a specified type of prejudice. The study participants included a sample

of 226 secondary education teacher candidates who were currently enrolled in professional education classes within a Southern California university. The participants were shown eight photos of young people, male and female, from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, which included Hispanic, Asian, African American, and Caucasian, and each in neat typical school attire. They were all around the same age (15-17) with physical appearance differencing only by race and gender. Teacher participants in the study matched 10 statements to photos portraying specified racial or ethinic groups, based on their own personal experience (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2011). By doing so, the researcher was hoping to unveil or uncover any hidden prejudices.

The statements were made in five cluster areas, which included success in academics, success in athletics, adversity in academics, challenging classroom authority, and perceived as outsiders (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2011). The report focused on the two photos with the highest response frequency. When asked to "identify which student is most likely to excel in academics, "70% of the participants chose pictures of the Asian male and female. When asked to "identify which student is most likely to attend an Ivy League college such as Harvard or Yale, "55% selected the Asian students. When asked "identify which student will most likely excel in athletics, "66% selected Black and Hispanic males. These preconceived teacher responses were examples of the dangers of looking and judging without knowing.

The student-teacher relationship quality tends to influence student academic achievements. As such, the students who lack high quality student-teacher relationships demonstrate lower engagment levels with school. Parents can support the development of

positive student-teacher relationships by working with teachers together to help foster this relationship along with the child. Teachers must know their students' backgrounds, cultural differences and life styles. Hughes, Jan, Kwok, and Oi-man (2007) suggested that children's' cultural background connects to the classroom process. Teachers knowing the backgrounds of their students could help to foster a constructive experience and bring together teacher-student and parent-related relationships. Many of the participants and their parents did not have quality relationships with the classroom teacher (Hughes et al., 2007).

Student Aggression

Psychologists often define aggression as behavior aimed at harming or injuring others (Cavell, 2000; Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2007). Aggressive students in the classroom affect student outcomes regardless of the presence of a positive classroom climate (Thomas, Bierman, & Powers, 2011). Aggression impedes the child's social development and can facilitate additional problems for the child within the family, school, and community (Fung & Tsang, 2007).

Many factors can contribute to aggressive behaviors, such as exposure to violence, dysfunctional family environment, violence in the media and crime ridden communities. Tremblay (2010) explained that children learn disruptive aggressive behaviors (opposition, defiance, rule-breaking, stealing) from their environment. Among American school children, 10% - 20% are reportedly exposed to domestic violence each year (Carroll & Hoekstra, 2009). Gentile, Coyne, and Walsh (2011) conducted a study with 430 students in Grades 3-5 on media violence and concluded any violence children

are exposed to or see on a regular basis is very significant in their social development. According to Gentile, D. A., Coyne, S., & Walsh, D. A.(2011, violence had a clear effect on aggressive behavior during the school year. In addition, Gentile et al. (2011) also concluded that watching media violence habitually was associated with higher verbal aggressive behavior, higher physical aggressive behavior, and lower pro-social behavior.

Students are better able to learn when the environment is safe (Rosiak, 2009). Students with aggressive, disruptive behavior can create a fearful climate or atmosphere for other students in the class, therefore impeding student achievement and wasting instructional time (Ruiz-Oivares, Pino. Herruzo, 2010). McKissick, Hawkins, Lents, Hailey, and McGuire (2010) investigated the effects of group disruptive behavior and engagement levels from a sample of 26 students attending second grade in an urban school located in the Midwest. This study examined disruptive behaviors and student engagement comparative to the various levels of intervention across three class periods. The study results suggested that intervention and pro-social teaching helped to increase student engagement and to decrease disruptive behaviors.

Preventing aggressive disruptive behaviors can be challenging even for teachers with skilled classroom management techniques. Students with aggressive disruptive behavior do affect other students in the class. Using a case study research design, Duvall, Jain, and Boone (2010), focused on a sample of four students in the second grade who did not have disabilities and who were placed in the same classroom as a disabled, disruptive student. Removing the influence of the disruptive student (i.e., when not in the classroom), the academic response rate was much higher and inappropriate behaviors

were lower, but reintroducing the influence of the disruptive student (i.e., disruptive student placed in the classroom), academic response was much lower and the incidence of inappropriate behaviors was higher.

Teachers are in need of strategies and methods to combat physical aggressive behaviors in the classroom, such as fighting and verbal disrespect. Basch (2011) pointed to recent national data on students between the ages of 12-18, for which in-school physical fighting, threats, and injury were more prevalent (sometimes twice as likely) in urban as opposed to suburban or rural areas. Lannie and McCuurdy (2007) investigated a method using the Good Behavior Game as an evidence-based strategy for behavioral management using a sample of 22 first grade students. Praise statements from the teacher were examined to discover their effect on disruptive behaviors. Results of the study revealed an increase in on-task behaviors of students and a decrease in disruptive behaviors as a direct result of teacher praise and acknowledgment of student work ethics and appropriate behavior (Lannie and McCuurdy (2007).

Another study on teacher incentives, by Musti-Rao and Haydon (2011) also demonstrated teacher praise as helping to support fewer disruptive behaviors in the classroom, while also creating a more positive learning environment. When teachers offer statements of “good job” or “nice work,” these statements constitute approval that is very encouraging and effective when done on a consistent basis. Ridicule or praise can affect situational outcomes. Leflot, van Lier, Onnghena, and Colpin (2010) revealed a classroom preventive intervention observation of student task engagement and teacher behavior management. Results showed that a reduction in the number of negative

remarks made by teachers supported an increase in student on-task behavior while also supporting a decrease in verbally disruptive behaviors (Leflot et al., 2010). This result indicated that when teacher attitudes remain positive, there is a reduction of disruptive behaviors, supporting the significant role of teacher attitude.

Although proior researchers have agreed that class size is critical in reducing the achievement gap, disruptive behaviors also can impede student achievement (Burch, Theoharis, & Rauscher, 2010; Tienkan & Achilles, 2009). Too many disruptive students in a class can increase the level of classroom aggression, as was revealed in the study by Thomas, Bierman, and Powers (2011) that tracked behavior changes among a sample of 4,179 kindergarten through second grade students. Thomas et al. (2011) suggested limiting classrooms serving many high-risk students and too many aggressive students in one class could influence other students. Powers and Bierman (2012) emphasized that proximal peer relations with aggressive behaviors were detrimental to the overall classroom. Students sitting too near or close to continued disruptive aggressive behaviors tend to mimic what they have seen and possibly end up desiring to be friends with the troubled student.

In order to monitor aggressive disruptive behaviors, schools have implemented discipline referrals (Pas, Bradshaw, & Mitchell, 2011), but students must perceive these referrals as fair and equitable for everyone. Shirley and Cornell's (2012) study investigated and compared discipline referral differences between ethnic groups and found there were three times and five times as many suspensions for Latino and African American students, respectively. These findings connected to Mercer and DeRosier's

(2010) study results, which revealed that student perception of difference could present subsequent levels of conflict in the teacher-student relationship.

Efficacy

Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977) explains development through understanding the influence of four main sources: mastery, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and emotions. Mastery experiences include both successes and failures. Fives and Buehl (2010) examined a three-factor structure efficacy scale (efficacy for classroom management, instructional practices, and student engagement) and found teachers who had 10 years of experience or more commonly expressed learning from failures and setbacks, which ultimately helped them succeed. When individuals work through difficulty or hard times, they learn to be diligent and persistent, thus rising with strong efficacy and confidence. Bandura (1997) suggested that mastery experience serves as the most influential contributor to self-efficacy, which coincides with Pendergast, Garvis, and Keogh's (2011) study of student teachers from a university in Australia.

A longitudinal study was used to investigate the perceived meaning behind teaching. A sense-of-efficacy scale for teachers was administered twice; before and after they experienced 7 weeks in a classroom placement. Prior to the classroom experience, the participants were very confident about their efficacy, but after the placement, these same students rated themselves with much lower levels of teacher efficacy, which the researcher attributed to experience gained in the classroom. Study participants entered into practical experiences where mastery and verbal persuasion was needed as efficacy encouragement and support.

Bandura (1977) explained that vicarious experiences are evident when one witnesses the success of others similar to oneself, providing a social model, which promotes or encourages others to believe they too have the capabilities of completing the same task. On the other hand, observing the failures of others can also influence one's self-efficacy in succeeding at the same job. People seek modeling influences that help to inspire and communicate knowledge that offers valuable skills and strategies.

Guo, Justice, Sawyer, and Tompkins (2011) examined teacher experience, perceptions, and the value of collaboration. This investigation reported higher levels of teacher efficacy generated through peer collaborations. The collaborative sessions allowed teachers to share, demonstrate, encourage, and articulate best teaching practices that help them as teachers. Another part of Bandura's self efficacy theory was social persuasion through convincing another that they can succeed or that they have the necessary capabilities to support mastery of a task. However, Pas, E. T., Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M. (2011). argued that people who have been persuaded that they cannot accomplish a task also tend to give up more quickly and avoid challenges altogether. Persuasion could also be in the form of positive feedback and suggestions about job performance.

Casey and Williams (2011) focused on the effects of continuous feedback to teachers about their classroom performance and found information alone did not have an impact, but verbal persuasion did. The researchers concluded that performance feedback was a promising practice for teachers. Phelps (2010) revealed teachers relied on verbal persuasion to build their efficacy attitude and beliefs. Cockett and Benevides (2011)

found both teacher efficacy and perceptions of student efficacy or effectiveness were positively linked to student accomplishment when teachers used verbal persuasion, thus building strong efficacy within themselves during this positive practice. Palmer (2011) found verbal persuasion influenced and enhanced teacher efficacy after a 2-year intervention for low efficacy teachers in elementary science. Data showed an increase in efficacy through verbal persuasion through teacher collaboration. Williams, Fougler, and Wetzel (2009) conducted a qualitative study of transforming attitudes and behaviors of the 21st century classroom in which the findings revealed a lack of confidence among teachers, but also revealed that peer collaborations helped to strengthen teacher confidence.

Williams (2009) and Hosotani and Imai-Matsumura (2011) examined inferred self-efficacy that included not only classroom techniques, but also teacher emotions, which included factors outside of the immediate area of daily teaching practices. Empathy was shown to be an emotion teachers needed in the classroom (Hosotani & Imai-Matsumura, 2011; Williams, 2009). Barr (2011) stated that with an increase in empathic capabilities, teachers tend to more easily and thoroughly understand and respond to their students. People with a high sense of efficacy, therefore, tend to view their confident emotional state as an energizing catalyst that leads to outstanding performance (Bandura, 1994).

When teachers deal with aggressive behaviors, they may be provoked into yelling in order to gain control of the situation (Riley, Lewis, & Wang, 2012), and these provocations affect the situation. Klassen (2010) used a qualitative approach to examine

teacher efficacy among 951 Canadian elementary teachers and credited low self-efficacy to challenging behaviors. Some teachers claim the situation is one of the most difficult and stressful moments of their professional lives (Mosley & Taylor, 2011).

Social Learning

According to Sparapani, Seo, and Smith (2011), before teachers and administrators can develop productive social learning programs, they must immerse themselves in the students' culture, walking through students' neighborhoods to observe what these students are exposed to—their models for behavior. Student diversity demands cultural understanding of language, customs, traditions, and social activity. Walking around the culture would allow teachers and educators to see firsthand what students live with on a daily basis, after which an effective social learning program can be implemented to target the specific behaviors that need to be altered. Regan (2009) suggested students with emotional and behavioral disorders would benefit from social learning, as it is as important as the curriculum.

Schools in high-crime neighborhoods tend to have socioeconomically disadvantaged students who will be exposed to high levels of aggression in the classroom, which only compounds the existing negative influences (Thomas et al., 2006). These students are in need of strategies and methods that will introduce them to appropriate pro-social behaviors, which is why 36 states have actively adopted laws that mandate or recommend some type of character education in schools (Character Education Partnership, 2010). The Partnerships in Character Education Program was enacted as part of The No Child Left Behind Act to support and promote positive character development,

for which Congress appropriated an annual $25 million grant subsidy to fund the design and implementation of character education programs (U.S. Department of Education 2010). Many schools are seeking to implement one of the wide variety of character education programs available for K-12 (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007).

Social learning is a method of teaching pro-social behavior through the use of observation and modeling of the desired behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others and involves skills of attention, motivation, and memory (Bandura, 1977). In other words, it uses the same methods in which disruptive behaviors are developed through seeing and repeating what has been seen. Many schools have adopted the Positive Behavioral Incentive Supports behavioral learning program, which foster positive expectations for behavior. This program uses principles of behavioral learning and social learning to support the development of a positive school climate with the goal of reducing student behavior problems (Scott, Park, Swain-Bradshaw, & Lander, 2007), while at the same time improving the systems and procedural aspects of the school environment that support positive change among the staff and the students in terms of behavior.

There are many ways of teaching pro-social behaviors to children, Zhang (2011) shared literature as a model to support the integration of social and emotional skills into the curriculum at the elementary and middle school levels through exploration of children's stories as an effective way of improving social and friendship skills in young students. Many stories are specifically written to help children develop socially approved behaviors and values that teachers can integrate into their daily classroom activities. Leffert, Brady, and Siperstein (2009) concurred that teachers can infuse daily social

learning skills into the curriculum through preplanned instruction and by adding a social skills dimension or connection in expected routines and duties.

