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Lived Experiences of Parents Regarding Their Elementary-Age Child's Exclusion From School Due to Behavioral Problems

Lauren Claire Ferber
Walden University

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Lauren Claire Ferber

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Abstract

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Lauren Claire Ferber

MA, Notre Dame de Namur, 2014

BA, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

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August 2021

Abstract

Disciplinary exclusion, particularly school expulsion, presents a significant challenge to school-age children and their families. Although the impacts of disciplinary exclusion from school on children are well-known, less is known about how this phenomenon affects their parents. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of parents who have a child who has been subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavioral problems in the classroom. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provided the framework for this study. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with 12 parents of children who faced exclusion. Four themes emerged from coding analysis: (a) impact of exclusion on parents, (b) child experience with exclusion, (c) coping strategies after exclusion, and (d) changes in parent–child relationship. The first theme detailed the effects of disciplinary exclusion on aspects of parents' lives, including relationships, career, and personal well-being. The second theme included information on the events leading up to the child's exclusion. The third theme revealed the methods parents used to handle their feelings and reactions to their child's disciplinary exclusion. The fourth theme addressed how the parents attempted to make changes in their parenting methods and how their households were adapted to meet their child's needs. The findings may contribute to positive social change by helping parents and schools reduce disciplinary exclusion through the implementation of more effective strategies for improving children's behavior.

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Dedication

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to the children who struggle in school and to their families.

Thank you to Dr. Balkcom and Dr. Sarkar for your support and guidance throughout this process.

Thank you to Neil, Finley, and Spencer for making the final section of this project entirely enjoyable. You guys sparkle up my life.

A big thanks to the kids and families I work with who have brought me tremendous joy over the years through both good and trying times.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Disciplinary exclusion is one of the many challenges that children with behavioral problems face in school. School suspension and school expulsion are the two most common forms of disciplinary exclusion (Hatton, 2013). These actions can have a detrimental impact on children's academic achievement (Morris & Perry, 2016), their ability to form successful interpersonal relationships (Bailey et al., 2019), their mental health outcomes (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018), and their risk of dropping out of school (Rumberger & Losen, 2016). According to the most recent data available from the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), approximately 2.6 million children received at least one out-of-school suspension in the 2013–2014 school year. Furthermore, the Civil Rights Data Collection (n.d.) demonstrated that 105,000 children were expelled from school due to behavioral issues in the 2015–2016 school year. Disciplinary exclusion, particularly school expulsion, presents a significant challenge to school-age children and their families. Although the effects of school exclusion on children are well documented, little is known about how exclusion impacts parents and the relationship between parents and their children (Hatton, 2018). In the current study, I sought to understand how the parents of children who have been excluded from school for behavioral reasons are affected.

The exploration of the effect of elementary exclusion on parents of children with behavioral problems may inform mental health and school professionals on how to develop policies to increase the positive and healthy development of children in elementary school (see Bailey et al., 2019). Understanding the long-term influences of

disciplinary exclusionary practices on parents may promote the development of more effective intervention strategies to help children and their parents navigate the challenges posed by disciplinary exclusion. The physical health, mental health, and academic outcomes of children who experience challenges such as disciplinary exclusion are negatively impacted (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). Therefore, acquiring a more nuanced understanding of how parents are affected by their child's exclusion from school may help mental health professionals develop more effective interventions for affected families and may help policymakers implement policies that are more effective at combating problematic behavior in school settings.

Chapter 1 provides a brief background of the literature related to disciplinary expulsion in elementary school settings. The present study is then situated within an identified gap in the literature, namely that little research has been conducted regarding the effect of disciplinary expulsion on parents. After identifying the gap in the literature, I outline the purpose of the study and its research questions, describe the theoretical framework, and provide a brief rationale of the methods used. I conclude the chapter by addressing the scope, assumptions, and limitations of the study, as well as the potential social and practical implications of the results.

Background

Discipline in an elementary school setting is typically manifested through classroom rules, negative behavior warnings by teachers, scolding, suspension, and expulsion (Sadik, 2017). Children with behavioral problems are frequently expelled from elementary school settings due to no-tolerance school policies (Somayeh & Mahdieh

Sadat, 2017). Bailey et al. (2019) and Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013) argued that as more U.S. schools adopt a no-excuse educational model, the frequency of elementary school exclusion will increase. This trend presents several negative implications for students and their parents. Several researchers have argued that because the academic classroom is the epicenter of social and behavioral functioning for children, the early school years are critical to the development of children's regulatory and social-emotional skills (Abry et al., 2017; Bailey et al., 2019). These early skills often serve as building blocks for future ones and are interrupted when children are excluded or expelled from school (Bailey et al., 2019).

It is important to understand the factors that can contribute to a child's exclusion from school. Heatly and Votruba-Drzal (2017) investigated how children's relationship with their parents prior to starting first grade can influence their behavioral and self-regulatory skills. By indicating that the parent–child relationship is directly associated with engagement in the first grade, Heatly and Vortruba-Drzal emphasized the important role parents play in incubating their child's early behavioral and self-regulatory skills. Bear et al. (2015) found that a healthy school climate that has the right balance of lovingness and demandingness can reduce the instances of behavioral issues in elementary-age children. Although there have been numerous studies on the classroom factors that influence children's behavior in the classroom (Bear et al., 2015; Sadik, 2017), how children's relationships with their parents influence school behavior (Heatly & Votruba-Drzal, 2017), and how children are affected by disciplinary expulsion (Bailey et al., 2019), comparatively little is known about how parents are impacted by this event

(Hatton, 2018). As a result, I conducted the current study to fill a gap in the literature regarding the effects of disciplinary exclusion on parents by examining the lived experiences of parents who have children who have been suspended or expelled from school for behavioral reasons.

Problem Statement

In the United States, one of the most common forms of exclusionary discipline is elementary suspension (Gage et al., 2018). As a last option, elementary expulsion occurs when a child and their family are asked to leave the school permanently. Expulsion is typically the result of the adoption of a no-excuses education model (Lamboy & Lu, 2017) that is characterized by extended school time, high-stakes assessments, and a zero-tolerance policy to managing and addressing children's behavior (Bailey et al., 2019). The adoption of such a model is becoming more frequent and can have significant short- and long-term impacts on students. Because the early school years are considered to be critical junctures for the development of socio-emotional and regulatory skills, children who are excluded from school are unable to build and maintain the self-regulatory skills that can help them develop successful relationships with adults (Bailey et al., 2019). Disciplinary exclusion can also leave children more vulnerable to the development of negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression (Fernando et al., 2018).

Although the impacts of disciplinary exclusion on children are well-known, less is known about how this phenomenon affects their parents (Hatton, 2018). Nagaratnam and Yeo (2018) found that the parents of children who had been expelled from schools in Malaysia felt confused, surprised, and devastated by their child's expulsion. It is difficult,

however, to transfer these findings to an American context. Furthermore, it is unknown how a child's expulsion can affect the parent–child relationship (Hatton, 2018). Fernando et al. (2018) claimed that parenting can be a determinant in altering the developmental trajectory of internalizing and externalizing behaviors that can result from the development of anxiety and depression linked with expulsion. Therefore, the exploration of the influence of elementary expulsion on the parents of children with behavioral problems may inform mental health and school professionals regarding how to develop policies that aim to increase positive and healthy development of children in elementary school (see Bailey et al., 2019). This study added to the body of knowledge regarding the influence of elementary exclusion on parents who have children with behavioral problems and addressed a gap in the literature surrounding the impact on parents when a child is suspended or expelled.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of parents who have a child who has been subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavioral problems in the classroom. A phenomenological approach was employed to explore and describe the ways in which parents are affected by their child's exclusion. Findings may help practitioners better understand the outcomes of parents who have been subject to the exclusionary policies of their children's schools.

Research Questions

This study was guided by one overarching research question (RQ) and three sub questions (SQs). Interviews were used to collect relevant data. The questions were as follows:

RQ: How are the parents of elementary schoolchildren who have been excluded from school due to behavioral issues affected by their child's exclusion?

SQa: What are the lived experiences of parents who have children who were subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavior problems?

SQb: How did parents cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion?

SQc: What is the perceived influence that disciplinary exclusion has on the relationship between parents and their children?

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. According to this theory, the inherent qualities of a child and their environment interact to influence growth and development throughout adulthood (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Under ecological systems theory, there are five ecosystems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) that interact to shape people's behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For example, in the microsystem, experiences may be directly, socially, and intellectually developmental, or they may have a negative impact on the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Furthermore, interactions in the mesosystem have indirect influences on the exosystem, as well as social and

cultural rules of the macrosystem (Rudasill et al., 2018). The systems under

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model are dynamic and interactive.

Ecological systems theory was an appropriate theoretical framework for this study

because it holds that human development is a function of humans' interactions in their

environment (Rudasill et al., 2018). With regard to the behavioral development of school-

age children, environmental contexts concerning the individual are interactive and

reciprocal, indicating that children are impacted by their environment and can also impact

their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). As such, children may be more impacted by a

change in their microsystem environment than some of the other systems (Rudasill et al.,

2018). When something in children's microsystem, such as school or family, directly

affects them, it can negatively influence their development and adjustment to other

features of their microsystem, such as familial relationships as well as long-term health

and well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). By emphasizing the influence of the environment

on children's behavior and the interconnected nature of this environment, ecological

systems theory provided an appropriate theoretical lens for investigating disciplinary

exclusion.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences

of parents who have a child who was excluded from school due to behavioral problems.

This method was appropriate for this study because qualitative methods allow for an in-

depth investigation of how human beings experience a specific phenomenon (see Ravitch

& Carl, 2020). A quantitative approach would not have been appropriate for this study

because the purpose was to obtain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon rather than to determine the relationship between a set of variables. A phenomenological approach is focused on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Because the phenomenon of interest in the present study was the lived experiences of parents who have a child who has been disciplinarily excluded from school, a phenomenological approach was appropriate. Phenomenological research focuses on different aspects of the lived experience, including lived space, lived body, lived human relations, and lived time (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Other qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography and grounded theory, were not deemed appropriate for this study due to their respective emphasis on observation and the generation of theory (see J. A. Maxwell, 2005). Phenomenological research can be conducted via in-depth interviews and data collection through observation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In the current study, interview questions were primarily open-ended, allowing the participants to narrate their experiences from their perspectives and memories related to the phenomenon (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Findings may be used by educators, caretakers, psychologists, and policymakers regarding the influence of elementary expulsion.

Definitions

Behavioral issues: Behavioral issues include the use of physical force on others; physical force on surroundings; abusive language; a refusal to do as told; and otherwise persistent, disruptive classroom behavior (Sadik, 2017).

Disciplinary exclusion: Disciplinary exclusion refers to school behavioral management strategies that result in the exclusion of a child from school activities due to

behavioral issues. Exclusionary practices include in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion (Bailey et al., 2019).

Elementary-age child: An elementary-age child is a child who is between the ages of 6 and 12 (MedLinePlus, n.d.).

Expulsion: Expulsion is the removal and banning of a child from school premises due to violation of school rules, including behavioral policies (Bailey et al., 2019)

In-school suspension: In-school suspension occurs when a student is temporarily removed from their classroom environment for at least half a day but is still under the direct supervision of school personnel (National Clearinghouse, 2014).

Middle to upper-middle class: Middle to upper-middle class refers to households in which the combined annual income falls between $42,000 and $126,000 (middle class) or $126,000 and $188,000 (upper-middle class; Snider, 2020).

Out-of-school suspension: Out-of-school suspension occurs when a student is removed from school premises for at least 1 day due to behavioral reasons (National Clearinghouse, 2014).

Zero-tolerance policy: Zero-tolerance policies are school policies that strictly enforce proper behavior by resulting in harsh punishments such as suspension and expulsion when rules are broken (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013).