What Works Clearinghouse (2011) presented several 20-minute social learning lessons teachers can incorporate into their daily lesson plans. The lessons focused on the topics of anger management, problem solving, feelings, behavior at school, and generally getting along with others. Zhang (2011) and Gul and Vuran (2010) agreed that watching and learning the targeted behaviors exhibited via video can be used as a social learning tool for children. The common model for social skills instruction involves modeling, role-play (or rehearsal), and feedback, which connect to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory components. Play activities give the learner opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned and to try out new positive social skills. Couper (2011) suggested the playground as an excellent place to demonstrate social learning skills, particularly because teachers can offer immediate verbal praise when the desired behavior is demonstrated.

Snyder, F., Flay, B., Vuchinich, S., Acock, A., Washburn, I., & Beets, M. K. (2010) states the efficacy of a comprehensive character education program for elementary school students, based on social and emotional skills, toward reducing student absenteeism, improving student achievement, and affecting disciplinary outcomes. The sample population included 20 schools, both of which demonstrated racial and ethnic diversity to ensure equity in ethnic backgrounds. The results proved the character education program aimed at targeting student character development and behavior could affect a positive change in overall school achievement, general attendance, and the need

for disciplinary action at the same time. Brannon (2008) interviewed national board certified elementary teachers throughout Illinois to gain an understanding of character education practices. Most of these teachers agreed that character education should be implemented in the school curriculum because many students are coming to school with challenging behaviors and attitudes.

The community, school, teachers, and parents should all work together to develop good character development in students and it has been made clear that it is necessary to implement character education (Brannon, 2008). When children enter the classroom, teachers should work to form a partnership with parents in order to positively shape minds, attitudes, and behavior. Helterbran (2009) argued that schools should start at the elementary level teaching moral development to avoid troubled outcomes later on.

Costley and Harrington (2012) emphasized the need for character education due to a lack of family structure and appropriately modeled social skills. Teachers have dual roles in meeting the academic and social needs of children; therefore, implementing social learning into the curriculum would ensure students receive attention to academics as well as social learning. Teachers were encouraged to focus on teaching the whole child; developing wholesome character, integrity, and traits of honesty (Costley & Harrington, 2012). The authors depicted teachers as wearing many hats; their jobs were crucial because some children would not learn appropriate behavior if they did not attend public schools. Academic learning was stressed, but the development of a caring and empathetic person was described as vital in teaching the whole child (Costley & Harrington, 2012).

Methodology

This qualitative, phenomenological research study design incorporated a criterion sampling to recruit participants who had experienced the phenomenon being studied, as suggested by Creswell (2007), and a focus group to determine additional perspectives in comparison with the criterion-sample of participants. The criterion-sample participants included five certified K-12 public school teachers. Polkinghorne (1989) suggested that no less than five participants with a shared experience of the same phenomenon are appropriate for a phenomenological study. Elementary, middle, and high school principals were contacted and provided a study description. They were asked to email teachers and explain the study to them. Teachers who had experienced student aggression and agreed to participate in the study were asked to email the researcher directly to gain further information.

A meeting was scheduled with these participants to give detailed background information about the study, dates, and times of interviews, as well as to allow them time to assess their willingness to participate. Hour-long face-to-face interviews were scheduled for the voluntary participants. The criterion sampling met at the elementary school, as did the focus group, later. Member checking took place at the elementary school. Each meeting received the principal's approval.

My role as researcher was to interview a purposefully selected, criterion-sampling participant group who had all experienced student aggression, as well as a separate focus group of six volunteer teachers to determine additional perspectives in comparison to the criterion-sample of participants. I arranged meetings, scheduled the interviews with

participants, sought approval from principals and the school district to conduct the study, delivered and collected participant consent forms, collected data, and collaborated with participants in order to validate the emergent themes. Face-to-face interviews took place in an educational school setting in order to maintain the educational environment where the phenomenon had taken place. Observation was not used because it could be viewed as intrusive, and teachers might have altered their normal interactions with students. I followed guidelines set by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) to protect the rights of human participants; as such, participant names remained anonymous. The approval letter from the IRB #11-08-13-0137336 is included in the Appendix.

A brief proposal was sent to the *gatekeeper*, as suggested by Creswell (2007), who were, in this case, each of the school principals. The brief proposal explained the study and requested three participants who had experienced student aggression, three random participants, and the school resource officer. In addition, the proposal listed a schedule for the interviews and requested a private room to ensure privacy. All interviews took place after school and lasted no longer than 1 hour. Volunteer participants were assured that their time and expertise was appreciated.

Data collection tools consisted of written notes in journals, taped conversations, and interviews. Data collection procedures included interviews with participants using focus questions that were presented within a group setting that supported interaction and free discussion with the other participants in the group. Moustakas (1994) stated asking two broad questions and a few short sub-questions will focus on gathering data, leading to the development of textural and structural descriptions of the experiences of

participants with the goal of developing an in-depth understanding of the every day lived experiences, as expressed by the study participants.

Data analysis and the interpretation plan included interview transcriptions (Moustakas 1994) highlighting specific statements, relevant to the topic, to gain an understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. The statements were used to develop clusters of meaning, which were organized into themes. In addition, textural and structural descriptions were combined to form an understanding on a more general, group level, presenting the essence of the phenomenon by sharing common experiences of participants. Audiotaping of interviews, conversations, and discussions were used. Hand-written notes in the researcher's journal served as written documentation.

3. Organization and data preparation for analysis were done through the transcription of the interviews, recording and typing field notes, and sorting the data into different categories, which were determined based on the source and content of the information gathered. The researcher first read through the data as a means of gaining an overview of the data and to describe the tone and general impression of what the participants shared in their interviews. Analysis involved sorting text data, segmenting sentences, paragraphs, or images into labeled categories using the actual language of the participants. This was meant to develop a detailed analysis with a coding process of organizing the material in chunks (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The coding process supported the development of a general setting and individual

descriptions, in addition to the development of categories or themes for analysis, and for designing a detailed description for generated codes. These codes were shaped into a general description derived from the following research questions:

1. What can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive aggressive students?
2. How can social learning help students with aggressive disruptive behaviors?

Summary

Positive relationships between teacher and student are a necessary component in student achievement. Optimistic and well-qualified teachers believe that all students have value, can learn, and feel the need to belong. Teacher beliefs and relationships with students are essential to the educational experience, but aggressive, disruptive students interrupt positive student teacher relationships as well as classroom order. These disruptions have been related to decreased achievement among both offenders and their school classmates. Researchers have agreed that classrooms containing high proportions of disruptive, aggressive students diminish classroom learning quality, hinder student learning, and negatively affect the school environment. Consistent behavior management and disciplinary procedures must be implemented to offset these disruptions.

Class size and the number of disruptive students were recognized as being disadvantageous toward student learning. Too many disruptive students mixed together were shown to create social environments that reduce and reinforce aggressive reactions from students who promote and escalate aggressive behavioral problems. Smaller class

sizes are optimal to give teachers more control in managing disruptive students. Noting that the aggressive student feeds off an audience and could escalate in disruptive behavior as a result, it is recommended that the audience be removed when students display aggressive disruptive behavior.

Wilson, Pianta, and Stuhlman (2007) and Ediger (2009) described orderly classrooms as places of teacher-student respect and supportive teacher-student relationships, which promote an environment conducive to optimal pupil achievement. Also, classrooms with greater supportive, positive teacher-student interactions fostered greater student self-regulation and conflict-management skills, which supported a reduction in aggression among students. Researchers also have agreed that too much teacher time spent on disruptive behaviors impacted classroom learning due to instructional time being taken for behavioral issues.

Aggression or aggressive disruptive behaviors are always challenging, and teachers are in need of support in dealing with these unwanted behaviors. Many of these disruptive, aggressive behaviors (opposition, defiance, rule-breaking, stealing) are learned from the student's environment, and these disruptions impede learning for themselves, as well as other classmates. Aggressive, disruptive behaviors are a threat to school safety. Children are better able to learn when they feel their school is a safe environment. Students with aggressive, disruptive behaviors can produce a fearful climate for other students in the class, thus hindering student achievement and wasting teaching time and affecting teacher efficacy. The school environment is shaped by day-to-day incidences, but aggressive, disruptive behaviors, such as hallway fights and yelling

matches between teachers and students, can negatively affect a positive learning environment and school effectiveness.

The twenty-first century school environment has presented the need for SROs to assist in maintaining a safe school climate and to act as a significant resource in teaching staff and parents about drugs, bullying, and other aggressive, disruptive behaviors. The SRO and the school administration work together to define policies, goals, and objectives for a safe school environment, especially for schools in high-crime neighborhoods with socioeconomically disadvantaged children. The Partnerships in Character Education Program, enacted as part of the No Child Left Behind Act, supported and promoted positive character development, and presently there are a wide variety of character education programs among K-12 for curricula implementation. Administrators are encouraged to walk through their students' neighborhoods to observe what these students are exposed to as their model for behavior. Then, an effective social learning program can be implemented because social learning is as important as the academic curriculum in the student's development.

Social learning is a method of teaching prosocial behaviors through observation and modeling the behaviors of others, including attitudes and emotions, encompassing skills of memory, motivation, and attention. Many schools have adopted behavioral learning programs, such as PBIS, with behavioral expectations that include respect for others. In 2012 more than 14,000 schools nationwide have implemented this program, and many South Carolina school districts are among them. Teacher effectiveness and personal feelings concerning success dealing with aggressive disruptive students is

explained through Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Teachers' experiences with successes and failures along with the persuasion and encouragement of colleagues helped to build their teaching effectiveness .

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to give voice to the lived experiences of five teachers in dealing with students' aggressive, disruptive behavior through procedures involving group discussions and interviews. Section 3 presents the qualitative methodology for this study and explains the rationale for the sites, participants, and focus group. This section describes the methods used for data collection, data analysis, and confirming the validity of the data.

Research Design

A qualitative research method using a phenomenological design was employed to address the phenomenon of increased student aggression in schools. The nature of a phenomenological design is to make sense, interpret, describe, and explore teachers' lived experiences. This design makes it possible to interpret a phenomenon by coming to understand the meaning participants ascribe to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)..

Phenomenological research focuses on what all participants have in common to provide description and detailed understanding of the essence of these experiences, rather than analysis and explanation (Moustakas, 1994). The definition of qualitative research explained by Rudestam and Newton (2001) was gathering data in the form of words as opposed to numbers. This study is interpretive and non-numerical; thus, a quantitative design was not used. Inclusion of participants from different schools negated the selection of a single case study. The ethnographic design was not selected because this study is not based on cultural descriptions. Finally, grounded theory was not selected

because there was no hypothesis or theory to develop based on data analysis to be determined during the study. A qualitative design was selected as a means of obtaining a complex, detailed understanding of the phenomenon, which can only be obtained through talking directly to people (Creswell, 2003).

The participants in this study consisted of a criterion-sampling group of teachers who had all experienced the phenomenon of student aggressive, disruptive behavior. In addition to the interviews with the five criterion sampling group, a focus group of six participants was used to determine additional perspectives in comparison to the criterion-sample of participants. All participants were from the same cluster of schools.

Following the phenomenological design, the constructivist paradigm was used to understand the phenomenon through the view of the participants being studied. This phenomenological study adds to the body of research pertaining to student aggression toward teachers and peers. It is expected that this study will serve as a resource for policy makers, school districts, administrators, and educators.

A phenomenological research design aligned with the goal of exploring participants' lived experiences. The definition of qualitative research explained by Rudestam and Newton (2001) is gathering data in the form of words as opposed to numbers. Phenomenological research, as explained by Creswell (2007), is identifying the essence of the human experiences related to a phenomenon, through an exploration of the in-depth descriptions of the experiences of individual participants.

This interpretive study sought to gain a rich, detailed understanding of the problem, which can be obtained only by talking directly to people. During this process,

the researcher bracketed out personal experiences and bias in order to more fully understand the participant experiences (Nieswiadomy, 1993). Participants must feel empowered to share their stories without unencumbered bias from the researcher.

Phenomenological research focuses on what all participants have in common, which in this study is experiences of student aggression and the development of descriptions that reflect the essence of the experiences of participants, rather than attempting to explain and analyze the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). It is in the nature of a phenomenological design to develop themes and categories to capture the lived experiences of teachers.

Other research designs were examined, but not chosen, such as case study and grounded theory. A case study involves the exploration of a phenomenon through individual explorations of one or more cases, set within a bounded system (Stake, 2005); because this research study involved participants from more than one school, a case study would have been less effective and a single case study was negated. Grounded theory research uses data collection to formulate a theory that emerges from the views of the researcher and the participants (Creswell 1998); because this study focused on participants' lived experiences, the grounded theory was not practical because the researcher's views, opinions, and bias are bracketed. In addition, grounded theory was not selected because there was no hypothesis based on data analysis to be determined during the study. Finally, an ethnographic design was not selected because this study was not based on cultural descriptions.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to support and guide this phenomenological exploration.

1. What can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive aggressive students?
2. How can social learning help students with aggressive disruptive behaviors?

Context of the Study

The importance of the implementation of evidence-based practice in school policies and programs as a means of limiting student aggressive and violent behaviors is critical to helping to address the growing achievement gap (Basch, 2011). Grumm, Hein, and Fingerie (2011) stated aggressive behavior research has become a topic of interest as violence and aggressive behaviors can lead to a variety of social disorders and maladaptive outcomes that affect students and their peers in schools. This qualitative, phenomenological research study explored teachers' lived experiences dealing with student aggression and the influence it has on teacher efficacy, as explained by Bandura (1994). The justification of this study was that teachers are in need of support in dealing with student aggression. To help gain understanding of aggression, two founding theories were examined: frustration-aggression and social learning. Dollard et al. (1939) theorized all aggression is the result of frustration, and Bandura (1977) asserted observational learning through modeling could modify disruptive behaviors.

Data for this study were gathered using criterion sampling, as all participants had experienced student aggression. These participants included five certified public school

teachers from the same cluster of schools; teachers from each school level (i.e., elementary level, middle school level, and highschool level) in the same school district. Six focus group participants were used to determine additional perspectives to compare to the criterion-sample of participants. Practical qualitative procedures, such as face-to-face interviews as well as focus group discussions, probed for in-depth information.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

The following measures were taken to protect the study participants:

1. I protected the confidentiality of the participants by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals and by ensuring no deceptive practices were used in the study.
2. Deletion of private, personal, off-the-record information from the analysis.
3. I did not share any personal information so that the bracketing effect was not minimized. The findings (without participants' names) were shared with the local school district, participants, and principals.
4. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent before participating in the study. The form explained the participants' rights to privacy, the right to discontinue participation at any point deemed necessary, and the general purpose and significance of the study.
5. This information is on a USB flash drive and hard-copy print in my bank safety deposit box. This information will be stored in a secure location for a period of at least 5 years, and I will be the only person with the key to this confidential information.

The Phenomenological Researcher's Role

As the researcher, my first role of significance was to make sure the participants felt respected and valued, and knew what they said would be reported truthfully with their consent and would remain confidential. My next significant role as a researcher was to obtain approval from the IRB before conducting the study. Written approval was also received from the school principals and district leaders to carry out this study. My responsibilities involved obtaining participants' written agreement to participate in the study and creating a professional, positive relationship to make certain their participation was appreciated and respected. I made sure all interview questions were open-ended, clearly stated, and minimal in number, and I provided audiotaping as well as journal notation of the intereview. I ensured secure private interview space free from interruptions for interviews and data collection as well as transcribing all data received.

Criteria for Participant Selection

For a proper qualitative, phenomenological research study, Polkinghorne (1989) proposed involving no fewer than five individuals having experience with the same phenomenon. To better understand student aggressive behaviors demonstrated toward teachers, criterion sampling plan was used to gather a sample of participants who had all experienced this phenomenon, as suggested by Creswell (2007). The participants were five public school certified classroom teachers from the same cluster of schools in the same school district. In addition, a focus group of six teachers was used to determine additional perspectives in comparison to the criterion-sample of participants. Participants were selected on the following criteria: certified public school teachers, who work in one

or more of the schools selected for inclusion in this study, express interest in the topic, and are comfortable talking to each other, as suggested by Richardson and Rabee (2010). To determine these qualifications, I met with potential participants to share the criteria and allowed them to give consent or not.

Data Collection

The data-collecting steps included setting the boundaries for the study and using open-ended interview questions intended to draw out views and opinions from the participants. These interview questions provided a focus during the interviews without the constraint of a specified format. The interview questions asked the following:

- What is your interpretation or definition of student aggressive behavior?
- What have you experienced in terms of student aggression?
- How did the experience affect or influence your self–efficacy, if at all, and did the school disciplinary procedures resolve the problem?
- How can school boards, administrators, and principals help teachers deal with student aggressive, disruptive behaviors?

The flexibility gained can support tailoring the questions by the interviewer to the context of the specific interview and participant responses (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The site for conducting this qualitative, phenomenological research was the educational setting in the elementary, middle, and high schools within the same school cluster. These sites were chosen because this was where the participants work and where the aggressive disruptive behaviors had taken place. During the face-to-face interview,

the criterion-sample participants shared their lived experiences of student aggression. The focus group participated in discussions about student aggression to garner their opinions and perspectives. These interviews helped me find common experiences, themes, and the overall essence of the experience for all participants.

Gaining access and making rapport was significant to the success of the study and in part connected to the IRB process of approval. Therefore, I gained permission from the IRB and had them review the study for potential harm and risk to participants. "To the review board, it might be argued, qualitative interviews, if unstructured, may actually provide participants considerable control over the interview process" (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Consent forms for participants are another vital part of a successful research study. These forms request review and signatures and contain specific elements including the central purpose of the study, the procedure to be used in data collection, statements about known risks associated with participation in the study, the right to withdraw from the study at any time, comments about protecting the confidentiality of the respondents, and the expected benefits to the participants. Written approval was requested and gained for conducting the study from the individual school principals and the school district.

Triangulated forms of data were collected in the natural educational setting to gather information, and I transcribed all notes to be useful in gaining this historical information. The forms of data collection were journal notation of discussions, interviews, and audiotaped conversations. The limitations were interviewees who may not have been equally articulate or perceptive; additionally, my presence may have biased responses (Firestone, 1987).

Recording information identified what I transcribed and the procedures for recording data (Creswell 2002). Data collection included conducting unstructured open-ended interviews, audiotaping the interviews, and using an interview protocol for recording information, which included a heading with instructions, the key research questions, specific probing questions to be used as follow-up to the responses to the key questions, transition messages, space for noting and or recording any comments of the participants , as well as reflections of the researcher in notation format. Any email sent to the researcher from participants was used as documentation, whether directly from the participants or as secondary materials. Proper storage of all information is crucial; thus, recommendations for data storage on a USB flash drive and a hard copy backup was followed, as offered by Davidson (1996).

Field issues are unforeseen problems that may arise. Sampson (2004) proposed that beginners start with limited data collection because they may become overwhelmed by the time requirements of the data collection that is needed to support detailed and rich data collection.

Data Analysis

Key methods for qualitative, phenomenological data analysis were described by Creswell (2007) as follows: First create, organize, and manage files for the data. Conduct a first read through the text, taking notes in the margins reflective of the initial codes. Generate a description of the personal experiences using epoche and generate a description of the essence of the phenomenon. Classify significant statements and cluster or categorize these statements into meaningful units. Generate textural descriptions for

each participant of what happened and a structural description of the individual experience of the phenomenon. Categorize incidences and episodes; what happened, what was done to correct it, what could have been done to prevent it, and how to help to diminish these aggressive behaviors. Finally, develop a written composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both textural and structural description. This is the essence of the experiences and presents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study.

According to Creswell (2007), it is critical to develop a narrative that tells what the participants experienced with the phenomenon and how they experienced it. Narration of the experiences should be presented in tables, figures, or discussion (Creswell, 2007). The language of the participants guided the development of coding and category labels. These codes and categories were used to compare and contrast information (Creswell, 2007). A coding template was organized in the following order: personal bracketing, significant statements, meaning units, textural description, and structured description.

Validity

Validity procedures used to check the accuracy of the findings in this qualitative, phenomenological research study were triangulated methods of using three different data sources from which to develop a well-founded rationale for the theme development; these data sources included criterion sampling, face-to face interviews, and random focus group discussion. Themes were brought back to participants to check for accuracy and peer debriefing through reading, reviewing, and asking questions to ensure resonance with a wide audience.

Summary

School environments need to be a respectful place of learning, supporting a broad effort to maintain peace and harmony through the cooperation of a variety of stakeholders in the community. These stakeholders include students, parents, educators, community-based organizations, and law enforcement officials. Safety is an elemental component in supporting development in society. The general acceptance of the participation of law enforcement in school safety has become more accepted. The SROs are now a part of the school climate. Teachers cannot be effective if student aggression is common and ongoing.

Along with multiple duties that can sometimes cause burnout, student aggression may also encumber a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Teacher burnout continues to be a problem in schools, globally. When experiencing burnout, teachers lose effectivness and often end up leaving the profession. A positive teacher-student relationship is essential to learning dynamics in a classroom. A nurtured teacher-student relationship is vital to the educational experience and engages every aspect of each student's being, not just intellect.

Further exploration of teachers' lived experiences and perspectives concerning student aggression will be investigated and reported in Section 4. The results and recommendations for further study will be found in Section 5.

Section 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate teachers' lived experiences dealing with students' aggressive behaviors and their effect on teacher efficacy. The goal was to explore teacher experiences by using participant descriptions to convey information about their experiences. In addition, the goal was to make sense of what is going on through interpretation in order to arrive at a complete understanding of this phenomenon and how teachers perceived the effect student aggression has on teacher efficacy.

Two groups of participants were used in this qualitative study: a criterion sample group and a focus group. There were five certified public school teachers in the criterion sample group and six certified public school teachers in the focus group. Each person in the criterion sample group must have had experienced the phenomenon and were interviewed individually. The homogenous focus group supported shared insights and diversity of perceptions. This approach, using phenomenology, supported a research focus on the lived experiences of participants, rather than the researcher's interpretation (Moustakas, 1994). The information was gathered through triangulation of data through discrepant cases and nonconforming data, member checking, and rich, thick descriptions found in the data results. The record-keeping process included journal note-taking by the researcher as well as audiotaped discussions from the interviews.

After emailing and meeting with the school principal to arrange the initial meeting with the candidates, I began the implementation of this research. Description of the study

was explained to interested teachers and those who continued to be interested were asked to return the consent forms within 48 hours, if possible, in order to meet desired research deadlines. Fourteen teachers attended the meeting, and three did not return consent forms. The individual interview meetings were completed with the consenting 11 participants by using a structured series of interview questions designed to obtain data that could be used to address the research questions of the study.

The following elements are described in this section: the research questions, participant selection, data collection, questions and themes, data analysis, discrepant cases and nonconforming data, description of patterns, relationships, and themes with evidence of quality.

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 11 certified public school educators with teaching experience ranging from kindergarten to high school. The criterion sample consisted of five educators who had experienced students' aggressive, disruptive behaviors. The focus group,consisted of six educators to provide additional perspectives for comparison. Participants were selected according to the following criteria: all were certified public school teachers, worked in the same school district, expressed interest in the topic, and were comfortable talking to each other, as suggested by Richardson and Rabee (2010). Table 1 gives the educational backgrounds of both the criterion sample and the focus group sample.

Table 1

Educational Background of Participants

Participant	Years	Highest Degree	National Boards	Experience
		Criterion Sample		
5	15	Master's plus 30		Elem - High
4	28	Master's plus 30	Yes	Elem- High
3	26	Master's plus 30	Yes	ElemMiddle
2	25	Master's		ElemMiddle
1	5	Master's		Elementary
		Focus Group Sample		
F	33	Bachelor's	Yes	Elem - High
E	24	Master's plus 30		Elem - High
D	11	Doctorate of Ed		ElemMiddle
C	8	Master's	Yes	Elementary
B	14	Master's plus 30		ElemMiddle
A	12	Master's		Elem-High

Summary of Participants' Background

All teacher participants' educational backgrounds ranged from Bachelor's to Master's degrees plus 30 credits above and one who recently received her doctoral degree in education. Their grade-level teaching experience ranged from elementary through high school. Each group had two national board certified teachers (NCBTs). Participants' years of teaching experience ranged from 5-33 years in education.

Data Collection Process

After receiving approval from the Walden University IRB (#11-08-13-0137336) to conduct research, the data collection process began through an emailed introduction letter to the principal about my study and the criteria and need for participants (Appendix A). After having met with staff, the principal organized a meeting with 14 interested teachers during which I explained the study and gave consent forms (Appendix B), requesting that the forms be returned within 48 hours. This resulted in a total of 11 interested educators who returned the consent forms. Five requested to participate in the criterion sample group because they said they had definitely experienced student aggression, and the remaining six wanted to participate in the focus group. The criterion sample interview process using face-to-face interaction was used as an attempt to gather reliable and valid responses from participants. The researcher scheduled individual interview sessions with the five individual participants and then arranged a meeting with the focus group, which consisted of six participants.

The criterion sample and focus group met on different days for one hour in a private room at the educational school setting. Triangulated forms of data were collected in the natural educational setting to gather rich, thick meaning and details about teaching experiences related to dealing with student aggression. The researcher transcribed the audio data and all notes useful in gaining this historical information. The forms of data collection were verbatim journal notations of interviews and audiotaped conversations. The specific criteria for participant selection was certified public school teachers in the same school district.

Management of Data and Emerging Themes

Journaling about the interviews was used to manage the emergent data. After IRB approval, the researchers' journaling was word processed into a file labeled "Research Study Journal" in a password-protected personal computer. The to-do list and tracking of my progress was implemented by writing down appointments, achievements, and updates. From this file, there was continual reading and rereading of transcripts with ongoing coding as suggested by Hatch (2002).

At the completion of the interviews and focus groups, the audiotape recordings were transcribed within a 10-day period and the transcripts were stored on a USB flash drive and on my password-protected personal computer. Member checking was used as a means of ensuring the accuracy of each transcription by having participants read their own transcript and give approval of their responses. All participants verified the accuracy of the transcription and approved the quotes.