Assumptions

Phenomenological research is predicated on the honest descriptions of the experiences of interest by the interview participants (Weiss, 1994). There were a number of assumptions underlying the current study. The first assumption was that the

participants would be willing to disclose their personal experience regarding their child's expulsion; if they were not ready to divulge the necessary information, this would have potentially influenced the quality of the data because the interview process relied on participants' honesty and openness. Another major assumption of this study was that participants would accurately identify as having experienced the phenomenon of interest, which is having a child who was excluded from school for behavioral reasons. The next assumption was that the participants' personal values, attitudes, and biases would be present in their responses because complete objectivity regarding a lived experience is not possible (Weiss, 1994). The data collected from interviews was the result of participants' subjective interpretations of their experiences. Lastly, the potential for researcher bias can have been more significant if there had been no epoch or suspension of judgment. To mitigate the limiting effect of these assumptions, I briefed participants on the purpose and structure of the interview beforehand. To encourage honesty, I assured participants that all identifying information would be kept confidential. Reflexive journaling was also used to maintain transparency through the research process and to reduce bias.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of parents who have at least one child who has been excluded from school for disciplinary reasons. Only parents with elementary-age children who had been excluded from school were considered. Additionally, those households in which the average income did not fall within middle to upper-middle class boundaries were excluded. By limiting the eligibility

requirements, I narrowed the potentially large sample population and controlled for factors such as socioeconomic background. Parents of children who had received disciplinary action in school that did not result in either suspension or expulsion were also excluded because the focus of this study was disciplinary exclusion.

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory. There are, however, other theories that explain children's behavior, including Freud's (1913) psychosexual development theory, Piaget's (1970) cognitive developmental theory, and Bowlby's (1951) attachment theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory was most appropriate for this study because it emphasizes the influence of an individual's environment (e.g., family, school) on behavior. Because the goal of the study was to examine the lived experiences of parents who have had a child who was disciplinarily excluded from school due to behavior issues, Bronfenbrenner's linkage between the environment and family was helpful in guiding the interpretation of results.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the generalizability of the findings. Generalizability is not possible in phenomenological research when examining a specific phenomenon due to the research's narrow focus (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The current study, however, furthered the understanding of the phenomenon as it pertained to a certain population and provided guidance for more extensive research in the future. Additionally, the data in a phenomenological study is dependent on observations and participants' experiences and interpretations of their experiences. Subjectivity and

interpretation of lived experiences must be based solely on participants' accounts to ensure reliability and validity. In the current study, there may have been challenges verifying information from the participants. One way to increase the data's validity was to ask follow-up questions ensuring that the response was interpreted the right way. Member checking was also used to verify interpretive accuracy because this process allows respondents to review the researcher's summary or interpretation of data to reinforce reliability (see Harvey, 2014). A similarity in responses across participants also reinforces the quality of the research instrument and the accuracy of responses (Stevenson & Mahmut, 2013).

Another limitation of this study was potential errors in the analysis process. With support from my committee, I served as the sole researcher for this study, which included recording findings and conducting interviews. Transparency and objectivity were important to obtain results and conclusions based solely on participants' perception without data contamination or unreliable or invalid interpretation. A potential barrier to this research was the voluntary self-identification of participants in response to advertising. Voluntary participation in response to advertisements mediated the ethical risk of coercion. To mitigate the risk of data contamination, I ensured there were five or more participants to guarantee that the participant total was sufficient for data saturation. Data triangulation and the use of multiple participants helped mitigate issues relating to bias and reliability.

Significance

Children with behavioral problems are frequently expelled from elementary school settings due to no-tolerance school policies (Somayeh & Mahdieh Sadat, 2017). Previous researchers focused on the impact of expulsion on children (Hatton, 2018); however, there was a significant gap in the literature addressing the impact of child expulsion on parents. I aimed to fill this gap and further the understanding of how expulsion impact parents. Understanding the long-term influences of disciplinary exclusion practices on parents may generate a more profound understanding of the influence of elementary expulsion on children and families (see Gage et al., 2018). Children with adverse childhood experiences are more negatively impacted in their physical health, mental health, and academic outcomes (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). These adverse childhood events include early trauma, child maltreatment (e.g., verbal or physical abuse), family dysfunction (e.g., parents who are mentally or physically ill, have been incarcerated, have abused substances, or have died) as well as violence in the community and/or natural disasters (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). Children who externalize or internalize problem behaviors are more vulnerable to underachievement, substance abuse, victimization, and suicidal ideation (Abry et al., 2017). Peer groups influence social-behavioral functioning and influence the degree to which elementary-age children will present with internalization or externalization of familial behaviors (Abry et al., 2017). The current study may contribute to positive social change as parents, policymakers, caretakers, and those working with children have a better understanding of

the potential negative outcomes for parents who are subject to exclusionary practices in their children's elementary schools.

Positive Social Change

In the 2015–2016 school year, approximately 2.7 million children received an out-of-school suspension (United States Department of Education, 2018). Although disciplinary exclusion is an extensive problem throughout the U.S. public school system, students of color and students with disabilities are frequently disproportionately targeted by the policy. Black students are 3.8 times more likely to receive exclusionary action than their White counterparts (United States Department of Education, 2018) and at the elementary level are twice as likely to be sent to the office for disciplinary action (Skiba et al., 2011). Other studies have demonstrated that students with emotional and behavioral disorders are twice as likely to be suspended than students without disabilities (Cholewa et al., 2018). Students of color and those with disabilities are already subjected to additional challenges, and discriminatory disciplinary practices can have severe personal and societal impacts. Students disproportionately targeted by exclusionary discipline are more likely to receive poor grades and drop out of school (Gage et al., 2019). Higher dropout rates and lower academic achievement can lead to the development of an economic burden on individuals and society. Students who drop out of school early and do not receive a high school diploma are likely to receive lower incomes and pay less state and federal taxes (Rumberger & Losen, 2016). As a result of decreased tax revenues, health care and welfare costs can increase (Rumberger & Losen, 2016). Increased crime is another societal impact that can be linked to exclusionary discipline

because school dropouts are more likely to be involved in crime (Rumberger & Losen, 2016). The current study had the potential to have a significant social impact because the benefits from an investigation of how exclusionary discipline affects parents could have a positive impact on children who have been subjected to the practice.

Summary

The current study addressed the lived experiences of parents who have a child who has been subjected to exclusionary practices due to behavioral problems in the classroom. Disciplinary exclusion, including suspension and expulsion, is becoming an increasingly common disciplinary practice in U.S. elementary schools (Gage et al., 2018). Such practices are the result of the adoption of zero-tolerance policies that call for the strict enforcement of appropriate classroom behavior (Bailey et al., 2019). Because the early school years are considered critical to the development of children's socio-emotional and regulatory skills, exclusionary practices can have a detrimental effect on their emotional and mental well-being (Bailey et al., 2019). Although the impacts of exclusionary practices on children have been well documented, little is known about how these policies affect parents and their relationship with their children (Hatton, 2018). Therefore, I filled a gap in the literature by contributing to the knowledge of how parents are impacted by disciplinary exclusion and how this practice affects the parent–child relationship, which is thought to underpin children's behavioral development (see Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). This study may contribute to positive social change because parents, policymakers, caretakers, and those working with children may have a better

understanding of the potential negative outcomes for parents who are subjected to the exclusionary practices in their children's elementary schools.

I employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to understanding the lived experiences of parents with a child who has been excluded from school due to classroom behavioral issues. This methodological approach was appropriate because it allowed for the development of an in-depth understanding of how parents are affected by their children's school exclusion. Open-ended interviews with middle to upper-middle class parents with at least one child who was excluded from school on behavioral grounds were conducted to gather data. The validity of the data was reinforced by conducting member checks, asking clarifying questions during interviews, and triangulating the interview data with other sources. Although the generalizability of the results was limited due to the small sample, the data yielded rich insights into how parents are affected by disciplinary exclusion. In Chapter 2, I present a review of the existing literature surrounding the theoretical framework that was used to guide this study, as well as studies that presented empirical evidence of the effects of disciplinary exclusion on children and their families.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Student misbehavior or disruptive behavior in school requires effective disciplinary policies and practices. Exclusionary practices, or the official removal of a student from education within the school premises, has gained popularity as a disciplinary sanction for various types of student misconduct (Bailey et al., 2019). The general problem for this study was that U.S. elementary schools adopting the no-excuse educating model frequently practice exclusionary discipline, which negatively affects children's ability to build and maintain their self-regulatory skills and reduces their ability to build bonds with their teachers and other adults (Bailey et al., 2019). Exclusionary discipline has been found to induce further behavioral problems in children, as well as several other negative effects such as depression and anxiety (Anderson, 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2019). The negative evidence against exclusionary discipline warrants further investigation on other damages it might cause.

Parents, as primary caregivers of children, play a vital role in their development. The specific problem is that existing research has failed to account for the impact of exclusionary discipline on the parents of affected students (Hatton, 2018). The current study addressed the gap within the literature regarding the impact of elementary expulsion on parents of children with behavioral issues. Filling this gap advanced existing knowledge regarding exclusionary discipline and provided practical implications for parents and school leaders regarding possible alternatives to exclusionary discipline. The study may also inform school-wide or even larger scale policy regarding the use of exclusionary discipline. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived

experiences of parents who have a child who has been subject to elementary exclusion due to behavioral problems in the classroom.

This qualitative study was guided by a single research question: What are the lived experiences of parents who have children who were subject to disciplinary exclusion due to behavior problems? Before proceeding with the study to answer this question, I sought to obtain a deeper understanding of the literature regarding this topic. In this chapter, I provide a review of relevant literature to familiarize the reader with research surrounding exclusionary discipline and what is currently known about it.

Literature Search Strategy

Finding relevant literature entailed using several search terms in various databases to ensure a comprehensive search. Databases used for this literature review included ScienceDirect, ERIC, PsycINFO, SpringerLink, Elsevier, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar. The search terms used included *exclusionary discipline*, *expulsion*, *suspension*, *self-regulation*, *behavioral problems*, *disruptive behavior*, *parents*, *parent stress*, *parent-child relationship*, *school climate*, and *disciplinary practices*. These search terms were used both individually and in combination, with the use of Boolean operators "AND" and "OR." Titles and abstracts of results were scanned to find the most relevant studies. Relevant studies were then selected and included in the literature review. This review contains 102 sources. Of these sources, 77 were from published in 2017 or later, and 25 were published in 2016 or earlier.

The is divided into two major sections. In the first section, I frame the literature review by discussing Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems model. This includes a

brief history of the theory, a description of the theory, and a few examples of how it has been applied in the context of student behaviors. In the second major section, relevant topics are addressed in the main literature review, including (a) children's behavioral problems, (b) parent–child relationship, (c) school climate, (d) exclusionary discipline, and (e) recommended practices and trainings. Existing literature regarding these topics is explored to convey a general idea of the current state of research on children's behavioral development and exclusionary discipline. I close this chapter with a summary of the relevant studies and a description of the gap in these studies.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems model. This model describes several environmental systems surrounding an individual that interact with the individual and with each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Rich & Roman, 2019). These interactions can be bidirectional, meaning that the individual can influence the environment around them as much as the environment influences them (Rich & Roman, 2019). The environmental systems surrounding the individual consist of microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Rich & Roman, 2019). These systems represent the layers around the individual that can influence their development and behavior.

Environmental or ecological systems vary by how closely they interact with the individual at the center. Microsystems represent the closest system to the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Rich & Roman, 2019). This system consists of immediate

informal beings related to the individual, such as the individual's home, family, and

friends. This system emphasizes the importance of the parent–child relationship as a

function of microsystem interaction. Because ecological systems also interact with each

other, the interaction of microsystems with each other form another system, the

mesosystem. The mesosystem includes interactions between a child's parents and the

school or local community (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Rich & Roman, 2019). This

system demonstrates how a child's home life can influence their school life, as well as the

inverse, and how the relationships between the school, parent, and child are intertwined

(Bronfenbrenner, 1986). These two closest ecological systems display the value of

parents and schools in the development of children.