Audiotaped interviews were scheduled to begin in late Fall. Each interview incorporated four questions, which were open-ended to allow for probing questions. Probing questions were used as a means of providing clarity and additional information to the initial responses. The use of the open-ended question format provided participants with an opportunity to detail their unique lived experiences dealing with student aggressive disruptive behaviors. All interviews took place in the participant's educational setting and lasted approximately one hour. The emergent data obtained from the analysis of the transcribed interviews were descriptive with a focus on details and in-depth understanding of teacher experiences of student aggressive behaviors in the school setting

(Creswell, 2003). The interviews were manually transcribed. Data were stored securely on a password-protected personal home computer during the analysis and on a USB drive after completion of the analysis.

A process of color coding the transcriptions aided in the identification of potential themes in the data. Each transcript was read and then reread prior to beginning to sort the data by content and according to each research question. Color coding helped to process differences, similarities, and concepts related to the study's research questions, which assisted in beginning the process of categorization of the relevant statements offered by participants in terms of their experiences or perceptions of the phenomenon. In the interview analysis (Appendix G), conducted after completion of the color coding process, the data were aggregated and organized for the identification of common themes.

Data Analysis

The completed data analysis process involved scrutiny, synthesis, and interpretation of word combinations derived from interviews, audiotapes. and the focus group. Field notes provided a log of what happened during the live observation of how participants answered questions. The data analysis had three steps: preparation and organization of the data, data reduction into themes, and presentation of the data in narrative and graphic form. After transcription of the audio interview data, the analysis process began through the reduction of data into relevant and meaningful statements in order to find similarities and differences (Hatch, 2002). Then, I related this information to emerging themes in order to discover patterns (Hatch, 2002). During the interview, categories emerged from participant responses. Patterns, or commonalities, revealed in

the data were color coded to identify groups, or categories, of emergent themes. This process permitted significant insight and observation on how teachers perceived student aggression and its effect on teacher efficacy.

Research Question 1

The first research question was, What can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive, aggressive students? In order to answer this first research question, interview questions were asked to search participants' definitions of aggression, to explore their experiences, and to investigate their effectiveness as a teacher. The difference between the participant groups was that the criterion sample participants had reported previously experiencing the phenomenon, whereas the focus group consisted of teacher discussions about the phenomenon and the teachers may or may not have directly experienced the phenomenon.

Interview Question 1. The first interview question was, What is your interpretation or definition of student aggressive disruptive behavior? This question was designed to explore teacher understanding of student aggression (i.e., how they perceived it). The criterion sample group of participants met a predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2001) in that these participants had experienced the phenomenon and were, therefore, very detailed in describing their interpretation of aggressive behaviors. Teacher 4 started the interview by emotionally saying something needs to be done about students who continue to disrupt the class on a regular basis with negative aggressive behaviors. I explained that this study will help to resolve this problem. The individual interviews encouraged participants to talk freely, to share exactly what they wanted to

share, as I made notes and allowed their personal view points to be expressed before moving on to the next question.

Emergent themes from criterion sample. When asked to describe their perceptions of aggressive, disruptive behavior, the teachers offered similar responses in terms of abusive behaviors that hurt others. Teacher 1 calmly explained "student aggressive disruptive behavior is a mean demeanor, physically and verbally abusive, with angry attitudes." Teacher 2 said without hesitation that this behavior is negative in attitude and physically harmful to others." Teacher 2 went on to say, "I've seen this happen, they will push or hit others around them when they get mad." Teacher 4 insisted that aggression was driven by anger and frustration, which included verbal and physical abuse toward others and also displaying social malfunctions. Teacher 5 stated in a passionate caring voice that, "These students do acts of meanness without remorse; it's as if they do not know right from wrong, I feel sorry for them." She talked at length about how they seem to behave negatively with resistance to correction and kept saying, "I simply don't understand."

Teachers talked about their understanding of student aggressive, disruptive behavior as interruptive or disrespectful behaviors, physical and verbal abuse driven by anger and frustration, which connected to the frustration-aggression theory (Dollard et al., 1949), which describes aggression as a consequence of frustration. As teachers expressed their definition of aggressive behaviors, they emphasized how these disruptions changed the school climate, as was explained by Price (2012) in that aggressive disruptive behaviors, such as hallway fights and yelling matches between teachers and students, can

alter a positive learning climate and hinder school effectiveness. The school climate contributes significantly toward building student achievement, and those students from schools with healthy learning environments score higher on standardized tests (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

Teachers stated disruptions were ongoing daily problems, mostly with the same students. School disorder has been shown to affect the academic achievement of students in both direct and indirect ways (Chen & Weikart, 2008). Rosiak (2009) explained that in order to maintain school order, teachers and administrators must work together at supporting the creation of a positive and productive school climate where students are better able to learn because they feel their school is a safe environment. Teachers also distinguished these disruptions as everyday problems with the same students that sometimes influenced students who do not regularly misbehave. Powers and Bierman's (2012) study revealed that students sitting near peers who display aggressive, disruptive behaviors showed an increased likelihood of gaining these aggressive students as friends.

The teacher participants in this present study gave clear indications that physical and verbal abuse were related to student aggressive-disruptive behaviors. Teacher 1 calmly explained her interpretation of the behavior as having a mean demeanor, and being physically and verbally abusive, with angry attitudes. Broidy.et al. (2003) and Kim-Cohen et al. (2005) shared that elevated rates of aggressive-disruptive behaviors among children in early elementary school puts these children at an increased risk a variety of other social problems and continued aggressive behavior patterns. Psychologists often define aggression as behavior aimed at harming or injuring others (Cavell, 2000; Kaiser

& Rasminsky, 2007). Aggression in a child hampers normal development and elicits problems at the family, school, and community levels (Fung & Tsang, 2007). Teacher 3 felt that disrespect was a major factor in that students thought respecting others was a sign of weakness. “I guess it comes from what they have seen or experienced” (Teacher 3). Gentile, Coyne, and Walsh’s (2011) media violence study showed consumption of media violence was correlated with higher verbal and physical aggressive behavior along with lower prosocial behavior.

In Table 2, emerging themes are shown as teachers rendered their definition or interpretation of aggressive behaviors as encompassing physical or verbal abuse, continuous disruptions, and emotional frustrations, emotionally unstable and social disorders.

Table 2

Criterion Sample Emerging Themes

Code	Description
PA	Physical abuse
VA	Verbal abuse
CD	Continuous disruptions
EF	Emotional frustration
EU	Emotionally unstable
SD	Social disorder

Emergent themes from focus group sample. The focus group was comprised of teachers who voluntarily agreed to discuss the phenomenon. This group was used to gain additional perspectives in comparison to the sample on the topic of student aggression

and to generate additional volume of data in a relatively short period of time (Hatch, 2002). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) stated that group discussion, such as in a focus group, allow for the gathering of data that provides insight and information that would not necessarily be possible to obtain without the participant interactions present in the group discussion.

The focus group discussion was very involved, supporting open comments by the teacher participants. For example, Teacher A gave an opening statement, "I think these kids' angry attitudes make them physically attack others without provoking." When this teacher talked more about the misbehaviors, she commented that too many kids with the same kind of behavior problem were in her class. This statement aligned with the research conducted by Powers and Bierman (2012), who found high levels of classroom aggressive, disruptive behavior were correlated with proximal peer relations as being too close to misbehaviors.

Teachers also described aggressive, disruptive behaviors as disrespectful attitudes, such as yelling, rude tones, and poor coping skills. Teacher A replied by saying, "I think their responses are abnormal because many times the violent outbursts and physical attacks on others is not necessary." Teacher C agreed and added, "That their disrespectful attitudes, yelling, rude tones could be to the lack of coping skills." Teacher E also noted that these students cannot leave a situation alone if they think they are right; "What they perceive to be truth is important and no one can change their minds. I think they are mostly emotionally unstable and have no positive social skills because it seems like the meanness empowers them." The teachers agreed that students needed to learn prosocial

behaviors. This implication communicates the conceptual framework of the social learning theory, a method of teaching pro-social behavior through use of observation and modeling of the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses of others (Bandura, 1977).

During the discussion, Teacher D stated the belief that these students have a problem with authority, as most have one parent who has to work, leaving them alone often, making them used to being on their own and doing what they want to do. To echo this, the South Carolina (2010) Census reported a higher incidence of single parent households among low-income families in South Carolina. Teacher D further stated:

> They do not like taking directions from a teacher as the authority, especially a male; I guess it's because most of them do not have males in their homes and many of my students have incarcerated parents which is now a normal thing and when they talk about it, it's as if they are talking about being in college.

To support this assertion, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2007) reported an estimate of 1,706,600 children with at lease one parent in prison. Table 3 identifies codes and themes that emerged from the focus group's interpretations and definitions of aggression.

Table 3

Focus Group Emerging Themes

Code	Description
PA	Physical abuse
CD	Continuous disruptions
AF	Angry & frustrated
VA	Verbal abuse
DRA	Disrespectful attitudes
PRA	Problems with authority
SD	Social disorder

Analysis of Interview Question 1. Descriptions, interpretations, and perspectives of participants agreed with the definition of aggression offered by Cavell (2002) as behavior aimed at harming or injuring others. The focus group described aggression as physical and verbal abuse, problems with authority,shaving social disorder or problems with others and angry, frustrated attitudes.

In Table 4, the interpretations of student aggressive behavior offered by both the criterion sample and focus group are illutsrated. These teacher interpretations were used as a phenomenological approach to reveal their understanding and interpretations, identifying the phenomena as perceived or interpreted by the participants, as suggested by Moustakas (1994).

Table 4

Teachers' Interpretations of Student Aggressive Behavior

Codes	Description	Criterion Sample	Focus Group
PA	Physical abuse	90%	80%
VA	Verbal abuse	90%	70%
CD	Continuous disruptions	100%	90%
SD	Social disorder	90%	70%
EF	Easily frustrated	90%	90%
EM	Emotionally unstable	90%	70%
DA	Dislike of authority	90%	90%

Summary for Interview Question 1. Participant responses to the first interview question helped to address the first research question, which asked, What can be done to help teachers dealing with student aggressive disruptive behaviors? Participants responded to the first interview question by sharing their definition or interpretation of aggression. These interpretations can ultimately be used to determine how teachers can be supported in their classrooms. This question was asked to probe understandings of aggression. The most common definitions or interpretations of aggressive disruptive behaviors included viewing the behavior as a social disorder, and incorporating aspects of physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. Teacher interpretations were based on their authentic experiences of continued disruptions observed in the classroom.

Both groups explained the definition in terms of harmful acts toward others, which connected to previous research and psychologists' definitions as behavior aimed at harming or injuring others (Cavell, 2000; Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2007). Table 4 compared

both group responses. Among the criterion sample group, 90% perceived aggressive acts as physical abuse, 90% as verbal abuse, 100% as continued disruptions, 90% as social disorders, and 90% as easily frustrated. Dollard et al.'s (1949) frustration-aggression theory suggested that aggression is always the consequence of frustration. In addition, 90% of the participants also thought that aggression and the ensuing acts were also emotionally unstable and 90% said these aggressive students disrespected or disliked authority. The focus group mostly agreed with the criterion sample, sharing the perception of aggression as physical abuse among 80% of the focus group participants, as verbal abuse among 70% of the participants, as continued disruptions in class (90%), as social disorder (70%), as easily frustrated (90%), as emotionally unstable (70%), and as dislike of or disrespecting authority (90%).

Teachers in this study said these visible aggressive acts disrupted classroom order. Similarly, a recent study by Thomas, Bierman, Thompson, and Powers (2008) found that classrooms containing a greater proportion of disruptive, aggressive students diminished overall learning quality in the classroom through the creation of social environments that reinforced more aggressive responses among students who promoted and escalated aggressive behavioral problems. When teachers presented their definitions in this study, they were concerned about other students who watched these behaviors on a day-to-day basis. Lannie and McCurdy (2007) explained that the disruptions in the classroom are connected to lower student achievement among both offending students as well as their classmates.

Interview Question 2. The second interview question asked, What have you experienced in terms of student aggression? This question was used to gain insight into participants' personal lived experiences with student aggression by exploring the essence of participants' real-life experiences concerning the phenomenon (Lodico, Spaulding, &Voegtle, 2010).

Emergent themes from the criterion sample. In the criterion sample group, this question caused a mixture of emotions among the participants, because they had collectively experienced the phenomenon in their classrooms. Teacher 1 was the youngest teacher with five years of teaching experience. She spoke assertively and convincingly about how tired she was of dealing with student aggression:

> I have experienced false accusations of students when they were approached by the principal, they insist they did not do it and the administration acted as if I was the one wrong. I have been punched in the faced when trying to restrain a student who was throwing books across room because he did not want to follow the rules and verbal disrespect by cursing. I'm tired of these kids being placed in my class in large numbers and I have no help. If I try to do referrals, they still come back without discipline and do it all over again, I'm tired.

This teacher was very emotional in recounting the experiences, evidencing the emotional toll of this type of behavior on the teachers. This teacher's response related to Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997) of social persuasion, which describes convincing another that they can succeed or possess the capabilities to master a task. Teacher 2 recanted a similar

experience, highlighting a lack of administrative support for the teachers related to student aggressive behaviors:

> I've experienced students making false accusations about me and the principal disciplined me by saying the student said he did not do it and you need to watch how you discipline your kids. Then the student bragged to others about how he got me into trouble and continued to disrupt the class and tormented me with disrespect the entire year.

This was stated by a veteran teacher of 25 years who also noted, "At this late stage in my career, I was ready to give up." Teacher efficacy is extremely important to continued success, as pointed out in Bandura's (1994) efficacy description as beliefs that determine how people think and feel, as well as how they are motivated to behave in a certain way.