After the mesosystem comes the layer of the exosystem. The exosystem describes

a larger societal system that may influence the individual even though it does not directly

interact with the individual (Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1986; Rich & Roman, 2019).

Examples of exosystems include local policies, teachers' personal lives, parents' work,

and the available community resources (Governale & Garbarino, 2020; Hertler et al.,

2018). The largest layer in the ecological systems model is the macrosystem. This system

represents large-scale social, cultural, and political factors that may influence the

individual, including norms, values, and laws (Governale & Garbarino, 2020; Rich &

Roman, 2019). The chronosystem was a later addition to the ecological systems model,

which represents the individual's cohort or placement at a certain time period that may

influence their development and behaviors (Governale & Garbarino, 2020). How

ecological systems interacted during a period in the past may not be the same as how they interact in another time.

The development of the ecological systems theory was derived from Bronfenbrenner's experiences while growing up as a trilingual immigrant child in the United States (Governale & Garbarino, 2020). Bronfenbrenner traveled to the United States with his family from Moscow at the age of six, which placed him at an age to be influenced by cultures from both the United States and Moscow (Governale & Garbarino, 2020; Hertler et al., 2018). His experiences allowed him to observe how the systems surrounding him influenced his development, which led him to describe his origins as *zwischen Mensch*, which translates to "between persons" (Governale & Garbarino, 2020). Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems model based on the influences of the systems surrounding him.

An example of how the ecological systems model is self-supporting can be seen by how the model was influenced by another person close to Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner's father, who was a neuropathologist, frequently highlighted the interactions between environments, particularly for individuals with developmental disabilities, a group he often worked with (Hertler et al., 2018). Bronfenbrenner, picking up on his father's ideas, posited that the children's mental incapacities were influenced by the poor conditions in the systems in which they lived (Hertler et al., 2018). With these experiences and insights, Bronfenbrenner introduced the ecological systems theory (Governale & Garbarino, 2020; Hertler et al., 2018). His theory was not exempt to criticism, as early researchers noted the lack of biological and cognitive factors within the

model; Bronfenbrenner later added internal characteristics and biological factors to his model (Governale & Garbarino, 2020). The general idea of the ecological systems model holds true, and theorists and researchers have acknowledged its use and value.

The ecological systems model has been particularly helpful in exploring the home environment. In a study on household chaos, Crespo et al. (2019) used the ecological systems model to consider the factors that influenced child development. The microsystem of home environment, mesosystem of parent–child relationship and single parenting, and exosystem of parents' work schedules and poverty were cited as influential factors affecting child development, which included the child's behavior (Crespo et al., 2019). Because of the bidirectionality of the ecological systems model (Rich & Roman, 2019), the child's behavior may also influence these home environment factors, including factors related to the child's parents. Considering this idea, I used the ecological systems model to explore the lived experiences of parents based on their child's behavior subsequently resulting in exclusionary discipline.

Researchers also applied the ecological systems model to the school climate. Rudasill et al. (2018) demonstrated how certain school-related systems and interactions represented the ecological systems. The school is a microsystem surrounding school climate. An example of the mesosystem is the parent–teacher conference, in which the interaction between parents and teachers influences how a student may behave in school. The exosystem describes how school climate is influenced by opportunities and constraints brought by school policies. This includes the school's support or use of exclusionary discipline (Rudasill et al., 2018). Although Rudasill et al. did not provide an

example for macrosystem, other researchers highlighted how factors such as race and gender, as shaped by culture and society, are determinants of exclusionary discipline use (Bal et al., 2019; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Gage et al., 2018; Gregory & Skiba, 2019; Huang & Cornell, 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2019; Whitford et al., 2018). For the chronosystem, high-profile incidents such as school shootings can influence the school climate, particularly feelings of safety in relation to school (Rudasill et al., 2018). This application of the ecological systems model to the school climate provided evidence of the model's utility in studies concerning the school system, including the present study, because the model provided a framework for examining how different aspects of an individual's environment can influence their behavior. In the following sections, I present the themes found in the literature addressing exclusionary discipline.

Literature Review

For the main literature review, topics were selected according to their relevance to the purpose of this study and their recurrence in existing literature. The topics of children's behavioral problems, parent–child relationship, school climate, exclusionary discipline, and recommended practices and trainings were included in this review. Each of the following sections contains a general overview of each topic along with findings that highlighted the need for the present study.

Children's Behavioral Problems

Children follow a typical pattern growing up. The normative development of children has been central to developmental psychology and developmental psychopathology research (Drabick & Kendall, 2010). Children are expected to fall under

this normative development pattern and display prosocial behaviors, such as following rules and authority figures. At times, children may deviate from this general norm and display disruptive or noncompliant behaviors (Floress et al., 2018). Such deviation may be considered problematic behavior but may still be within the normative range. Problematic behaviors in children often peak at the age of 2, which then decline as they grow older (Floress et al., 2018). Disruptive and noncompliant behaviors may be considered a part of typical development up to a certain point.

Parents and teachers report disruptive and noncompliant behaviors because it is part of the developmental process. There is no definite number to define the normative range of behaviors; however, parents and teachers should be cautious with such behaviors because they may indicate the possibility of atypical development or psychological disorders (Drabick & Kendall, 2010). Consideration of atypical development or psychological disorders should be made when behavioral problems occur beyond the average frequency for children in the same age group, and in at least two settings (Drabick & Kendall, 2010). Even without the presence of a disorder, behavioral problems may lead to higher parent stress and weaker parent–child relationships (Sher-Censor et al., 2018). The topic of children's behavioral problems requires in-depth exploration to understand this phenomenon and why it occurs.

Children's behavioral problems can involve internalizing or externalizing behaviors. Externalizing behaviors, consisting of outward behaviors, are problematic for parents because they are more obvious and more disruptive than internalizing behaviors, which consist of inward behaviors (Ooi et al., 2017). These externalizing behaviors may

include aggressive behaviors, delinquency, hyperactivity, and defiance (Eisenberg et al., 2017). Morales et al. (2019) noted that individuals who frequently displayed externalizing behavior possessed higher attention bias to reward. In other words, these individuals were automatically drawn to certain stimuli that they perceived would bring more rewards. Morales et al. purported that the individual's externalizing behaviors may be the result of acting toward a perceived reward without considering possible adverse outcomes or the possibility of a better delayed reward. Researchers have explored other factors that may be related to children's externalizing or problematic behavior.

Environmental Factors

Environments or settings which the child frequents should be considered in exploring their behavioral development. The characteristics of these environments may influence how the child behaves within or outside of it. The classroom is one of the most common environments that a child frequents, as they spend more than 30 hours in an average elementary classroom per week (Abry et al., 2017). Classroom adversity, which encompasses the collective risk factors in all students in a classroom and the abundance of classroom disruptions, was cited by Abry et al. (2017) and Müller et al. (2018) as a notable factor influencing children's behaviors. Peer influence is a strong catalyst for children's behaviors (Müller et al., 2018). As such, the interactions within the classroom should be explored as possible micro and mesosystems that could predict problematic behavior.

The classroom environment is one example of the complexity and bidirectionality of ecological systems. Behaviors of certain individuals in a classroom influence the

overall classroom environment, which in turn influences the behaviors of other individuals within the classroom (Abry et al., 2017). Based on this premise, Abry et al. used data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD) to determine the relationship between classroom adversity and levels of students' internalizing and externalizing behaviors. They found that classroom adversity positively influenced externalizing behaviors of students at all grade levels. Classroom adversity comprised students' overall home life, parental support, health, nutrition, intelligence, cultural differences, English language proficiency, special needs, disruptive behaviors, inadequate supplies, student-teacher ratios, student mobility, social and academic readiness, and attention problems. These factors were beyond the control of other students. Students who were not directly affected by these adversity factors may have become frustrated with the overall classroom adversity, considering they may not have understood what their classmates were going through. Such frustration may then lead to their own problematic behaviors (Abry et al., 2017). As children are still developing their socio-emotional skills, classroom adversity may represent a significant obstacle in children's development. The way teachers handle such obstacles may be crucial in ceasing the chain of disruptive behaviors influenced by classroom adversity.

Müller et al. (2018) noted that factors such as teachers' instructional quality and classroom management may contribute to the issue of classroom adversity. Although teachers in the study of Abry et al. (2017) indicated that classroom adversity did not impede their instructions, Müller et al. (2018) believed otherwise. Müller et al. purported

that teachers played a huge role in fostering a supportive environment for students to lessen the effects of classroom adversity. Their study involved a 3 year longitudinal investigation of lower secondary schools in Switzerland. Their main finding confirmed that the amount of disruptive behaviors in a classroom predicted future incidents of disruptive behavior. The authors presented peer influence as a possible reason for this phenomenon, as children may consider disruptive behaviors a strategy to be a part of the in group, which would explain why classrooms in which disruptive behavior is considered the norm would have more students attempting to fit this norm. Müller et al. also found that teachers' level of support as well as students' perception of the lessons as interesting served as moderators for the effect of classroom adversity on students. For instance, students who were highly interested in the lesson would focus on it more than on their peers; hence, they would be less influenced by their peers' disruptive behaviors (Müller et al., 2018). Based on the study's findings, the researchers presented the important environmental factors of the classroom setting and the level of disruptive behaviors and adversity within it. These findings could help explain why students from certain classes are more prone to disruptive behaviors than others. The reduction of class adversity by teachers and other school professionals could lead to less need for exclusionary discipline.

The home is another important environment in the child's life. Dynamics between household individuals can also be quite complex. For instance, Kim and Kochanska (2020) indicated that a family's sociodemographic status influenced problematic behaviors in toddlers within the household. The toddler's behavior then lead to parents'

power-assertive discipline, which then lead to more disruptive behaviors in children (Kim & Kochanska, 2020). Crespo et al. (2019) also cited the level of household chaos as a risk factor for behavioral problems in children. Crespo et al. operationally defined household chaos as a construct of instability or turbulence. A chaotic household could be described as a noisy, crowded, disorganized place where rules and routines are highly inconsistent. Crespo et al. found this type of household to be related to more internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors in toddlers as early as 24 to 36 months, with self-regulation as a moderating factor. Household chaos resulted in more problematic behaviors only for children with lower levels of self-regulatory skills (Crespo et al., 2019). Therefore, lower socio-demographic households could engender higher risks of behavioral problems in children, particularly if the child's self-regulatory skills are not developed. While little can be done about the family's socio-demographic status, the relationships noted in both studies were indirect and quite complex. This means that there were possible moderating and mediating factors that may be of use to reducing exclusionary discipline.

Understanding the different environmental factors that influence children's behavior can help shed light on how parents are affected by their child's disciplinary exclusion and how the parent-child relationship influences child behavior. A higher level of parental involvement at home can have a positive impact on a child's behavior (Parker et al., 2016). On the other hand, many parents feel like they are unable to influence their child's classroom environment. Based on these findings, the researchers demonstrated

how external factors, such as classroom environment and parent child interaction, can significantly impact the behavioral development of children.

Individual Factors

The environmental factors presented above do not completely account for individual differences in children's behavioral development. Previous researchers have explored certain individual factors to help predict behavioral problems. Gender, for example, is a much cited factor in existing literature. Previous researchers have found that male children displayed more externalizing behaviors (Lonigan et al., 2017) and were more likely to be subjected to exclusionary discipline than girls (Bettencourt et al., 2018). Bettencourt et al. and Lonigan et al. found these gender differences to be observable at kindergarten levels. As children prepare to enter the educational system, their school readiness is measured not just cognitively, but also socially and behaviorally (Bettencourt et al., 2018). Overall, boys were found to have lower social and behavioral readiness than girls, which predicted their higher rates of suspension, expulsion, or use of services such as individualized education plans. In addition, boys appeared to have lower self-regulatory skills than girls at the preschool level, which predicted their externalizing behaviors in higher levels (Lonigan et al., 2017). Based on these findings, the researchers highlighted the male gender as a possible individual factor that influences behavioral problems in children.

The findings presented above do not entirely absolve female children from possessing behavioral problems, however. While girls generally display fewer externalizing behaviors than boys, their probability of showing such behaviors may be

elevated by certain conditions. For instance, language development was a stronger

predictor of externalizing behaviors for girls (Lonigan et al., 2017; Roberts et al., 2018).

Abry et al. (2017) further noted that girls typically possessed more empathy than boys,

which made them more vulnerable to classroom adversity. The effects of classroom

adversity caused more distress for girls, which then translated into their own problematic

behavior (Abry et al., 2017). The nuances of gender differences in relation to behavior

may have implications on children's behavioral development and problematic behaviors

that could lead to exclusionary discipline. Parents and teachers alike must consider these

differences when dealing with such behaviors.

Aside from gender, certain individual factors should also be noted as children age.

The typical development of a child implies that problematic behaviors peak at

toddlerhood or 2 years (Floress et al., 2018). Such behaviors decline as children age and

become more mature. Toddlerhood, for example, is a critical stage for language

development in children. In a study of 18 to 36 month old toddlers, Roberts et al. (2018)

found that early language abilities were significantly related to disruptive behavior. They

purported that the relationship may be bidirectional. Language delays reduced children's

social skills, as they could not interact and express themselves properly, which lead to

frustration, defiance, or aggressive behaviors. Alternatively, disruptive behaviors reduced

opportunities for interaction as other children or adults tended to avoid these children

with aversive behaviors. This lack of interaction consequently reduced opportunities for

language development (Roberts et al., 2018). Grabell et al. (2017) further noted a

developmental pathway for problematic behaviors, stating that preschool children

between the ages of 3 and 5 who displayed higher levels of disruptive behaviors had a higher risk of continuously displaying problematic behavior later in life. The researchers highlighted the need for vigilant monitoring as children's behavioral problems can begin at a young age. As toddlers begin to show externalizing and disruptive behaviors, parents must be alert to both risk factors and possible protective factors that may influence their children's problematic behaviors.

One possible protective factor for behavioral problems in children is their ability for self-regulation. Self-regulation involves the management and expression of one's emotions in the face of environmental demands (Eisenberg et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2018). Having high self-regulatory skills means that one is in control of their physiological, attentional, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive domains (Perry et al., 2018), while low self-regulatory skills reflect poor emotional processing and inhibition (Grabell et al., 2017). Self-regulation is a developmental concept, which means that self-regulatory deficits in early childhood may progress further as children age (Perry et al., 2018). The preschool age is critical, as this is when children become more self-aware and learn regulatory strategies (Perry et al., 2018). As such, self-regulation may pose as a protective factor against problematic behavior in children.

Previous researchers have explored self-regulation as a predictor of children's behaviors. Perry et al. (2018) examined specific domains of self-regulation in their longitudinal study exploring externalizing behavior patterns from children aged 2 to 15 years. They noted that self-regulatory skills at age five were significant predictors of externalizing behavior patterns (Perry et al., 2018). This is in line with the findings of

Lonigan et al. (2017) that self-regulation during preschool years was related to externalizing behaviors from first to third grade. Perry et al. (2018) also found the self-regulatory domains of behavioral inhibition and emotion regulation to be more significant predictors of externalizing behaviors. Morales et al. (2019) also examined the specific self-regulatory domain of effortful or inhibitory control in relation to externalizing behaviors. By measuring the exuberance, behavioral effortful control, and attention bias of 291 children at ages three, four, and seven, respectively, the researchers found that lower levels of effortful control between the ages of three and a half to four and a half were associated with externalizing behavior problems at age five and a half (Morales et al., 2019). These findings placed the critical age for developing self-regulatory skills at the preschool age between three and a half to five (Lonigan et al., 2017; Morales et al., 2019; Perry et al., 2018). Because self-regulation is a skill, parents and teachers can work to develop it early on in their children. Unlike this skill, however, certain traits in children may be more enduring.

Personality traits are individual factors that may distinctly influence one's behavior. Frick and Viding (2009) brought attention to a distinct developmental process in some children with behavioral problems. They noted that children displaying more callous unemotional (CU) traits displayed more severe, stable, and aggressive behaviors than children without these traits (Frick & Viding, 2009). CU traits indicated lower levels of empathy, guilt, motivation, emotional depth, and prosocial emotions (Billeci et al., 2019; Frick & Viding, 2009; Rizeq et al., 2020). Allen et al. (2018) stated that CU traits were the trademark of child psychopathy. CU traits have since been included as

indicators of conduct disorder in the fifth and most recent edition of the Diagnostic and

Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-5), linking it directly to behavioral

problems in children (Allen et al., 2018). These traits possess considerable utility in both

research and practice regarding children's behavioral problems.

Researchers have since explored various variables that may be associated with

CU traits. Because of the low empathic abilities of individuals with CU traits, a topic of

interest for researchers is how well these individuals can recognize emotions (Billeci et

al., 2019). Billeci et al. compared a sample of children with disruptive behavior disorder

(DBD) to a sample of typically developing children. They found that, in both groups, CU

traits predicted less ability to recognize the specific emotion of sadness (Billeci et al.,

2019). The inability to recognize sadness may influence their behavior as they fail to

realize that their behaviors may have upset other individuals such as their parents,

teachers, and peers. Further aggravating this problem is the finding that children with CU

traits are often unresponsive to social reinforcements or punishments (Allen et al., 2018).

Social rewards, such as praise, are coveted by typically developing children and may be

used to reinforce positive behaviors for them; however, this does not appear to work for

children with CU traits. Alternatively, teachers may enforce discipline strategies that

limit negative behaviors in children, but such strategies are often met by angry or

aggressive responses by children with CU traits (Allen et al., 2018). Thus, it difficult to

use typical disciplinary practices on children with CU traits. While CU traits are stable

and enduring, Billeci et al. (2019) noted that they can also be improved by implementing

intensive personalized interventions. Researchers have noted, however, that CU traits

were related to certain psychological symptoms such as those of conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder (Rizeq et al., 2020), hyperactivity, and autism spectrum disorder (Allen et al., 2018). The added factor of comorbid symptoms may make it more difficult to eliminate children's CU traits and their subsequent behavioral problems.

In this section, the researcher has demonstrated how individual factors such as gender (Lonigan et al., 2017), age (Roberts et al., 2018), the ability to self-regulate one's emotions (Perry et al., 2018), and personality traits (Frick & Viding, 2009) can influence children's behavior. Research has shown that boys display more externalizing behaviors than girls, meaning they are more likely to be subjected to disciplinary exclusion as early as kindergarten due to being less socially ready (Bettencourt et al., 2018). Roberts et al. (2018) found evidence that language development is directly related to disruptive behavior, as language delays may make it harder for children to express themselves, thus leading them to act out in frustration. Additionally, the ability to self-regulate emotions in the face of environmental stressors may protect against disruptive behaviors (Perry et al., 2018), while children with CU traits are more likely to be subjected to disciplinary exclusion and be less responsive to it (Billeci et al., 2019). These findings suggest that children's behavior is influenced by many factors, an understanding of which can be crucial to examining how parents can affect and be affected by their child's behavior.

Comorbid Disorders

The presence of comorbid symptoms or disorders may exacerbate children's disruptive or externalizing behaviors. The diagnosis of DBD is strongly associated with behavioral problems in children (Billeci et al., 2019; Coto et al., 2018; Mugno et al.,

2017). DBD is a category for more specific disorders including attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), and conduct

disorder (Billeci et al., 2019; Mugno et al., 2017). The common denominator for these

disorders is that they manifest as antisocial, hostile, and aggressive behaviors (Billeci et

al., 2019). Behaviors commonly found in children with DBD include defiance, attentional

issues, impulsivity, and lying (Coto et al., 2018; Mugno et al., 2017). Coto et al. (2018)

found DBD to be associated with parent-related factors and sleep problems. Sleep

problems, which can negatively affect children's overall development, were significantly

related to oppositionality and aggression in children with or at risk for DBD. Further,

inconsistent parenting and negatively phrased questions, commands, and interactions

from parents were related to sleep problems (Coto et al., 2018). Although the study by

Coto et al. did not include directionality between these three variables, it can be purported

that children's disruptive and aggressive behaviors may stem from sleep problems,

which, in turn, may stem from parenting factors. Regardless, these findings highlight the

complexity of DBD and subsequent disruptive and aggressive behaviors.

Researchers have also examined the relationship between externalizing behaviors

and children's anxiety. Pediatric anxiety, or anxiety in children, is one of the costliest

disorders, amounting to an annual mean cost of $4952 (Fernando et al., 2018). Behaviors

of children with anxiety may also cost additional time and effort from parents, such as in

the case of separation anxiety disorder, where parents are forced to spend a significant

amount of time with the child and less time on work and personal matters (Fernando et

al., 2018). Anxiety is mainly considered an internalizing disorder because its symptoms

are directed inward toward the individual (Mitchell, 2019). The symptoms of anxiety, however, may also manifest as externalizing behaviors. Mitchell found that children with anxiety often display externalizing behaviors such as arguing, screaming, temper tantrums, sullenness or irritability, disobedience, and emotional lability. Such externalizing behaviors coming from children with anxiety may distinctly convey responses to distressing stimuli that triggered the child's anxiety (Mitchell, 2019). Pediatric anxiety may present a complex case for children's behavioral problems due to the underlying causes of such behaviors. Parents and teachers must be aware of the possibility of comorbid anxiety disorders in children displaying problematic behaviors so that the underlying causes may be resolved.

Another disorder commonly related to behavioral problems in children is autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Children with ASD often display problematic behaviors such as noncompliance, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, self-injury, and tantrums, as well as disruptive and aggressive behaviors (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Postorino et al., 2017). Ibrahim et al. reported that around 27% of children with ASD present with comorbid DBDs, and more than 50% of children with ASD display disruptive behaviors, including those without comorbid diagnoses. In their cross-sectional study of children with ASD and disruptive behavior, ASD only, and typically developing children from 8 to 16 years old, they found a significant reduction of connectivity within the amygdala–ventrolateral prefrontal cortices (vlPFC) as well as within posterior parietal cortex regions in children with ASD and disruptive behaviors, which was not present in children with ASD only. Impairment in connectivity within these regions impacted children's emotion

dysregulation and their ability to control disruptive behaviors (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Postorino et al. (2017) indicated that children with ASD were occasionally subjected to

medications such as risperidone and aripiprazole to reduce their problematic behaviors,

but also noted that these medications had weight-related and metabolic side effects. They

further noted that behavioral therapy for children with ASD and disruptive behaviors can

be extremely costly (Postorino et al., 2017). The financial costs of caring for children

with comorbid ASD and disruptive behavior may add to the already heightened stress of

parents who deal with these disruptive behaviors daily. This comorbid condition of ASD

and disruptive behavior also highlights the complexity of children's behavioral problems

and how certain conditions may exacerbate parental stress.

In this section, I discussed how children may deviate from typical developmental

patterns and display exceeding amounts of externalizing, disruptive, and problematic

behaviors. Environmental factors, such as the home and classroom, may influence such

behaviors, as children may emulate any negative behaviors or interactions within these

environments. Classroom adversity and household chaos could lead to more externalizing

behaviors in children. Individual factors such as gender, age, self-regulatory skills, and

the presence of CU traits or comorbid disorders could also influence children's

externalizing or problematic behaviors. Boys generally displayed more problematic

externalizing behaviors and lower levels of self-regulation than girls, while girls

displayed more empathic behaviors, rendering them more vulnerable to environmental

factors. Problematic or externalizing behaviors often peak at 2 years old. The frequency

of problematic behaviors during preschool years may predict more problematic behaviors

in later years. Self-regulation was cited as a protective skill that reduced problematic behaviors in children, while CU traits were risk factors related to more problematic behaviors. Disorders that were most often cited in relation to externalizing or problematic behavior included DBD, anxiety, and ASD. The additional burden of these co-presenting conditions could add to parental stress, which could subsequently influence parenting styles and the parent-child relationship. This pattern is an example of how the topic of parent child relationships is closely related to children's behavioral development.