Teachers discussed being cursed out and talked back to in a violent manner. Teacher 3 explained, "A child cursed me out and when his mother came [in], she was just as rude." Teacher 2 agreed, stating, "Oh yes, that same child was very rude and disrespectful in the hallway; when and whenever he saw me he would try to intimidate me with obscene gestures." Teacher 1 added, "It is bad to get into a shouting match with these kids, when you tell them something to do, they give you word for word." This response was similar to the conclusions of Price (2012), who stated that aggressive disruptive behaviors, such as fights and yelling matches between teachers and students, can alter a positive learning climate and hinder school effectiveness and student achievement.

The teacher participants in this study were very descriptive in sharing their experiences. Teacher 3 offered, "I've experienced students spitting, turning over book shelves, and parents cursing me out because they said their child did not do it." Teacher 4 also talked about her classroom environment being troubled because of an aggressive, disruptive student. Teacher 5 explained:

> I've been hit with a phone and a student turned over tables in the room. I had to get the other students out of harm's way. This same student was a child who would run, so we called him a runner; this exhausted me, I was tired every day.

As teachers talked freely, they frequently ended their answers with "I wonder why?" Many of the participants seemed very disturbed and even shared that they believed that it was getting worse each year. They described the physical and emotional abuse as alarming. The teacher concerns mirror prior research conclusions that there is a pressing need to understand the factors that give rise to and maintain aggressive behaviors in our students (Singh, 2010) and that these behaviors are a growing concern for education stakeholders (Kindiki, 2009).

Teacher 5 talked about and questioned what the children were exposed to on a daily basis in their troubled high crime neighborhoods and was concered for those with an incarcerated parent, as most students were from single-parent homes. Teacher 5 also shared an experience with a parent who was disrespectful and used bad language when talked to about her child, noting, "I could see where this child got this aggressive behavior from." Thomas et al. (2006) stated that schools who tend to have

socioeconomically disadvantaged students will be exposed to high classroom aggressive acts, thus compounding negative influences.

Emotional disorders were suggested by Teacher 4 as a cause of the behaviors. This participant insisted that these students have emotional problems and cannot handle redirection; especially the word *no.* She asserted, "Counselors and social workers are needed to help these children and also as educators, we need to focus on educating the whole child." Campbell (2011) explained that the direction of education more recently has shifted toward displaying a tendency toward a more narrow focus on academic skill testing, while ignoring other aspects of child development. The emergent themes from criterion group are coded and listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Criterion Sample Group Emerging Themes for Interview Question 2

Code	Description
PA	Physical abuse
HT	Hitting
PU	Punched
CU	Cursed
TO	Turning over bookshelves/tables
SP	Spitting
EM	Emotional disorder, very angry

Emergent themes from the focus group. The focus group discussed experiences in terms of physical and verbal abuse as a regular occurrence. The National Center for

Education Statistics (2008) reported about 18% of city schools reported that students act disrespectfully toward teachers at least once a week and often daily.

Teacher A stated, “I have experienced verbal disrespect from students and parents cursing me out.” Teacher B stated, “I have been pushed and cursed out.” Teacher E stated, “I’ve been hit and pushed in the door while a student was kicking me.” However, Teacher E did not report the incidences because she believed nothing would be done; She said this in a careless way, shrugging her shoulders. Pas, Bradshaw, and Mitchell (2011) explained that people who have been persuaded that they cannot accomplish a task tend to give up more quickly.

Teacher C detailed her experiences and how she adapted the classroom:

> I have been hit, cursed out and really too much to recall but after going through it so much in my early years, I had to change my strategies by giving them the freedom to choose things in order for me to survive in the classroom. I learned they did not like authority or taking directions so I tried to make them feel as though they were making their own decisions and it really helped.

She shared her experience and outcomes with pride because she said she learned how to deal with the problems. Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory shares mastery experiences that include both successes and failures. Themes that emerged from the focus group were coded and listed in Table 6.

Table 6

Focus Group Emerging Themes for Interview Question 2

Code	Description
PA	Physical abuse
VA	Verbal abuse
PU	Pushed
HT	Hit
L	Lied about
F	Fighting

Analysis of Interview Question 2 data. Teachers' experiences relating to student aggression on a day-to-day basis provided additional insight in answering research question 1. The participants described their experiences as emotionally and physically exhausting. Mosley and Taylor (2011) explained that teachers dealing with disruptive students reported the situations were among the most difficult and stressful of their professional lives. Garegae (2001) stated that student aggression has a negative effect on teacher self-efficacy. The results in Table 7 are an indication of the seriousness of these behaviors that teachers are dealing with daily.

Table 7

Student Abusive Behaviors

Codes	Descriptions	Criterion sample %	Focus group %
PA	Physical abuse	99	80
VA	Verbal abuse	99	70
PU	Pushed	99	60
HT	Hit	99	70
CU	Cursed at	90	60
SP	Spit on	80	10
F	Fighting	70	60

Summary of Interview Question 2 findings. Teachers shared what they were dealing with on a day-today basis in order to prove that they were in need of help, especially during the yelling in class, which brought about more disorder. Riley, Lewis, and Wang (2012) explained that teachers dealing with aggressive students are sometimes provoked into yelling in order to gain control of the situation. Teachers said when students were angry, they would do more negative things in order to cause more disruptions in the learning. Farmer, Xie, Cairns, and Hutchins (2007) talked about students who demonstrate aggressive, disruptive behaviors as those who influence and interrupt positive classroom order, which impedes student learning and results in loss of instructional time.

Differences between the group experiences included being spit on, which was noted in the criterion sample at a rate of 80%, compared to a much lower rate of 10% among the participants in the focus group. In addition, demeaning verbal abuse such as cursing and disrespectful tones was experienced by 90% of the criterion sample and by 60% of the focus group. Both the criterion and focus groups overwhelmingly agreed that they had definitely experienced student aggression and revealed how it interrupted learning for other students in their classrooms, supporting conclusions by Chen and Weikart (2008), who described the direct and indirect effects of school disorder on student academic achievement.

Teachers in both groups had experienced student aggression at alarming rates. These acts were disrupting learning as well as tiring the teachers, who had to deal with fighting. The teacher participants explained that fighting needed more administrative

attention because most of the students were not suspended for their actions, but rather, often remained in school for time out periods, after which they were sent back to class.

Interview Question 3. The third interview question asked, How did the experience affect or influence your self–efficacy and did the school's disciplinary procedures resolve the problem? This question was constructed to probe into how the experiences affected participants' teaching ability, attitudes, emotions, and effectiveness. It explored teachers' self efficacy in dealing with student disruptive behaviors and how the school's disciplinary procedures assisted with these behaviors. Teacher efficacy is very important and their confidence in their ability may affect their professional and personal self-esteem (Garegae, 2001; Bandua, 1977; Split, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

***Emergent themes from the criterion sample*.** The criterion sample group emotionally spoke about how dealing with these aggressive experiences was very tiring. Teacher 5 described:

> Yes, the school disciplinary procedure resolved the problem. The student was moved to another school self- contained class, but this took a full year before something was done and I was totally exhausted. I couldn't teach the rest of my class the way I wanted to, I took more days off and really wanted to quit.

However, Teacher 1 stated, "I stopped reporting disciplinary problems because it did no good; plus, I was tired of dealing with it." When talking about the school's disciplinary assistance, it seemed as if they did not realize that reporting defiant behaviors would be used as supported collected data (Clonan, McDougal, Clark, & Davision, 2007). Rusby, Taylor, and Foster (2007) explained disciplinary referrals are important information used

in early detection and monitoring of disruptive students. Again, these teachers did not see it this way. Many teachers stated that the school's disciplinary procedures through referrals did not help, and that, in their opinion, nothing was done. Teacher 4 asserted, "No, these students repeatedly disrupted the class without any consequences. It is very frustrating to deal with." Lack of motivation is explained in the self-efficacy theory by Bandura(1977) as people tending to avoid threatening situations that they feel exceed their coping skills.

Teacher 1 said, "The process of documentation took a lot of time and nothing was going to be done anyway." Teacher 2 also stated, "I had a student who gave other teachers problems too, everybody knew about it, even the administration, but nothing was done. I felt like I had too many of the same kinds of kids in my class and how was I suppose to teach them?" These teachers were sharing the stress of dealing with aggressive disruptive students and the effect it had on them as teachers. Teacher 1 contended, "These situations made [her] feel ineffective; didn't want to come to work, and took more days off." Teacher 2 said, "I never took my class on field trips, dealing with these students changed my attitude about teaching; I felt alone." The American Federation of Teachers (2010) explained that teachers feel a sense of abandonment when they perceived there was no help dealing with disruptive students.

The teacher participants felt that class size had a big influence, negatively affecting their efficacy. When teachers continually deal with disruptive, aggressive students, academic achievement is minimized and the learning climate is challenged (Ruiz-Oivares, Pino, & Herruzo, 2010). Tienkan and Achilles (2009) explained that class

size with large disruptive behaviors can obstruct student achievement. All the teachers in this study stated they were worried about teaching time lost in dealing with disruptive students. Teacher 3 noted in a professional voice:

> I felt unfairly treated; too many kids like this in my class and [I] spent too much time on aggressive behaviors and not enough [time] teaching. I tried to keep high expectations for my students, but these problems were too much. My efficacy was challenged and I constantly questioned how I could be accountable for teaching if I had to deal with these aggressive disruptive acts on a continuous basis, plus the school's disciplinary procedures did not resolve the problems.

Thomas, Bierman, and Powers (2011) similarly found that too many disruptive students in a class can increase the level of aggression.

Teachers reported a change in their routine from taking field trips because of disruptive students. Teacher 2 said, "I stopped taking the class on field trips because anything could set these kids off and when they became frustrated and angry, they were out of control and I did not want to deal with it publically." This teacher implied that when these students became frustrated and angry, the aggression would begin, as was discussed by founding theorists Dollard et al.(1949), who wrote that all aggression is the result of frustration.When these frustrated, aggressive students are not disciplined, their behaviors could be imitated by other students (Garandeau, Ahn, & Rodkin, 2011). Tremblay (2010) explained that children learn disruptive, aggressive behaviors (opposition, defiance, rule-breaking, and stealing) from their environment. The rates of domestic violence continue to climb with evidence suggesting that on an annual basis,

10-20% of American school children experience domestic violence in some form (Carrell & Hoekstra, 2009), and children from troubled homes and families exhibit significant increases in misbehavior.

The teacher participants discussed how these disruptions affected them in varied ways. Teacher 5 noted that she "did not want to come to work. [There was] too much dealing with problems instead of teaching; [I] felt tired all the time, emotionally drained." Similarly, Teacher 2 described:

> My teaching methods changed; I never took my class on field trips, never did extra fun activities because I knew those with aggression could be set off for no reason. [I] lost a lot of teaching time, I felt these students suffered no consequences, and I had to suffer with them. Plus, I felt the administration allowed them to do all of these negative things.

Teacher 1 also stated:

> I took more mental health days off. [I] was disappointed in the disciplinary procedures because of the lengthy documentation; these students were never removed. [I] did not want to come to work because I dreaded dealing with these aggressive students everyday

Murphy, Theodore, Aloiso, Alric-Edwards, and Hughes (2007) stated children who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors in the classroom force the teacher to focus on classroom management rather than on classroom learning, limiting class instructional time for academics. Efficacy is extremely important, as pointed out in Bandura's description of self-efficacy as beliefs that determine how individuals think and feel, are

motivated, and behave. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory explained that mastery experiences stem from both successes and failures. These teachers were expressing a need to master their failures as perceived by them. There were many codes and themes that emerged from the criterion sample group as reflected in Table 8.

Table 8

Criterion Sample Emerging Themes

Code	Description
LT	Felt loss in teaching time
FA	Felt alone
CS	Class size too large with same behaviors
DO	Took days off work
NF	Attitude changed; no field trips
EFC	Self-efficacy was challenged
TD	Felt Tired
SDH	School's discriplinary helped
SDNH	School's disciplinary did not help
DNR	Did not report to school's disciplinary

Emergent themes from the focus group. The focus group shared similar self-efficacy viewpoints as the criterion sample (tired, felt alone, and loss of teaching time), and similarly discussed a lack of reporting ofdisciplinary problems. Teacher A said, "I knew nothing would be done about the behaviors, so I never reported it." Teacher D stated, "I reported it sometimes, but I knew nothing would be done," and Teacher E said "I knew nothing would be done so I didn't report it." These statements aligned with Pas, Bradshaw, and Mitchell's (2011) explanation of teacher self-efficacy, stating those who

are persuaded that they can't accomplish a task tend to give up and avoid challenges; especially in reporting student referrals, because they internalize this as an acknowledgement of failure.

Teacher D was upset about the fact that she was made to feel responsible for these behaviors, as well as the perceived lack of administrative support for teachers. "I felt that I was without support. The administration told me that I was wrong and supported the student. This really bothered me and I felt as if I was a failure." Mansfield and Woods (2012) discussed teacher efficacy as personal traits of teacher effectiveness, beliefs or self perceptions, and how these values have become an important field of research today because teachers' feelings and emotional well being are vital to student academic success.