Parent–Child Relationship

Parents may arguably be one of the closest microsystems in a child's ecological system. Children spend more time with their parents from the time of their birth than anyone else. As such, the parent child relationship represents a vital factor in children's development. Early proponents of psychology, such as Sigmund Freud, included the parent child relationship in their theories and noted how this relationship could influence individuals' behaviors even as adults (Rich & Roman, 2019). The typical role of parents as primary caregivers involves loving, nurturing, and being responsive and sensitive to the needs of the child (Rich & Roman, 2019). When these roles are not fulfilled, the child may encounter problems in their development, including their behavioral development. Children's behaviors may influence the parent-child relationship as well. Ooi et al. (2017) indicated that conflicts within the parent-child relationship often stemmed from discrepancies in how the parent and the child viewed the child's behaviors. Some children may not perceive their behaviors to be problematic, which means that they may not understand their parents' perceptions regarding their behaviors and their parents'

subsequent disciplinary practices. Such discrepancies may result in more externalizing behaviors in children and more parental stress (Ooi et al., 2017). The conflicts stemming from the discrepancies represent the complex nature of the parent child relationship, showing how both the child and the parents play critical roles within this relationship.

Children's attachment to their parents, which displays the strength of the parent child relationship, has been a topic of interest in behavioral development research. Heatly and Votruba-Drzal (2017) indicated that although the parent-child relationship before the beginning of school did not directly influence children's engagement in school, it did serve as a safeguard for teacher child conflict. The study by Bizzi et al. (2018) specifically focused on children diagnosed with DBD. The authors found that children with DBD displayed more insecure and disorganized attachment styles than typically developing children. Thus, there is a need for targeting parent child relationships in interventions for children with DBD. Parent child relationships are interrelated with the child's behavioral development and school engagement. As such, parents' influence on children's externalizing or problematic behaviors warrants a closer examination.

Parents' Influence on Children's Problematic Behaviors

Parents may present with certain factors that influence their children's behavioral problems. Shahid et al. (2019) stated that most students who display disruptive behaviors in school are experiencing domestic problems. Shahid et al. found that out of 84 students and teachers surveyed on the causes of children's classroom behavioral problems, half of the respondents agreed that students experiencing family issues are more disruptive in the classroom. These domestic problems commonly involved a destructive family

background or the disinterest and negligence of parents. Specific parenting styles have since been explored in the literature to find which styles promoted problematic behaviors in children. Indulgent parenting, which involves high responsiveness but low demandingness from parents, has become prevalent in the 21st century as family dynamics have shifted (Cui et al., 2019). This type of parenting style has been noted to increase children's risk of behavioral and emotional problems up until young adulthood. Children who grew up under indulgent parenting styles may be deprived of opportunities to develop life skills, such as self-regulation, to deal with challenges, as parents freely grant their every desire (Cui et al., 2019). Overindulgence can be considered a negligent parenting style, as it neglects to allow for the child's maturity and development of self-regulation.

Parents who utilize overly restrictive parenting styles may also influence children's behavioral problems (Coto et al., 2018). Parenting styles based on negatively phrased questions, commands, and interactions were found to increase the probability of the child's externalizing behaviors (Coto et al., 2018). In a study of 134 children and their parents, Booker et al. (2019) found that both family permissiveness and hostile behaviors, which represent opposite ends of parenting styles, led to severe externalizing behaviors in children with ODD. Parental monitoring, which connoted a more positive parental supervision that was neither too permissive nor too restrictive, was found to predict fewer externalizing behaviors (Booker et al., 2019). Based on these findings, it appears that the optimal parenting style for reducing problematic behaviors involves the balance between indulgent parenting and hostile parenting.

Another dimension of parenting that is often cited in the literature on behavioral development is child neglect. Child neglect, or failing to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of parenting, has been reported to cause as much harm as child abuse (Bland et al., 2018). It is also considered the most common form of child maltreatment with the highest frequency of fatalities (Hecker et al., 2019). Both physical neglect (failing to provide basic necessities) and emotional neglect (significant lack of interaction with the child) can have negative influences on the child's psychological development. Neglect can also produce biological effects, particularly on the reduction of the corpus callosum, on a child's development (Bland et al., 2018). The effects of child neglect may translate into externalizing behaviors later in life. Child neglect, however, can be intentional or unintentional. Parents may not have enough resources to support their children or may not realize their own neglect (Hecker et al., 2019). It may be helpful to check if a child displaying disruptive or problematic behaviors has their basic needs met.

Previous researchers have since explored the factor of socio-economic status (SES) on children's behavioral problems. Bettencourt et al. (2018) noted that families in lower socio-economic classes are more exposed to risk factors such as trauma, environmental toxins, residential and employment instability, dangerous neighborhoods, limited public transportation, and limited access to health care. Parents from low SES families found it significantly more difficult to provide for their children. Such cases often led to poor social and behavioral development in children, which increased their likelihood of receiving exclusionary discipline in school (Bettencourt et al., 2018). Parents from low SES families are also more prone to poor parenting and harsh

disciplinary practices such as spanking (Baker & Brooks-Gunn, 2019). These harsh

disciplinary practices were found to increase problematic behaviors in children.

Child neglect may be a consequence of a broader societal problem. A common

problem that parents, particularly minority parents, may face is discrimination (Ayón &

García, 2019; Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2017; Savell et al., 2019). Discrimination is a

prominent cause of cultural stress and depressive symptoms, which leads to poor parental

functioning (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2017). A more direct relationship was indicated by

Ayón and García (2019), who found that higher discrimination experiences were related

to less monitoring as well as inconsistent and harsher disciplinary practices. Notably,

Savell et al. (2019) indicated that discrimination did not occur exclusively in racial

minorities. In their study, parents' income and education were also considered as factors

for discrimination. Parents' experiences of discrimination at the child's age of 3 to 5

years were found to be significant predictors of the child's adolescent disruptive

behavior. They noted, however, that the parent-child relationship strength at the child's

age of 9 and a half years buffered this effect (Savell et al., 2019). When examining

children's behavioral problems, it is important to be aware of parenting styles and any

possible underlying causes to these parenting practices.

Parents' health, both physical and mental, may also influence the parent child

relationship and subsequent behavioral problems of the child. Poppert Cordts et al. (2020)

highlighted the physical demands of parenting, especially for younger children. They

indicated that poor physical health may reduce parents' self-efficacy in relation to

parenting and thus may produce more disruptive behaviors in the child. At the same time,

parents' mental health was also related to their self-efficacy and negative parenting style (Poppert Cordts et al., 2020). Mental health receives more attention in the research on parent child relationships than physical health, perhaps because of its stronger association with children's problematic behaviors. In the longitudinal study of parents of 9-year-old children by Roetman et al. (2019), the researchers found that the presence of a mental disorder in a parent increased the risk for the child's disruptive behaviors in adolescence. Participants in this study were part of a larger longitudinal study on parents of 8,906 twins in Sweden born between 1992-1999 (Roetman et al., 2019). Baseline measures of 4,492 twins that completed two follow-ups to baseline measures of parent reported disruptive behavior at age nine revealed that fathers' mental disorders predicted the 9-year-old children's disruptive behaviors and subsequent antisocial behaviors more than mothers' mental disorders. The gender specificity could be due to fathers' typical role in children's rough and tumble play (Roetman et al., 2019). Alternatively, mothers' anxiety was significantly related to parenting stress at the child's preschool age, which led to more externalizing behaviors in children (Tsotsi et al., 2019). Parents' health represents another important consideration for school professionals as they manage children's behavioral problems. As a complex phenomenon, the parent child relationship may indeed be influenced by several underlying factors. The inverse effects of children's behavioral problems on parents and their subsequent parenting styles and practices further add to this complexity.

Parents' Reactions to Children's Behavioral Issues

While parents can influence their children's behavioral development, children's behaviors can also influence parenting styles. Parents may adjust their parenting styles and disciplinary practices according to their children's behaviors. For instance, parents of children with DBD were found to be more retributive when it came to their children's honesty than parents of typically developing children (Malloy et al., 2018). Parents of children with DBD also self-reported being more honest than parents of typically developing children. Malloy et al. purported that these parents may be hyperaware of the possibility that their dishonesty would be perceived more negatively than those of the control group, hence promoting more honesty. It is also possible that the propensity of lying in children with DBD made their parents more honest as they became more aware of the value of honesty (Malloy et al., 2018). Regardless of the reason, it can be concluded that children's disruptive behaviors can influence their parents' behaviors and disciplinary practices.

A more commonly researched effect of children's behavioral problems is parental stress. Coto et al. (2018) indicated that parents' perceptions of their children's difficult behaviors increased their stress levels. Parents may be subject to several stressors including their child's self-regulation difficulties and unsatisfying behaviors (Sher-Censor et al., 2018). Even problematic behaviors in the typical development range can serve as stressors for parents. Blacher and Baker (2019) investigated the well-being of mothers of children with ASD and intellectual disability who also displayed disruptive behaviors to demonstrate the stress inducing factor of disruptive behaviors. They found

that the mothers' well-being related more strongly to the disruptive behaviors of their

children rather than the disability itself. Ooi et al. (2017) indicated that parental stress

could lead to fuzzier judgment regarding their children's behaviors. Parents under a great

deal of stress may view their children's behaviors in a more negative light than other

parents. Further exacerbating this issue is that parental stress could also lead to more

externalizing behaviors in children, making it a cyclical process (Sher-Censor et al.,

2018). As parents become more stressed, their harsher disciplinary practices may increase

their children's problematic behavior, which, in turn, further increases parental stress.

Parental stress was also found by McDaniel and Radesky (2020) to mediate the

relationship between children's behavioral problems and media use. Only television use

was related to more externalizing behaviors in children. Overall, these findings highlight

the multiple roles of parental stress in children's behavioral development.

In this section, I explored previous literature regarding the dimensions of parent

child relationships. In general, parent child relationships were found to be a vital factor in

children's behavioral development. Too permissive and too restrictive parenting styles

were cited as predictors of children's behavioral problems. The parental practice of

monitoring represented the proper balance between the extreme parenting styles. Child

neglect, whether intentional or unintentional, may lead to children's behavioral problems.

Parents from low SES families may not be able to provide enough resources for their

children, thus impeding their development. Parents experiencing discrimination may

particularly be prone to child neglect or harsh disciplinary practices, which predicted

children's externalizing behaviors. Furthermore, parents' physical and mental health

predicted their relationship with their child and, consequently, their children's behavioral problems. Children's behaviors may also influence these parental factors. Parents may adjust their parenting style according to their children's behaviors, such as in the case of parents of children with DBD reporting more honesty and more retributive disciplinary strategies for lying. The variable of parental stress was involved in several processes such as in judging their children's behaviors and in determining media use. Notably lacking in these studies is the effect of schools' exclusionary discipline on the parents. As parents of children with problematic or disruptive behaviors are already under a huge amount of stress, the additional factor of their child's suspension or expulsion might exacerbate this issue. Aside from the parent child relationship, another system that may hold influence on both the child's behaviors and on the parents is the school and the individuals within it. In the following section, I explore the topic of school climate and how it relates to children and their parents.

School Climate

The school climate, which is a multidimensional concept that describes how individuals think and feel about the interactions, interactions, relationships, values, and beliefs associated with a school, represents a major aspect of the school system (Rudasill et al., 2018). School climate, although similar to school culture, is more interpersonal in nature (Dernowska, 2017) and is made up of the relationships and interactions between the parents, students, teachers, and other stakeholders of the school (Rudasill et al., 2018). School climate also involves the school's vision, mission statement, and leadership (Dernowsak, 2017). It has been characterized as the school's own personality

(Maxwell et al., 2017) or the overall measure of the quality of school life (Dernowska, 2017). The topic of school climate has garnered much attention in research, as it has been found to influence student outcomes, such as academic achievement, attendance, mental well-being, and behaviors (Bear et al., 2015). Parents, as stakeholders of the school, also share their own perceptions of school climate.

School Climate and Parents

Parents are major stakeholders of the school system, as they primarily decide where their children will study. Parents' perceptions of school climate also reflect the overall image of the school (Bear et al., 2015). Bear et al. noted several advantages of obtaining parents' perceptions of school climate. First, parents can speak for their children's experience of school life, especially those such as very young children or children with disabilities who are not able to express their own perceptions. Second, parents can either corroborate or contradict students' and teachers' perceptions of school climate. Third, parents' perceptions represent a valuable external view of the school. Fourth, the relationship between parents' perceptions of school climate and their satisfaction with the school could predict their involvement in their children's education. Hatton (2013) further indicated that the parents' relationship with the school could influence the decisions regarding the use of exclusionary discipline. As such, parents' perception of the school climate can be a valuable factor in their children's education and overall development.

Parents' perceptions of school climate are limited to the minimal amount of time they spend in the school or in the company of school faculty and staff. It is important that

parents feel welcomed in these few opportunities of interactions. Parents expect the school climate to reflect the familial values of lovingness and demandingness or strictness for their children (Bear et al., 2015). When parents perceive a warm and welcoming climate from the school, they are reassured that their children are under capable and nurturing care (Rattenborg et al., 2018). Interestingly, Rattenborg et al. found ethnic differences in school climate perceptions with American Indian parents indicating a less welcoming climate than other ethnicities. They further noted that, while parents and teachers agreed on the value of collaboration for academic skills, there was less agreement on social skills. Teachers expected more efforts from parents to develop their children's prosocial skills. These expectations may affect the teacher parent relationship, which is a vital part of parents' school climate perception (Rattenborg et al., 2018). The disparity in teacher parent expectations regarding social skills may cause confusion as to who is more responsible for a child's problematic behavior. As much as parents represent a critical factor in their children's problematic behaviors, the school climate may also play a role.

School Climate and Student Behaviors

School climate may influence student behaviors in various ways. For instance, O'Connor et al. (2020) investigated the differences in students' perceptions of school climate according to their behavioral subgroups. Subgroups included predominant aggressors, aggressive victims, predominant victims, and youth with limited involvement. They found that predominant aggressors and aggressive victims both shared perceptions regarding the clarity and consistency of school rules. Furthermore, predominant

aggressors also perceived less support from their teachers. Therefore, students who perceive less adult support and find school rules unfair or unclear were more likely to display aggressive behaviors in school (O'Connor et al., 2020). Similar findings were noted by Huang and Cornell (2018), who investigated authoritative school climate (ASC). They noted that ASC, which was defined by a strict but fair school system and supportive teachers, was negatively related to suspension rates (Huang & Cornell, 2018). Heilbrun et al. (2017) further elaborated that when students knew the rules well, perceived equal treatment for all students, and perceived their teachers to be fair, the school had less need for suspensions.

The relationship between school climate and problematic behaviors appears to be bidirectional, which means that students' behaviors and experiences may also influence their perceptions of school climate. In a study by Simão et al. (2017), adolescent victims of cyberbullying were examined regarding their perceptions of school climate. The results revealed how cybervictimization predicted lower ratings of positive school climate. Victims of cyberbullying often reported these incidents to their friends and parents. Those few students who had reported their cybervictimization to their teachers tended to have more positive perceptions of school climate (Simão et al., 2017). Students who perceived a more positive school climate may have been more open to reporting problematic behaviors, which then had bearings on the school's overall disciplinary practices. Similarly, Mischel and Kitsantas's (2020) mixed-methods study on middle school students revealed how the prevalence of teasing and bullying predicted students' perceptions of school climate. Students may not feel safe in school when such incidents

occur frequently, which reflects their perceptions of poor school climate (Mischel &

Kitsantas, 2020). Students may also consider disciplinary practices as indicators of school

climate (Sadik, 2017). According to Sadik, while parents and teachers differed in

perceptions of the responsibility of children's problematic behaviors, students also

maintained a passive role, placing the responsibility of discipline on teachers. Huang and

Cornell (2018) noted that positive school climates were beneficial for all students

regardless of race or ethnicity. Based on the findings above, the researchers revealed how

schools can improve their school climate through clear and consistent disciplinary

practices and supportive teachers and staff.

In this section, I elaborated on the relationships between the school climate, the

parents, and children's behaviors. School climate represents the overall personality of the

school, including the interactions, relationships, values, and beliefs associated with the

school. Parents, as major stakeholders of the school system, hold valuable perceptions

regarding school climate. Their perceptions of school climate, although limited to the

minimal interactions they have with the school and the individuals within it, could

influence decisions such as the use of exclusionary discipline. Parents expect a warm and

welcoming school climate that is reflective of the familial values of lovingness and

demandingness for their children. Teachers and parents may hold dissimilar beliefs

regarding who holds more responsibility for developing prosocial behaviors in children.

Although parents do have major roles in children's behavioral development, the school

climate may also have an impact. School climates wherein rules are unclear or

inconsistent, and wherein faculty and staff are unsupportive, can lead to more aggressive

behaviors in students and may lead to more student suspensions. Inversely, prevalence of problematic behaviors within a school can influence students' perceptions of school climate, which generally involves the disciplinary practices within it. As such, school climate may influence exclusionary discipline, one of the commonly used practices in the 21st century.

Exclusionary Discipline

Exclusionary discipline has been a prevalent disciplinary practice in most schools in the 21st century. This practice involves the exclusion or removal of a student from education within the school premises temporarily or permanently (Hatton, 2013). This type of disciplinary practice began with the enactment of the Safe Schools Act during the 1970s as an answer to issues regarding school safety (Green et al. 2018). The act promoted the "no excuses" or "zero-tolerance" policies, which involve the strict control of children's behaviors (Bailey et al., 2019). These policies were further strengthened during the 1990s following the Gun-Free School Zones Act, which was implemented due to a series of school shootings (Jacobsen et al., 2019; Maeng et al., 2019). For the general safety of students, this act required any student with a firearm to be removed from school premises (Jacobsen et al., 2019). Although it began as a response to the safety of students, the zero-tolerance policy was soon applied to any student displaying disruptive or inappropriate behaviors (Jacobsen et al., 2019). Since then, several school, state, and nationwide policies and regulations followed in support of exclusionary discipline (Anderson, 2018; Bailey et al., 2019; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Green et al., 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2019; Maeng et al., 2019). The no excuses and zero-tolerance policies

became highly popular due to their purported advantage of increasing standardized test scores of disadvantaged children (Golann et al., 2019). What began as a precaution for student safety has since become a widespread practice for any kind of student misbehavior.

Prevalence of Exclusionary Discipline

Previous researchers have highlighted the alarming prevalence rates of exclusionary discipline practices in the United States. Gage et al. (2018) reported data from 2016 showing over 3 million students receiving at least one in school suspension and another 3 million students receiving at least one out of school suspension annually. Jacobsen et al. (2019) further noted that U.S. children at 9 years old may still be learning to read but may already be subjected to suspension or expulsion. These cases were especially prevalent in urban areas and minority children, with over 30% of Black male children and 15% of Black female children in urban areas having received at least one suspension or expulsion by age nine (Jacobsen et al., 2019). The risk of receiving exclusionary discipline was seven times higher for African American students, and two times higher for Native American and Latino students (Bal et al., 2019). English language learners may even have a higher risk of receiving exclusionary discipline, considering how language and communication are related to behavior (Whitford et al., 2018). Hatton (2013) noted that the actual prevalence rates of exclusionary discipline may be even higher, as there are undocumented cases such as when students are prompted to take absences or when parents are convinced to withdraw their children from school.

The racial differences in prevalence rates highlighted the inequality behind

exclusionary discipline practices. While exclusionary discipline may have its advantages,

leaders are beginning to recognize its disadvantages, especially to minority students. As

part of the Every Student Succeeds Act passed in 2015, the use of exclusionary discipline

has been discouraged (Bailey et al., 2019). In 2019, a total of 16 states and Washington

D.C. were reported to have laws limiting exclusionary discipline practices, particularly in

lower grade levels. Although these newer laws appear to be optimal, some schools may

fail to comply with them. For instance, Anderson (2018) highlighted the state of

Arkansas where the use of out-of-school suspension has been prohibited for truant

students. Three years after passing this bill, prevalence rates indicated that schools with

more truancy, more minority students, and those that used more out-of-school

suspensions were the ones that failed to comply with it. There were possible reasons cited

for this compliance failure: (a) lack of communication with the schools regarding the

reasons for the bill, the consequences for schools, and possible alternatives to out of

school suspension; (b) not holding schools accountable for complying; and (c) schools'

limited resources for complying (Anderson, 2018). Thus, proper coordination between

policymakers and school leaders may be necessary to properly implement laws and

reduce the use of exclusionary discipline practices. Compliance with these laws may

promote equal access to education.

Another group of disadvantaged students who were frequently subjected to

exclusionary discipline were children with disabilities. The most cited reason for

exclusionary discipline in the United Kingdom was "persistent disruptive behavior"

(Hatton, 2013, p. 156), a characteristic often linked to students with special needs. Researchers have already noted the increased risk of students with disabilities, particularly emotional or behavioral difficulties (EBD), ADHD, and learning disorders (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Hatton, 2013). Hatton (2018) noted in a later study that exclusionary discipline prevalence was higher for children with moderate learning difficulty and ASD. As these students are already disadvantaged to begin with, the additional exclusion from school activities may further handicap them by removing them from opportunities for learning and interaction with peers (Benson et al., 2019). Students with special needs who show problematic behavior may benefit more from other non-exclusionary discipline strategies and practices. The negative effects of exclusionary discipline are not limited to these groups of students with special needs.

Effect on Students

According to Anderson (2018), students subjected to exclusionary discipline are more likely to have lower academic achievement, higher risk of dropout or retaining a grade level, and higher probability of being involved in juvenile crime. Students of color and students with disabilities are more likely to be targeted by exclusionary practices (Bailey et al., 2019). For example, Black male students accounted for 25% of out of school suspensions in the 2015-2016 school year, despite making up just 8% of the school-age population (Gage et al., 2019), while out of school suspension rates for Black girls are almost six times higher than that of White girls (Department of Education, 2014). Students who are more susceptible to trauma or are more likely to be exposed to violence are also disproportionately affected by a policy that places the burden of blame

on children instead of on systems that perpetuate inequalities and do little to address the root causes of behavior (Bailey et al., 2019). Exclusionary discipline may lead to further behavioral issues rather than reducing behavioral problems (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Jacobsen et al., 2019). In the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study by Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013) between the school years 1999-2000 and 2004-2005, parents were tasked to report on their demographic characteristics and whether their child received exclusionary discipline within three waves in 6 years. They found that students who were excluded during the first wave were significantly more likely to be excluded in latter waves. The researchers highlighted the adverse effect of exclusionary discipline for promoting even more behavioral problems in children (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013). Jacobsen et al. (2019) likewise reported an increase in physical aggression in elementary students who have been suspended or expelled, which emphasized how exclusionary discipline is not only ineffective in reducing behavioral problems but may also be a predictor of future behavioral problems. The negative effects of exclusionary discipline may also be felt by the ones mostly responsible for the children, namely their parents.

Effect on Parents

When students are subjected to exclusionary discipline by their school, their parents are informed. Practices such as out of school suspension have been purported to be used by some school professionals to gain the families' attention (Green et al., 2018). Parental involvement is helpful for the child's education, but trying to obtain it by using exclusionary discipline may produce the adverse effect of damaging the parent-school relationship and partnership (Green et al., 2018). In their study, Bowman-Perrott et al.

(2013) observed how higher rates of exclusionary discipline led to higher parental involvement; however, this involvement was mostly comprised of unpleasant meetings regarding their children's behavioral issues. Family members have further expressed concerns regarding the equity of exclusionary discipline (Gregory & Skiba, 2019), considering the discrepancies in the aforementioned prevalence rates. Exclusionary discipline elicits negative reactions from parents. Some parents, however, may agree with such disciplinary measures.