Many in the focus group discussed the loss of teaching time when dealing with disruptive behavior and were worried about other students' academic well being. Most talked about feeling tired and alone, but some felt they had to survive in the classroom and not bother with referrals because nothing would be done. Teacher C asserted, "I know I teach well and do a great job with my kids, so it did not bother me because I knew and understood why these students were angry due to their emotional problems and what they were exposed to at home." Thomas et al. (2006) suggested that schools in high-crime neighborhoods tend to have socioeconomically disadvantaged students who will have an increased exposure to aggression in the classroom, which compounds other negative influences. Teacher D stated that "I had to start learning new ways of dealing with aggressive students because I was the one in the classroom who had to figure out

ways of handling it." Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory connects to this teacher's perception of mastering a situation and producing a positive outcome. Codes and themes that emerged from this group discussion are listed in Table 9.

Table 9

Focus Group Emerging Themes

Code	Description
LT	Felt loss in teaching time
FA	Felt alone
CS	Class size too large with same behaviors
DO	Took days off work
NF	Attitude changed; no field trips
EFC	Self-efficacy was challenged
TD	Felt tired
SDH	School's disciplinary helped
SDNH	School's disciplinary did not help
DNR	Did notreport to school's disciplinary

Analysis of Interview Question 3 data. The focus group expressed feelings of tiredness when dealing with ongoing disruptive behaviors. They emphasized that the loss in teaching time hampered learning for all students, and they felt they had not accomplished what they were hired to do. Disappointment in leadership also affected self efficacy because of insinuations of their ineffective teacher-leader role in the classroom, which was interpreted as their role in creating the problem.

Table 10 provides the results from both groups. These results show a similarity with both groups of teachers feeling overwhelmed, and with concerns of teaching time lost when dealing with aggressive disruptive behaviors.

Table 10

Results from Criterion Sample and Focus Group

Coding	Description	Criterion sample (%)	Focus group (%)
LT	Felt loss in teaching time	100	100
FA	Felt alone	90	90
CS	Class size too large with same behaviors	90	80
DO	Took days off work	30	20
NF	Attitude changed, no field trips	30	10
EFC	Self-efficacy was challenged	90	70
TD	Felt tired	90	60
SDH	School's disciplinary helped	5	30
SDNH	School's disciplinary did not help	90	60
DNR	Did not report to school's Disciplinary	70	40

Summary of Interview Question 3 findings. Both groups shared how dealing with student aggression affected their professional performance: Thirty percent had a change in their attitude about field trips, 70% definitely felt their efficacy or effectiveness was challenged, 90% felt the school disciplinary procedures did not help, and 90% felt tired and alone, but significantly, 100% felt a loss in teaching time. These rates indicate that teachers are in need of help in order to fulfill their responsibilitites of ensuring academic excellence or all students. Ninety percent of the participants in this study reported low efficacy when dealing with aggressive acts because they felt hopeless and

alone. Pas et al. (2011) stated that people who have been persuaded that they can't accomplish a task tend to give up more quickly and avoid challenges altogether. This low efficacy connects to Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, which infers efficacy as being the way people percieve themselves. Garegae (2001) stated that aggression has effects on teacher self-efficacy. Importantly, 100% of both groups reported a loss in teaching time and 30% in the criterion sample and 20% in the focus group took more days off of work as a result of dealing with these acts on a regular basis.

The school disciplinary procedures was reported as not working by both groups at a rate of 90% by the criterion sample and 60% by the focus group. Both groups stated they never reported the incidences because they knew nothing would be done. Pas et al. (2011) explained that office discipline referrals were increasingly used as data to monitor student behavior problems, but these teachers were not reporting these problems.

The teachers noted that because of student aggressive disruptive acts, teachers restricted educational field trips. A total of 30% of the criterion sample reported limiting field trips, but the focus group had a much smaller rate of 10%. Teachers in both groups said they did not want to deal with behavior problems in public because the class sizes were too large and this was a serious problem. Burch, Theoharis, and Rauscher, (2010) posited that class-size reduction (CSR) enables better management of disruptive behaviors. Too many disruptive students in a class can increase the level of classroom aggression, as was revealed in the study by Thomas, Bierman, and Powers (2011).

The criterion group shared what they would like to see in the future. Each teacher gave specific details of the help they needed in the classroom as it connected to their experience. The following examples offer insight into teacher needs moving forward:

Teacher 1: Enforce zero tolerance: only 3 referrals for continuous disruptive behaviors

Professional training on disruptive aggressive behaviors for teachers

Lower class size

Discipline students who misbehave constantly

Teacher 2: Assist teachers by adding social workers to help with their emotional problems

Maintain no tolerance and use SRO so they can see the seriousness

Teacher 3: More administrative help in classroom

Add social workers for these disturbed kids

Increase guidance support

Lower class size

Discipline students when sent to office

Teacher 4: Administrative support for teachers when confronted by parents

Give students examples of good or correct behavior

Lower class size

Use SRO at schools when dealing with these behaviors

Teach us to help each other

Teacher 5: Lower class size

Get social workers in here to deal with these kids

Train teachers on how to work with aggressive students

The criterion group discussed the need for SROs' assistance during physical altercations in order to help maintain a productive and safe learning environment. MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) explained that students from schools with healthy learning environments score higher on standardized tests, but disruptive behavior impedes student learning and obstructs the positive school climate. Teachers talked about having to deal with the same students who always fight, hit, or throw books in class, and the SRO was never included in the disciplinary procedure unless a weapon was included. However, Teacher 1 stated that no one has realized that these kids are not only using their verbal abuse, thay are using their hands and body as a weapon.

The teachers also talked about training teachers with best practices in dealing with aggressive, disruptive behaviors during professional development opportunities, as well as through enhanced administrative support. They shared their need for implementing effective strategies through professional suggestions and proven methods. Shawer (2010) defined professional development as educational opportunities offered in the form of training courses, seminars, and workshops, which aid in the ability of teachers to remain up to date on current strategies, techniques, methods, and trends to addressing similar classroom challenges.

One discrepant finding was that teachers did not realize reporting student problems through school referrals helped administrators to guide preventative efforts in the school setting. Clonan, McDougal, Clark, and Davison (2007) explained how these

data could be used to inform and to aid in the decision making and problems solving of administrative teams. But if teachers do not report problems or incidences, then the administration cannot support them, and many stated that they did not report incidences. Professional training would emphasize the need to report incidents or to maintain records of incidents.

Their last discussion was about lowering class size, because too many of the same disruptive students were together and teachers asked for administrative support to enforce zero tolerance.

Table 11 shows the emerging themes from the criterion group as needing professional training, including SRO in disciplinary procedure and lower class size and enforcning zero tolerance for disruptive behaviors.

Table 11

Emerging Themes for Interview Question 3: Criterion Group

Code	Description
ZT	Enforce zero tolerance
PT	Professional training on aggressive behaviors
CS	Lower class size
AS	Administrative support for teachers
SRO	Use of school resource officers

The focus group shared similar concerns and suggestions as the criterion sample.

Teacher A:Use SRO to help with violent and threatening behaviors

Make part of weekly staff meetings to share techniques

Teacher B: Teach students self control, maybe the guidance counselor

Make referrals easy to complete and do something about the problem

Teacher C: Teach students how to work with others

Change disciplinary procedures

Teach teachers to teach teachers

Teacher D: Train teachers in professional developments about aggressive behaviors and techniques

Make SRO more available in the school disciplinary procedures

Change referrals to only a few before suspension

Teacher E: Principals need to support teachers

Train teachers to help each other

Teacher F: Use SRO more, especially when it gets too bad for teachers to handle

Train teachers to be stronger teachers so they can help other teachers

Teachers talked about having to deal with too many disruptive behaviors in a large class and how the disruptions negatively affected student achievement. Burch, Theoharis, and Rauscher (2010) stated CSR enables management of disruptive behaviors. Harrfitt (2012) noted the effects of the reduction of class size at the secondary school level and suggested that smaller class sizes may indeed promote improved teaching, learning, and behavior in the classroom.

This group agreed with needing SRO in the disciplinary process as well as enforcing zero tolerance, but really emphasized the need for administrative support for teachers. They also emphasized the need for reducing disciplinary paper work, but Rusby, Taylor, and Foster (2007) explained disciplinary referrals are important

information used in early detection and monitoring of disruptive students. However, their interest in increased guidance intervention did support Singh's (2010) description as a pressing need to understand the factors that give rise to and maintain aggressive behaviors in our students. The focus group's emerging codes and themes are listed in Table 12.

Table 12

Emerging Themes for Interview Question 3: Focus Group

Code	Description
ZT	Zero tolerance
PT	Professional training on aggressive behavior
SRO	Use school resource officers
CS	Lower class size
DP	Guidance support for students
AS	Adminstrative support for teachers

Research Question 1 Analysis

These results show many similarities as well as differences between the criterion sample and focus group participant responses. The similarities shown in Table 11 and 12 indicated that both groups expressed the need to train teachers in dealing with aggressive disruptive behaviors, the need to lower class sizes, the need to use SRO in the disciplinary procedures, and that there is a definite need for zero tolerance through administrative support. Both groups unanimously agreed that SROs were needed to work with aggressive, disruptive students.

The implications from the findings in Table 13 are that teachers want to be trained in handling aggressive, disruptive student behaviors, they see a need to lower class size, and express the need for administrative support.

Table 13

Perceived Needs to Support Teachers in Dealing with Disruptive, Aggressive Students

Code	Description	Criterion Sample	Focus Group
ZT	Enforce zero tolerance	100%	80%
PT	Professional training	100%	100%
CS	Lower class size	100%	100%
GS	Increase guidance support	90%	70%
AS	Administrative support	100%	100%
SRO	Use school resource officers	100%	100%

Summary. Answering the first research question, which asked what can be done to help teacher's dealing with disruptive aggressive students, teachers agreed unanimously that they needed training through professional development in managing disruptive aggressive behaviors. All participants (both criterion sample and focus group) agreed that class size reduction was needed in order to maintain control of the class and limit the replication of unwanted behaviors, as disruptive acts might lead other students to imitating these negative behaviors (Garandeau et al., 2011). The teacher participants also all agreed that there is a need for SROs to assist the school counselor with disciplinary problems in order to help gain control of aggressive students and to professionally work them through their aggressive episodes. The criterion sample and focus group agreed that zero tolerance was needed for continued disruptions and the teachers felt support from

the administration was also necessary for success. Thus, in answer to research question 1's concern for supporting teachers with disruptive and aggressive behaviors, it was determined that teachers need professional training in behavior management, class size reduction, implementation of zero tolerance policies, and a school resource officers to assist with aggressive students.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, How can social learning help students with aggressive disruptive behaviors? To address the second research question, participant responses to interview question 4 were analyzed. Findings revealed themes relevant to social learning.

Interview Question 4. Teachers were asked to give their professional perspectives about social learning in terms of whether or not it could help aggressive students. Teachers eagerly communicated their opinions and perspectives in both groups about social learning. The criterion sample group agreed that students needed to be taught how to behave, which aligns with Brannon's (2008) research on character education in the school curriculum, as many students are coming to school with problematic behaviors and attitudes.

Emergent themes from criterion sample. All teachers in this group agreed that the students were in need of learning models of appropriate behavior modeling. Teacher 1 suggested, "It can model the right behaviors for these students." Teacher 2 stated, "Social learning can help to change their focus, teach self control and give them another perspective to think about." Likewise, Teacher 3 asserted, "Social learning can teach

them how to work with others and see other positive perspectives." Teacher 4 concurred, "It could show and demonstrate appropriate behaviors and responses," and Teacher 5 noted, "Live model demonstrations of kindness and other acts of good citizenship would be good for them, and it could help them learn how to communicate instead of fighting."

Each suggested class time devoted to teaching students prosocial behavior, such as getting along with others and showing respect for each other and the teachers. Behavioral learning connects to the conceptual framework of this research. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory stated that people learn through modeling and observational learning. Gregory and Weinstein (2008) suggested that a fun, prosocial learning tool in behavioral learning for students could be games. Zhang (2011) found children's stories to be very effective in improving social and friendship skills in young children. Leffert, Brady, and Siperstein (2009) also shared that teachers could daily infuse social skills into the curriculum with a 20-minute learning lesson that focused on understanding individual feelings, problem solving, anger management, how to get along with others, and learning appropriate school behavior (Works Clearinghouse, 2011). These models are necessary because, as noted by Teacher 4, "These students have no examples of good or correct behavior because no one is teaching them. Their neighborhoods are filled with drugs, cursing, fighting, stealing and crime and many of the parents are in jail or prison."

Again, teachers pointed out lower class size as an answer to escalating student aggression because too many of the same kinds of unwanted behaviors were mixed into one class. These large classes need training in social learning. Classrooms containing a large numbers of disruptive aggressive students (proportionally) diminish the overall

classroom learning experience (Thomas et al., 2008). Class size reduction (CSR) enables management of disruptive behaviors; CSR has emerged as a successful policy approach for closing the achievement gap (Burch, Theoharis, & Rauscher, 2010), and these strategic initiatives have evidenced positive effects, both short and long-term, at the elementary level (Tienkan & Achilles 2009). Duvall et al.'s (2010) study revealed that when disruptive students were minimized in the classroom, academic response was much higher and inappropriate behaviors were much lower. Social norms evident in the classroom that support and encourage aggression may promote aggressive behavior and peer acceptance of this behavior and the students who promote aggression via social synchrony by modeling the behavior (Farmer et al., 2007).