Previous researchers have clarified the positions of schools that continue to use exclusionary discipline. In a study by Olowoyeye (2018), teachers described how students are given second chances before being subjected to exclusionary discipline. Teachers noted that they discussed the children's behaviors with their parents before the exclusionary discipline practice was enacted. Parents were therefore aware of the efforts made by the school and teachers and understood why exclusionary discipline was necessary. Some parents disagreed with the decision and their concerns were heard, but the school had the final word regarding the matter (Olowoyeye, 2018). Similarly, a founder and CEO of a charter school that practices exclusionary discipline shared how parents knew what they were signing up for when enrolling their children in the school and that these parents chose the school exactly because of the strict disciplinary practices (Golann et al., 2019). Parents of children with behavioral problems may understand the need for strict disciplinary measures; however, strict discipline does not necessarily equate with exclusionary discipline. Furthermore, these findings reflected the views of

school professionals, not the parents themselves, which highlighted the need for more

exploration on how parents truly perceived exclusionary discipline.

A major issue in exclusionary discipline is that it takes the student and their

parents from the equation. Gregory and Skiba (2019) emphasized how solving problems,

such as behavioral issues, required partnerships between the students' home and school.

With the home-school partnership, more alternatives to exclusionary discipline may be

obtained (Gregory & Skiba, 2019). Furthermore, while parents in the study conducted by

Golann et al. (2019) did state that they appreciated stricter disciplinary measures from

schools, they also stated that self-discipline was more important. Parents appreciated

more disciplinary measures that highlighted self-regulation and self-discipline rather than

simple rule following. Exclusionary discipline, in its process of removing the student

from education, did not promote self-regulation or self-discipline at all. Furthermore,

parents also expressed some apprehensions regarding the overuse of exclusionary

discipline even on minor cases of misbehavior (Golann et al., 2019). Overall, it appears

that, while parents appreciated strict disciplinary measures, a partnership that included

the parents and the students themselves was purported to be more optimal.

In summary, exclusionary discipline is a prevalent practice in the United States

wherein students are removed from education temporarily or permanently. Exclusionary

discipline follows the no excuses or zero-tolerance policies, which were initiated in

response to school safety issues in the 1970s and reinforced again in the 1990s.

Exclusionary discipline became popular as punishment for various types of problematic

behavior; however, minority groups were more likely to be subjected to exclusionary

discipline than White students, especially in urban areas. Children with special needs were also subjected to more exclusionary discipline which further impeded their development. Exclusionary discipline can have adverse effects on all types of students, particularly in terms of eliciting future problematic and aggressive behaviors. Parents' reactions to exclusionary discipline have generally been negative; however, some teachers and school leaders who continued to use exclusionary discipline argued that parents who enrolled their children in these schools were well aware of the practices they used and mostly appreciated the strict disciplinary measures. Strict discipline may not necessarily mean exclusionary discipline. Some parents indicated how self-discipline or self-regulation may be a better practice for their children than exclusionary discipline. The overall adverse effects of exclusionary discipline on students and their parents have led researchers to examine and recommend alternatives for dealing with behavioral problems. In the following section, I explore some of the more prominent examples.

Recommended Practices and Trainings

In lieu of exclusionary discipline, researchers have presented recommendations for schools to handle students' behavioral problems. A popular disciplinary program in the literature is School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), which is a multi-tiered program involving positive discipline interventions (Anderson, 2018; Feuerborn et al., 2019; Gage et al., 2018). The objectives of the SWPBIS are to (a) execute effective and preventive disciplinary practices with integrity, (b) base decisions on data and collaboration, and (c) foster a positive school climate and culture for better outcomes (Gage et al., 2018). The three tiers of SWPBIS involve preventive steps that

gradually become more specialized for students with unique needs (Anderson, 2018; Gage et al., 2018). The first tier involves a school wide prevention effort applied to all students. As students show more problematic behaviors, they are referred to the second tier, which involves more targeted prevention. Finally, students who show no improvement in the second tier are referred to the third tier where they receive individualized interventions targeted toward their unique needs (Anderson, 2018; Gage et al., 2018). As a school-wide effort, SWPBIS may be difficult to implement, as school professionals may have divergent beliefs and perspectives regarding discipline (Feuerborn et al., 2019). Feuerborn et al. indicated that some school professionals may disagree with the principles and utility of SWPBIS. Schools that aim for school-wide disciplinary efforts such as SWPBIS must ensure that all personnel are on board with the program and fully understand its reason, procedures, and benefits.

A similar disciplinary program for schools is threat assessment. The main principle for threat assessment is that problematic behaviors are considered as indicators of an underlying issue, such as student frustration (Maeng et al., 2019). This practice began in Virginia as the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines (VSTAG) and was soon adopted by other states (Maeng et al., 2019). This program utilizes a problem-solving approach that aims to identify the motivations, intentions, and needs behind students' problematic behaviors (Gregory & Skiba, 2019). Once identified, school professionals then work to eliminate the students' underlying problem and prevent further problematic behaviors (Maeng et al., 2019). Maeng et al. indicated that schools utilizing threat assessment had fewer cases of exclusionary discipline. Furthermore, Gregory and

Skiba (2019) stated that the use of VSTAG was related to more instances of parent

conferences and counseling, which reflects better parental involvement. Threat

assessment thus presents another possible alternative to exclusionary discipline that may

improve student outcomes.

Aside from alternative disciplinary measures, researchers also recommended

parent training programs that may help reduce their children's problematic behaviors, and

in turn, reduce the need for exclusionary discipline. Booker et al. (2019) investigated two

types of parent training programs targeting children's behavioral issues. Parent

management training (PMT), otherwise known as behavioral parent training, involves

teaching parents to use a structured contingency management program that is purported

to reduce disruptive behaviors and increase child compliance. Practices recommended for

this program included using direct and clear commands, differential attention, one-on-one

time for positive reinforcement of prosocial behaviors, and time out for negative

reinforcement of problematic behaviors. Alternatively, the Collaborative and Proactive

(CPS) program for parents trains them to create a collaborative environment wherein

children proactively help resolve the underlying issues behind their problematic

behaviors. Booker et al. (2019) noted that each program had its own specialty. While

PMT was purported to be more appropriate for warm and responsive family

environments, CPS was purported to be more appropriate for hostile family

environments. Each parent training program thus has its own unique way of helping

parents improve their children's behavior.

Some training programs for parents help to alleviate their own problems regarding their children's behaviors. One such example is the 4Rs and 2Ss Strengthening Families Program, which targets roles, responsibilities, relationships, respectful communication, social support, and stress (Gopalan et al., 2018). This program also improves parents' discipline practices involving consistent discipline, use of reinforcements, and enhanced family quality. The program is mostly recommended for parents who may be experiencing severe stress or depressive symptoms due to their children's behavioral problems (Gopalan et al., 2018). Although parent training programs may differ in process and aims, Leijten et al. (2019) noted certain factors that predicted the success of such programs. These factors included (a) the use of positive reinforcement, (b) the specific use of praise, and (c) the use of natural or logical consequences for children's problematic behaviors. These factors may reduce children's problematic behaviors, which, in turn, may reduce parents' stress regarding these behaviors.

As aforementioned, problematic or disruptive behaviors often co-occur with certain disorders or disabilities. For children with anxiety, the Parenting Resilient Kids (PaRK) intervention may help parents teach their children skills necessary for reducing their depression and anxiety. Behavioral management training was cited as an effective program that allowed parents of children with ASD to consider the problematic behavior's antecedent, increase overall home structure, and apply certain specific techniques to reduce problematic behaviors and increase compliance (Postorino, 2017). Such training programs may help parents deal with the dual issues of their children's disability and problematic behaviors.

In this section, I covered the commonly recommended practices and trainings within the literature. School-wide practices such as SWPBIS and threat assessment were cited as effective alternatives for exclusionary discipline in schools. The caveat for these programs is that all school professionals must be on board with the program in order for it to be successful. At the same time, certain parent training programs may also help reduce children's problematic behaviors and the subsequent use of exclusionary discipline. Programs such as PMT, CPS, 4Rs and 2Ss Strengthening Families Program, PaRK, and behavioral management training each had their own specialty. Parents and their referrers must be aware of the family dynamics and conditions in order to find the most suitable program for their families. With these recommendations, students may display less disruptive behavior, which may reduce the need for exclusionary discipline and also help to alleviate some parental stress.

Conclusion

The literature presented in this chapter described the roots and effects of children's behavioral problems, the parent-child relationship, school climate, and exclusionary discipline, as well as recommended practices and trainings to minimize the need for exclusionary discipline. Existing literature revealed several individual and environmental factors, as well as comorbidities, that may contribute to children's behavioral problems. Children exposed to classroom adversity and household chaos who had low self-regulation, possessed CU traits, and had comorbid disruptive behavior disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or anxiety, were more likely to display problematic behaviors that may cause them to be subjected to exclusionary discipline. Parents' mental

health, physical health, parenting style, and SES were also identified as possible factors

to children's behavioral development. Children's and parents' perceptions of school

climate also influenced children's behaviors in school. The ideal school climate is one

wherein the rules are strict, but fair and consistent, and school professionals are warm and

supportive. The frequent use of exclusionary discipline on certain types of students

denotes poor school climate. Exclusionary discipline was found to lead to more

problematic and aggressive behaviors in students and poorer school-parent relationships.

As the adverse effects of exclusionary discipline have been revealed, researchers have

recommended a number of practices and trainings for schools and parents to reduce

children's problematic behavior without resorting to exclusionary discipline. The

experiences of parents whose children have been subjected to exclusionary discipline are

lacking in the literature. For the current study, I sought to fill this gap and provide more

knowledge regarding the wide-ranging effects of exclusionary discipline. In the following

chapter, I elaborate upon the study's methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of parents who have a child who has been subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavioral problems in the classroom. I attempted to answer the following overarching research question: How are the parents of elementary schoolchildren who have been excluded from school due to behavioral issues affected by their child's exclusion? SQs derived from this overarching question were as follows:

SQa: What are the lived experiences of parents who have children who were subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavior problems?

SQb: How did parents cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion?

SQc: What is the perceived effect that disciplinary exclusion has on the relationship between parents and their children?

To answer these questions, I conducted a phenomenological study to gain a deep insight into how parents are affected by their children's disciplinary exclusion. As Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted, a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to develop a holistic understanding of a common lived experience within a certain group. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research methods for the current study, including the role of the researcher, a justification of the chosen methodology and sampling strategy, instrumentation, the data collection plan, the data analysis plan, and ethical considerations.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument because the researcher uses their senses to make sense of what is happening (J. A. Maxwell, 2005). The researcher is both an observer and a participant within their research. In qualitative interview research, the researcher is a participant because they choose what questions to ask based on their research agenda and guide the conversation to satisfy this purpose. The researcher is also an observer because they silently observe and record the responses (J. A. Maxwell, 2005; Weiss, 1994). As a result, researcher bias in the selection, delivery, and interpretation of the interview questions and answers is inevitable. One key to maintaining a successful research relationship is to manage these biases. As observer-participants, researchers have a responsibility to acknowledge their potential biases throughout the research process, from the selection of the research topic to the analysis of data (J. A. Maxwell, 2005). Additionally, researcher bias can be manifested through the selection of data that either fit the researcher's preexisting conclusions or stand out (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Exploring how these biases can affect the data collection and analysis early on can help increase the study's validity. Biases in the present study included my opinion that disciplinary exclusion is an unfair practice. Furthermore, I had worked in special needs education for 10 years and helped train teachers to work with children who are twice exceptional.

In addition to identifying sources of bias early on, the researcher has other responsibilities. These include working in conjunction with participants to produce useful information; defining the topics that will be covered in interviews and monitoring the

quality of what is reported; acting as a silent, impartial observer; respecting participants' integrity; and enforcing the principle of no harm to participants (Weiss, 1994). The researcher should ensure that they work collaboratively with their participants to make sure that data relevant to the study are obtained in a way that respects the respondents' rights.