Teacher 2 stated, "There is a desperate need for guidance to also teach behavioral classes during their time with the students. They should have lessons on negative and positive behaviors, keep track of troubled kids and visit them regularly in order to monitor their behaviors, as well as create a behavior management plan to help them assess themselves." Teacher 4 stated, "We cannot do this by ourselves, the guidance counselors could really help with teaching appropriate behaviors though social learning lessons." This supports Whiston, Tai, Rahardja and Eder's (2011) emphasis on the effectiveness of school counseling interventions in helping disruptive students in schools. Brana and Brott (2011) explained collaborations between teachers and school counselors are proven key elements in intervention for disruptive students. Criterion teachers' emerging themes and codes are identified and listed in Table 14.

Table 14

Emerging Themes of Social Learning: Criterion Sample

Code	Description
CE	Character education
LM	Learning models
SC	Teach self control
PB	Teach prosocial behaviors
DSL	Daily short social lessons
LG	Develop large group behaivoral lessons
GC	Guidance counselor behavior plan

Emergent themes from focus group. The focus group talked at length about the need for social learning. Teacher A stated, "Social learning can help them learn how to respect others." Teacher B shared, "If we teach them each day, they can learn how to behave appropriately, but it needs to be part of the curriculum." Similarly, Teacher C noted, "These kids really need to learn how to get along with others because they come from negative backgrounds." Teacher D offered, "Social learning can teach them how to interact with others," and Teacher E added, "It can help them to realize that there is an acceptable behavior that is expected in public because they cannot do what they don't know." Teacher F noted, "These students will get the chance to see what appropriate behavior looks like." The most common model for social learning skills involved modeling, role-play, or rehearsal and feedback, which connects to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Play activities give the learner opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned and to try out new positive social skills. Couper (2011) suggested the

playground as an excellent place to demonstrate social learning skills, particularly since teachers can offer immediate verbal praise when the desired behavior is demonstrated. Teacher D stated,

> These students have no examples of good or correct behavior because no one is teaching them. Their neighborhoods are filled with drugs, cursing, fighting, stealing, and crime and many of the parents are in jail or prison. They talk about prison as if it's college life.

Costle and Harrington (2012) emphasized the need for character education due to a lack of family structure and appropriately modeled social skills. Community violence is connected to the negative influences now reaching schools (The National Gang Intelligence Center, 2009). Administrators and teachers should know the students' culture and their neighborhoods in order to observe what they are regularly exposed to as their model for behavior (Sparapani, Seo, & Smith, 2011). "All they understand about communication is cursing, yelling, and threats" (Teacher E). Schools in high-crime neighborhoods tend to have students of low socioeconomic status who are often in classrooms with increased prevalence of classroom aggression, which compounds the existing negative influences (Thomas et al., 2006). Table 15 reports the emerging themes and codes from the focus group discussions.

Table 15

Emerging Themes of Social Learning: Focus Group

Code	Description
CE	Character education
LM	Learning models
SC	Teach self-control
PB	Teach prosocial behaviors
CS	Communication skills

Analysis of Interview Question 4. The focus group agreed that social learning was needed to help aggressive students alter their behavior through modeled behavioral activities. The focus group also listed similar skills as the criterion sample and added communications skills. Table 16 shows how teachers differientiated social models for student learning. Every teacher in both groups rated character education and teaching self-control as a significant element and 90% shared the need for guidance counselors to help with teaching appropriate behaviors by developing behavioral plans to help students track their progress.

Table 16

Social Learning Model Differentiation

Code	Description	Criterion Sample	Focus Group
CE	Character education	100%	100%
LM	Learning models	80%	100%
SC	Teach self control	100%	80%
PB	Teach pro social behaviors	100%	90%
GC	Guidance counselor behavior plan	90%	100%
CS	Communication skills	90%	30%

Summary of analysis for Research Question 2. All teachers in both groups stated social learning through modeling could help aggressive students. This significant association to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory infers that students learn through modeling and observational learning. Bandura proposed three models of observation of which social learning could be inferred, which was also listed by the teachers: live, verbal, and symbolic. These models were described by teachers as demonstrating the desired behavior as a live model. Verbal instructions could be given by the guidance counselor, who provides a detailed description of the desired behavior, while instructing the student in how to engage in the positive behavior described. Lastly, the symbolic model describes modeling in the media (i.e., character models of behavior in movies and television, off the internet, in literature, and on the radio), using stories of either real or fictional characters who serve to demonstrate the desired behaviors. The participants of this research study felt that social learning would significantly benefit aggressive students.

In answer to Research Question 2, how social learning can help students with aggressive disruptive behaviors, teachers expressed their beliefs that social learning could take place through modeling the desired behaviors and through character building programs in which students would learn, see, and do, helping to lessen aggressive acts in the classroom. Also, participants suggested that guidance counselors would help by working individually and in large groups to teach behavior management plans to help students assess and keep track of their aggressive acts.

Evidence of Quality

This study followed various strategies to ensure the data are accurate and valid (Lodico et al., 2010). Triangulation used multiple data sources, such as sample interviews, focus group discussion, and member checking (Merriam, 2009), which allowed for the inclusion of various perceptions for analysis, supporting the trustworthiness of this qualitative research study. Maxwell (2005) proposed that the use of member checking is critical to the ability to rule out possible misinterpretation of the meaning behind participant responses and perspectives. All of the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions were initially recorded and then transcribed verbatim, and then the data were organized through continued reading, rereading, and coding. In order to demonstrate the triangulated sources in relation to the research questions, a matrix of tables was created to provide illustrations of the questions and results. Appropriate evidences occur in the appendices, including a research participant consent letter and interview questions.

Conclusion

Teacher participants shared their struggles dealing with disruptive, aggressive students on a day-to-day basis. They talked about anger frustrations demonstrated in the classroom, which supported the conceptual framework of the study. Dollard et al. (1939) developed the frustration-aggression theory, which suggested that social learning could help to lessen these aggressive acts. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory supported observational learning. The study results are consistent with the research of these theorists. Researchers acknowledge that classroom teachers are facing a difficult challenge in dealing with disruptive, aggresive behaviors and that punishing aggressive acts may prove temporarily effective, but understanding and implementing ways to deal with frustration is a vital preemptive strategy in preventing aggressive behaviors in the long term (Gilhuly, 2011).

Grumm, Hein, and Fingerie (2011) stated that the topic of aggressive behavior has received much research interest in schools, due to the causative relationship between aggressive behavior and maladaptive social outcomes through fearful classroom environments and hinderence of student learning. From the findings of this present study, it is evident that student aggressive disruptive behaviors need immediate attention as teacher efficacy is at risk. The research questions in this study were addressed through exploring teacher experiences with student aggression, shedding light on this phenomenon and investigating if social learning could help aggressive students through behavioral learning.

Summary

In this section, data analysis methods, findings revealed from the analysis, and a discussion of the findings have been presented. The findings offered in this chapter and realized through the analysis of the data collected in this study are consistent with the results of other related studies on student aggressive disruptive behaviors by Grumm et al. (2011) and Gilhuly (2011). In addition, the impact of teacher efficacy in dealing with disruptive aggressive behaviors has been explored.

Data findings were described and presented in tables. Research question 1 asked what can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive aggressive students. Both participant groups stated the need for professional training for teachers in aggression, zero tolerance for continued disruptive students, addition of school resource officers to help with aggressive students, and class size reduction, because of too many of the same kinds of behaviors in the same classroom.

Research question 2 asked how social learning can help aggressive students. All the teacher participants agreed that aggressive students were in need of social learning by teacher modeling of the desired behavior; observational learning through media, videos and games; character education to teach kind and respectful manners; and behavioral management by school counselors to help aggressive students track their behaviors.

In Section 5, the implications of the findings, limitations to this study and recommended actionable changes will be discussed.

Section 5: Implications of the Findings and Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand classroom teachers' daily lived experiences with aggressive disruptive behaviors.. The participants in this study included a criterion sample group of five teachers, in which all participants reported their direct experience with aggressive student behaviors in face-to-face individual interviews. Additional perspectives on aggressive disruptive student behaviors were gathered from a focus group of six teachers who work in the same school district, but who may or may not have had direct experience with these behaviors.

This purpose of this section is to review the issue, research questions, and findings and to present the interpretation of these findings within the context of prior research and the conceptual frameworks, as well as to provide insight into implications of the findings toward social change and related recommendations for practice and further research. In addition, in this section, I offer my reflections on the experience of conducting the research and provide a concluding statement. The following subsection will focus on discussing the research questions that guided the study and how the findings of this study address these research questions.

Steps in data collection included setting the boundaries for the study and using open-ended interview questions to elicit participants' views. The interview guides were used to stick to the topic of aggressive, disruptive behaviors, but remaining open ended so as to avoid limiting participant responses. This flexibility allowed for the questions to be tailored to the specific context of the individual interviews and to the people interviewed

(Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). During the individual, face-to-face interviews, the criterion-sample participants shared their lived experiences with student aggression, and the focus group discussion helped to identify common experiences, reveal themes, and to understand the essence of the experience for all participants. Triangulation was done through member checking, face-to-face interviews, and focus group discussion. The forms of data collection were journal notation of discussions, interviews, and audiotaped conversations. I transcribed all notes to be useful in exploring this historical information.

Key methods for data analysis were categorizing incidents and episodes into what happened, what was done to correct it, what could have been done to prevent it, and how to help to diminish these aggressive behaviors (Creswell, 2007). Narrations of the experiences were presented in tables or discussion. The language of the participants guided the development of coding and category labels. These codes and categories were used to compare and contrast information. The findings of this research study suggest that teachers are in need of administrative support; professional training with strategies and methods for dealing with student aggressive, disruptive behaviors; class size reduction to limit large numbers of aggressive students in one class; social learning for disruptive students; and school resource officiers and counselors assistance with physical incidents and emotional disturbances that interrupted the classroom learning environment.

Research Questions

1. What can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive, aggressive students?
2. How can social learning help students with aggressive disruptive behaviors?

These research questions are examined and results are interpreted within the context of the conceptual frameworks used to gain understanding of aggressive, disruptive behaviors was the frustration-aggression theory (Dollard et al., 1939) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Dollard et al. (1939) theorized that all aggression stems from frustration. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory identified observational learning through behavioral modeling, supporting learned aggression among students through observation and modeling in the classroom.

Interpretation of Findings

This section will address both research questions and cover all data, while discussing the relationship to the conceptual framework and the practical applications of the findings.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, What can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive aggressive students? From the analysis of the interview and focus group data, regardless of grouping, teachers revealed the perceived need for training in handling aggressive, disruptive student behaviors, smaller class sizes, and administrative support. Each of these needs are discussed independently.

Professional training. Teachers were very specific in detailing what could be done to help them in the classroom in handling aggressive acts of students. Both groups unanimously agreed that professional training was needed for their survival in the classroom. Alberto and Troutmand (2009) contended that classroom teachers are facing a difficult challenge in dealing with problem behaviors. Teachers in this present study

stated they were in need of supportive professional training offering teachers proven strategies, methods, and research to help support best practices in dealing with aggressive behaviors. Aggressive behavior is a current and relevant research topic given the support for a causative relationship between violence and/or aggressive behavior and the many maladaptive social disorders present among students in the schools and creating classroom environments in which students are fearful (Grumm et al., 2011). Prior research has suggested that rather than punishing these aggressive acts, attempts should be made to understand the causes behind the behavior and implement preemptive measures that will serve as a long lasting advantage, such as early behavioral learning (Gilhuly, 2011).

Zero tolerance. The criterion sample group all agreed that school districts need to enforce a zero tolerance policy because the continual class disrupters were usually readmitted into the classroom with little correction or consequence. In June of 2006, the legislature for the state of South Carolina passed the Safe School Climate Act with the intent to protect the health and welfare of South Carolina school children by improving their learning environment (Troy, 2010). Teacher participants believed the other students in the classroom deserved to be protected from these harmful behaviors. Ruiz-Oivares, Pino, and Herruzo (2010) supported this concern that aggressive, disruptive behavior engenders a fearful climate for other students in the class, impeding student achievement and interrupting instructional time.

Teachers reported experiences with aggressive, disruptive behaviors that resulted in high levels of physical attacks. An average of 90% of both groups reported physical

altercations by students, such as hitting, pushing, spitting, and fighting. Among the criterion sample particpaints, 99% reported physical attacks on teachers that consisted of pushing and hitting, and 80% reported being spat upon. In contrast, among the focus group participants, 80% reported physical abuse and 60% reported being pushed, while only 10% reported the experience of being spat upon. Among both groups, 60% reported that their students were involved in some sort of fighting. Verbal abuse included cursing as an indication of disrespect towards teacher authority; in all, 90% of the sample participants and 60% of the focus group participants reported they experienced rude acts of cursing. Most of the teacher participants (80%) reported that their students spit, hit, pushed, and used physical and verbal abuse along with fighting throughout the day. The exhaustion of dealing with these behaviors daily caused many problems with teachers' sense of efficacy. Teachers felt that zero tolerance of rude acts would send a message to other students that these behaviors would not be tolerated.

Class size reduction. All teachers reported loss in teaching time as a result of aggressive, disruptive behaviors among the students. The participants felt class size was too large and when coupled with dealing with daily aggressive behaviors, the teachers felt they lost invaluable teaching time. Powers and Bierman (2012) proved a relationship between high levels of classroom aggressive disruptive behavior and proximal peer relations, as being too close to misbehaviors. Researchers have agreed that class size is essential in reducing the achievement gap (Burch, Theoharis, & Rauscher, 2010; Tienkan & Achilles, 2009); however, too many disruptive students in one classroom can increase levels of classroom aggression (Thomas et al., 2011). Field trips were reported as

restricted or minimal due to large class sizes with students with aggressive behaviors. Differences in reports were noted, as 30% of the criterion sample group noted class reduction, but only 10% of the focus group reported the need for class size reduction.

The teachers stated large class sizes disrupted order and helped to foster disruptions. The disruptive behaviors are a threat to school safety (Rosiak, 2009) and have a significant impact on learning processes in the classroom, as academic instructional time is consumed by classroom management issues (Murphy et al., 2007). Research has shown that orderly classrooms promote an environment conducive to optimal pupil achievement (Ediger, 2009; Wilson, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2007); however, aggressive disruptions impede learning for everyone (Tsang, 2007).

The social fabric of the classroom would improve if the number of aggressive students were lowered (Rosiak, 2009). Class size reduction (CRS) has emerged as a policy approach for closing the achievement gap (Burch, Theoharis, & Rauscher, 2010) and these strategies have provided positive effects, in both the long term and short term, in elementary grades (Tienkan & Achilles 2009). The teacher responses in this study support the importance of class size reduction in limiting the negative impact of aggressive, disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

Increase guidance, administrative and SRO support. Teachers felt that guidance counselors needed to be more involved in developing behavioral plans for aggressive students and that the SRO was needed in handling these aggressive behaviors. The criterion sample group reported feeling alone when handling aggressive situations and needed administrative support. Differences were determined between the focus group

and the criterion group regarding the need for increased guidance support for aggressive behaviors. Ninety percent of the criterion group saw a need for support in developing behavior plans for aggressive students, as these behavioral problems continued to exhaust them, while 70% of the focus group agreed that support such as counseling would support teachers with students demonstrating continued aggressive behavior.

Based on these findings, in answering Research Question 1, which asked what can be done to help teachers dealing with disruptive aggressive students, providing teacher professional training in aggression; implementing zero tolerance of aggressive, harmful acts; reducing classroom sizes, which will limit the number of aggressive students; and making it possible for the school resource officer to work with the disciplinary procedures in support of the administration will provide significant ways of supporting teachers on a regular basis. Lastly, to support teachers dealing with disruptive aggressive behaviors, administrators should make it mandatory for school counseling intervention programs by counselors to develop behavioral management plans for aggressive students. Prior research has shown that school counseling interventions are critical in helping disruptive students adjust to school (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011); the findings of this study further support the importance of counseling interventions.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, How can social learning help students with aggressive disruptive behaviors? Social learning is a method of teaching prosocial behavior through observation of others and modeling others' behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses (Bandura, 1977). Social learning involves individual attention,

memory, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). Both groups, at a rate of 100%, noted that character education was needed on a daily basis. Thirty-six states have current laws that mandate or recommend some type of character education in the public schools (Character Education Partnership, 2010). Teachers said these programs would help students discover other ways of handling frustration, anger, disappointment and help to foster positive social skills. Leffert, Brady, and Siperstein, (2009) suggested that teachers could daily infuse social skills into the curriculum with a 20-minute learning lesson that focused on enhancing peer relations through understanding feelings and the feelings of others, anger management strategies, problem solving techniques, and appropriate behavior at school.

For students who exhibit emotional and behavioral disorders, social learning is as important as the academic curriculum (Regan, 2009). Teachers in both groups said learning models, through storytelling, plays, and other kinesthetic approaches would benefit students. Many stories have been specifically written to help children develop socially approved behaviors and values (Zhang, 2011). What Works Clearinghouse (2011) shares 20-minute social learning lessons that teachers can incorporate into their daily lesson plans.

Teachers also discussed media learning as a possible venue for learning, building on students' enjoyment of videos. These videos could serve as a source of modeling and fun while learning. Zhang (2011) and Gul and Vuran (2010) agreed that watching and learning positive behaviors exhibited in appropriate videos can be used as a social learning tool for children.

Social learning could teach students appropriate communication skills and behaviors through positive learning activities and stories that model how to get along and respect others. One difference in the two groups was that 90% of the criterion sample group felt that an improvement in communication skills was needed as a form of social learning because many of their students used foul language; however, only 30% of the focus group were in agreement with that need. Teachers implied that many students were from homes with an incarcerated parent or students lived in crime-ridden communities; therefore, social learning could be the bridge that connects appropriate behaviors and reactions to the classroom setting for those students who have no model at home. Helterbran (2009) argued that schools should actively plan to teach moral development starting at the elementary level in order to avoid leaving character education to chance. Children learn disruptive aggressive behaviors (opposition, defiance, rule-breaking, stealing) from their environment (Tremblay, 2010), and if this is true, then they can also learn positive behaviors from positive social learning in the classroom on a daily basis (Fung & Tsang, 2007) .

The teacher participants continuously expressed academic teaching along with social learning for children because education in recent years has focused only on academics and assessment (Campbell, 2011), but the twenty-first century classroom needs to focus on educating the whole child and finding innovative ways to ensure our children are well-rounded and academically and emotionally stable (Stone, 2007).

Implications for Social Change

Social change envisions education as a chief strength for societal transformation (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The societal transformation that is needed in our schools is a classroom free from student aggressive, disruptive behaviors. Implications for social change are revealed as transforming the school's learning climate, building positive teacher-student relationships, and empowering students to become positive learners in a prosocial learning environment. This transformation will significantly help in promoting constructive learning environments that foster and nurture positive teacher-student relationships in a productive, prosocial learning environment that is free of aggressive, disruptive behaviors, where teachers are free to teach without interruptions and students are empowered to learn and grow.

Walden University's (2009) social change mission emphasizes the process through which ideas are generated and applied, strategy development, and action taken in the promotion of the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, organizations, institutions, communities, cultures, and societies. Social change in this present study included positive teacher student relationships in order to facilitate a productive learning community. These positive relationships carry great value in society because many continuing benefits are associated with school success, such as increased socioeconomic status, general health, and wellbeing (Oreopoulos, 2007). Classrooms that exhibit order, teacher respect, and supportive teacher-student relationships aid in building a positive learning community that contributes to the successful creation and maintenance of a positive school climate. The positive school climate is evident when an emphasis is

placed on cooperation and the support for optimal student achievement in all areas, including academic achievement, social achievement, and psychomotor skill development, within the community of learners (Ediger, 2009). A classroom climate that is defined by an abundance of positive teacher–student interactions that generate a sense of support for the student and fosters the development of skills of self-regulation and conflict-management, which serve to limit student aggression (Wilson, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2007). Positive relationships between teachers and students are a necessary component in student achievement (Way, 2011).

Recommendation for Action

The results of this study suggest the need for five actionable changes for school districts, board members, and administrators. These changes include (a) classroom size reduction, (b) teacher professional training in handling aggressive behaviors in the classroom, (c) social learning programs for students, (d) zero tolerance for continued disruptions, and (e) increased guidance, administrative and school resource officer support. These recommendations can be disseminated in district monthly principal meetings then shared, discussed, and implemented in teacher faculty meetings on a regular basis as a preemptive measure in reducing student disruptive, aggressive behaviors.

I believe it would be extremely beneficial to inform all stakeholders of the findings of this study, including school district board members and administrators. It was my intent in developing this study to create awareness of how student achievement is interrupted due to the increase in student aggressive, disruptive behaviors in the

classroom setting and school climate. However, the most important result of the study was identifying that teachers are in need of professional training dealing with aggressive disruptive behaviors. The findings of this study also indicate that students are in need of social learning and that classrooms should not exceed an acceptable number of aggressive, disruptive students.

Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this study suggest the need for future research in how student aggressive, disruptive behaviors affect classmates. Future studies should examine a larger sample size of teacher responses concerning aggressive, disruptive students and should consider using teacher best practices dealing with aggressive students, specifically, tones used during discipline, mannerisms, and facial expressions.

In thinking about how this study could be implemented differently, one might choose to conduct the study through classroom observations; by experiencing the atmosphere, teacher interactions, student seating, and how students perceived correction. This may give a better idea of why these disruptive behaviors are exhibited. This research was conducted by using teachers only; therefore, in future research, students could be included as participants to identify their perceptions and opinions. In addition, it would be interesting to add parents' viewpoints in the form of a questionnaire to inquire about family history, including the number of people in the home, siblings and age ranges, the amount of time reviewing behavior expectations, and the degree of education of each family member.

Researcher's Reflection

My love for teaching and passion for understanding the struggles with student aggression guided this research study. My first role of significance as a researcher was to make sure the participants felt respected and valued, as well as to ensure the participants understood and were confident knowing that their responses would be reported truthfully with their consent. My other responsibility involved obtaining participants' written agreement to participate in the study. This process of obtaining consent was somewhat difficult and stressful because many teachers were busy with end of term commitments. I made sure all interview questions were open ended, clearly stated, minimal in number, and audiotaped. In addition, I completed journal notations of the interviews as additional data collected for the study. During the interviews, I did not interject my thoughts, opinions, or perspectives in order to avoid guiding the answers or inflicting any personal biases.

I worked hard not to have an affect on the participant teachers by rendering gestures of agreement to what they were saying, but instead maintained a professional demeanor and only asked questions, waited for responses, and then made notes as they answered. I kept my facial expressions accepting, but neutral. I showed interest in what they were saying without interruption. I wanted to make sure that the data reflected the teachers and not my personal thoughts.

As a result of this study, I have learned that student aggression has many dimensions: frustration, anger, and a need to be understood. Also, teachers are doing their best in the classroom dealing with student aggressive, disruptive behaviors, but definitely

need professional training to cope and resolve disruptive issues. I am now more determined to collaborate with colleagues and share my research findings in hopes of bringing best practice strategies into our learning community dealing with student aggression.

Conclusion

The reasons why students exhibit disruptive, aggressive behaviors have been of special interest for me. During the course of this study, many questions were prompted by the cause, effect, and results of these unwanted behaviors. How do teachers interpret aggressive disruptive behaviors? What were their personal experiences? Did they receive any help in dealing with these behaviors? What can be done to help teachers?

When interviewing teachers, it was established that they were overwhelmed with large class sizes, contributing to continuous aggressive disruptions. A majority of the teachers described feeling alone, with evidence of low efficacy as a result. However, these teachers managed to keep going even though they self-identified as burned-out and considering leaving the profession of classroom teaching. I believed teachers are in need of support and assistance in developing best practices in dealing with aggressive behaviors. I was determined to focus my research on supporting their needs.

The teachers in this study felt that students with disruptive, aggressive behaviors were in need of behavioral learning, as many were from poor, crime-ridden communities, and an increasing number of students had at least one incarcerated parent. They identified social behavioral learning as a significant learning tool to help foster appropriate behaviors in the classroom. I believe that a significant number of students we are

teaching in the twenty-first century are dealing with extreme emotional challenges that cause them to react in various aggressive ways. Therefore, it is up to school districts to ensure these students receive a well-balanced educational experience that is not only academically driven, but connected to social learning.

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Appendix A: Criterion Sample Interview Questions

INTERVIEW Interviewer Comments

What is your interpretation or definition of student aggressive behavior?
Response:

What have you experienced in terms of student aggression?
Response:

How did the experience affect or influence your self–efficacy, if at all, and did the school disciplinary procedures resolve the problem?
Response:

How can school boards, administrators and principals help teachers deal with student aggressive disruptive behaviors?
Response:

You stated _____ ; tell me more about that.
Response:

You talked about _____; describe this experience including specific details.
Response:

What else has happened through your experiences with student aggressive behaviors?
Response:

Appendix B: Focus Group Interview Questions

INTERVIEW Interviewer Comments

What is your interpretation or definition of student aggressive behavior?
Response:

Have you experienced student aggression?
Response:

If not, please share your successful strategies.
Response:

If yes, please share your experience?
Response:

How did the school disciplinary procedures resolve the problem?
Response:

Do you feel the disciplinary procedures were appropriate?
Response

What was asked on the school disciplinary form and how did you respond?
Response:

How can school boards, administrators and principals help with student aggression?
Response:

You stated _____ ; tell me more about that.
Response:

You talked about _____; describe this experience including specific details.
Response:

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CERTIFICATIONS

Music Education K-12 1996

EDUCATION

EdD., Administration & Leadership, 2014
Walden University, Minneapolis Minnesota

M.Ed., Divergent Learning, 1999
Columbia College, Columbia, South Carolina

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Richland School District One, Columbia South Carolina (1996-present) Music educator to pupils in grades K-8th. Responsible for planning, delivering and evaluating instruction based on specific goals and objectives. .

Grade Level Chair (August 2010- present) Leader of arts departmental curriculum planning and school wide events.

Highly Qualified Teacher (May 2005-present) Hold a master's degree, fully licensed by the state of South Carolina, and demonstrates content knowledge in music education.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Founder of non profit 501(c) Arts Foundation

Teacher of the year 2000

Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc

Alpha Epsilon Xi Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education

Board Member, SC HIV/AIDS Council