In qualitative research, the researcher must negotiate and renegotiate ongoing relationships with their participants. As J. A. Maxwell (2005) noted, this relationship should be a participatory partnership between the researcher and each participant in which the researcher collaborates with their participants to generate new and useful knowledge. As with all types of relationships, the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is subject to researcher bias and possible power discrepancies (J. A. Maxwell, 2005). For example, situations in which the researcher and the participants come from starkly different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds might, intentionally or not, produce power differentials that will influence the ways in which participants respond. Differences in gender and race also have the potential to perpetuate existing power relationships. The potential effect that these differences can have on the data should be kept in mind during the data collection and analysis process.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The target sample population for this study was parents who have at least one child who has been subjected to disciplinary exclusion at school due to classroom behavioral issues. For the purposes of this study, the child had to be elementary age and

must have been either suspended or expelled from school due to their behavior. For the purposes of this study, age (other than the age of the child), gender, and ethnic group of the parents and children were not relevant. Selected participants were, however, classified as middle to upper-middle class. Parents with children who were not elementary age who had been excluded from school were not included in the study, as were parents who did not fall into the aforementioned socioeconomic categories. In order to select participants who underwent the same experience and met all of the selection criteria, purposeful sampling was used.

Purposeful sampling was an appropriate sampling technique for the present study because the focus was on recruiting parents who shared lived experiences of the same phenomenon. Purposeful sampling has several important goals: achieving representativeness of the individuals selected, adequately capturing homogeneity in the population, examining cases that are relevant to previously held theories, and establishing comparisons to help explain the differences between individual responses (J. A. Maxwell, 2005). A deliberate selection method yields more confidence that the conclusions drawn are accurate representations of the population as compared to conducting a random sample on a small scale. Although random sampling is a useful way to ensure that the sample population represents the larger population, such a method is only effective for large sample sizes, which are not feasible in phenomenological studies (J. A. Maxwell, 2005). Purposeful sampling is best accomplished by defining the qualities of the variation that are most relevant to a study and selecting participants who represent the most important of these variations (J. A. Maxwell, 2005).

To facilitate the identification of potential participants, I obtained lists of names of children who had been disciplinarily excluded from local schools. I contacted the parents first by mail, sending a letter explaining the purpose of the research and the importance of their participation. According to Weiss (1994), this is an effective way to make preliminary contact. After 1 week, I followed up with a telephone call, identified myself, my sponsoring institution, how the potential respondent's name was found, why they were selected, and the purpose of the interview. I also asked questions confirming the potential respondent's eligibility (e.g., citizenship status and economic bracket). If the respondent agreed to proceed with an interview, they were sent an informed consent form and a time and date for an in-person interview was arranged. On the day of the interview, I discussed the informed consent form with participants, had it signed, and reiterated the purpose of the interview prior to commencing.

Criteria for Selection

Participants were required to meet the following criteria: (a) fall into the middle to upper-middle class income bracket and (b) have at least one elementary-age child who was subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavioral issues in the classroom. In this study, the parents of children who were not elementary age but had been excluded from school were not included, and parents whose incomes fell below or above the predetermined brackets were excluded. The justification for this was that disciplinary exclusion disproportionately affects children coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bailey et al., 2019). These selection criteria were set to control for the effects that class might have had on the enforcement of exclusionary practices. Because

race is thought to play an important role in disciplinary exclusion (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Valdebenito et al., 2019), and to encourage cross-case comparison in the data analysis, race and ethnicity were not factors in the selection criteria. Finally, because the early years of school are crucial in terms of children's emotional and behavioral development (Bailey et al., 2019), the study was limited to elementary-age children.

Number of Participants

When it comes to selecting participants, there is no universally accepted rule for what constitutes an adequate sample size. According to Elo et al. (2014), the number of participants in a study of individuals who have experienced a common phenomenon should not exceed 10 to 12. On the other hand, Smith and Osborn (2007) suggested that the sample size for phenomenological studies should be as small as three and five to allow time to conduct a thorough investigation. The sample size should not be too small to avoid problems with data saturation and should not be too large to avoid complicating data analysis and requiring more time (J. A. Maxwell, 2005). Therefore, I aimed to recruit 10 to 12 participants.

Saturation

Data saturation occurs when interviews no longer shed new light on the issue of interest (Weiss, 1994). The more interviews that are conducted, the more likely it is that data saturation will be reached. As a result, I aimed to recruit between 10 and 12 participants.

Instrumentation

Data collection was directed by an interview guide with open-ended questions that centered around parents' experiences with their children who had been disciplinarily excluded from school. The interview guide was organized into topics by a diachronic nature to gain insight into parents' lived experiences with disciplinary exclusion from the very beginning (see Weiss, 1994). Sample topics included behavioral events that led up to their child's exclusion, the parents' initial reaction to the punishment, and how the parents' reaction changed over time. By employing a diachronic approach, I was able to develop a holistic understanding of how parents were affected by exclusionary policies. Although lines of inquiry were generated from a predetermined list of relevant topics, I may or may not have asked all of these questions based on the nature of the interview. To facilitate a natural flow of thought, interruptions were kept to a minimum, with clarifications only being asked if something was not made clear. Prior to the commencement of interviews (see Appendix A for interview questions), the interview guide was disseminated to university faculty to ensure content validity and clarity.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Prior to recruitment, I obtained Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure that the data collection process would be in alignment with university ethical standards. Potential participants were identified from lists of children who had been subjected to exclusionary practices. I then sent a brief letter to potential households explaining the purpose of the study and why they qualified. After about 1 week, I followed up with potential participants by phone to determine their eligibility and

interest. The informed consent form and demographics form were mailed or emailed to potential participants who expressed interest over the phone. Interested parties were asked to read over the information and email me within 10 days with their demographics form if they were interested. Upon confirming participants' eligibility through the demographics survey, I proceeded to set up a date and time for the interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were held through video conferencing (e.g., Skype or Zoom). Potential candidates who did not respond within the allotted 10 days were contacted again to assess their interest, and the first 12 participants who indicated their interest were included in the interviews. I kept the contact details of other interested parties in the event that some participants withdrew unexpectedly or data saturation was not achieved after the first 12 interviews.

Once participants indicated their interest and met eligibility requirements, the interview data and time were decided upon. Interviews were conducted through video conferencing so that I and participants would be able to see each other and minimize the risk of any miscommunication. Prior to the start of the interview, I reiterated the purpose of the study and went over the terms of the informed consent form. Participants were reassured of their confidentiality throughout the process. Participants were also told that they had the right to withdraw from the interview process and could request to see their interview transcript at any time. If participants had not already emailed me an affirmative response to the informed consent form, they provided their verbal consent. Once consent had been established, the interview began, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. If the participants consented to it, the interview was recorded using the record function in

Skype or Zoom so that I only had to take brief and succinct notes during the interview. If recording made the participants feel uncomfortable, then I took detailed notes throughout the interview. Participants were interviewed once and were contacted once or twice more to review their interview transcripts. Thank-you letters were sent to all participants as a gesture of appreciation for their time.

Data Analysis

Following data collection, I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews. The aim was to immediately transcribe rather than wait until all of the interviews had been conducted to both save time and to identify emerging themes that could be incorporated into future interviews. As Loftland and Loftland (1984) emphasized, the distinction between data collection and analysis is an artificial one; the two should be conducted in tandem to achieve the best results. After transcription, the data were coded to identify important themes. Rather than coding on a per-question basis, each transcript was coded as an individual unit to allow for the creation of categories and the grouping of relevant data. Moustakas's (1994) method of analyzing phenomenological data was followed. Steps in this process included the following:

- First, statements that were relevant to the goals of the study were written down.

- All statements that were not repetitive or overlapping were listed; these statements constituted the units of meaning.

- These statements were arranged into units and grouped in themes.

- The units of meaning and themes were synthesized to form the description of various elements of the phenomenon in question and to support these descriptions with verbatim quotes.

- Imaginative variation was used to describe the structures of the phenomenon.

- A textural structural description of the meanings and essence of the experiences was created.

- An overall textural structural description was created and supported with verbatim quotes from the original data by using all of the individual textural structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

Member checking of each individual's textural structural description was carried out to help increase validity. NVivo 11.0 software was used to aid in the coding process, which was used to sort, classify, and arrange data, and also identified patterns both within the interview data and between interview data and the wider literature.

Trustworthiness

When conducting interviews, it was crucial that I established trust with my respondents in order to facilitate the collection of accurate data (Maxwell, 2005). It was also critical that the data in the study itself appeared trustworthy—that it was reliable and could explain what it intended to explain. Trustworthiness was gained by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and authenticity (Cope, 2014). I followed the protocol established by Callari and Young (2015) in addressing bias by engaging in reflexive journaling of the beliefs and biases that could compromise the research. Triangulation and member checking (Maxwell, 2005) were two other methods

that I used to improve the validity and reliability of the results. Member checking was done on both transcriptions of the interviews and the results of the analysis.

Triangulation involves using multiple methods and sources of data to make sense of research findings (Maxwell, 2005). Doing so increases a study's validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014). In this study, results were collected using several methods, including interviews, a focus group, and the use of quasi-statistics. Caillaud and Flick (2017) emphasized the utility of using focus groups to provide deeper insights into the collective construction of a certain phenomenon. In the present study, a focus group among parents with a child who had been subjected to disciplinary exclusion was conducted in order to provide a different perspective on how parents are affected by disciplinary exclusion. Sharing their experiences with other parents elicited novel ideas and thoughts that were not expressed in individual interviews. Similarly, parents were more likely to divulge more sensitive information during an individual interview. Quasi-statistics generated from both interviews and the focus group helped reveal trends in parents' perceptions that were used to draw broad conclusions. Triangulation of data gathered from focus group interviews helped provide me with a more holistic understanding of how parents have been affected by their child's disciplinary exclusion.

Member checking is a method for increasing the credibility of results obtained through qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005). Essentially, member checking is a way of demonstrating the accuracy and honesty of a study's findings by allowing participants to ensure that their responses resonate with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). In the

present study, each interviewee received a copy of their own interview transcript so that

they could review what was said and make additional edits if necessary. By giving

participants a second opportunity to think about their experiences regarding disciplinary

exclusion, interviewees were able to both check the accuracy of the transcript itself and to

provide clarity to their responses if necessary. I reached out to a few selected participants

via email to conduct the member check; if no email response was received, then I

scheduled another in-person meeting with them so that they could review their interview

transcript. A member check of the analyzed data was also performed by providing a few

participants with synthesized data and allowing them the opportunity to determine if

others' experiences were similar to their own. As Birt et al. (2016) point out, this type of

member checking is suggestive of a grounded theory approach in which preliminary

theories are tested and "grounded" by further data. This method is particularly

appropriate when the lived experiences of participants are being explored.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which the research conducted represents the

"truth value" or the real meaning of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maxwell

(2005) argued that triangulation is one method used to improve credibility by reducing

the risk that the conclusions drawn will only reflect the systematic limitations or biases of

a particular source or method. Therefore, participants' responses were checked against

other sources, such as participant observation and empirical research. While observations

provide mostly descriptive data, they can also provide insight into people's behavior and

the broader context in which it occurs (Maxwell, 2005). For example, observations of

how the participants interacted with their children helped reinforce their narratives

regarding how these interactions were affected by their child's exclusion from school.

Credibility can also be increased by member checking and by peer debriefing, in which

findings from the research and questions about the research process are shared with other

experts to acquire additional perspectives (Moon et al., 2016). As someone who has

worked in Education for ten years, I recognize that I do bring certain biases to the

conclusions that may be drawn. I am utilizing these tools, however, to mediate potential

biases.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability is the extent to which the results can be

transferred to other contexts (Maxwell, 2005). In other words, it is how well the findings

from one particular study, conducted on a particular sample population, can be

generalized onto studies conducted on other sample populations. As Maxwell (2005)

noted, the value of a qualitative study is often found in the fact that the insights gained

from one particular study are not easily transferrable due to their in depth and specific

nature. To check the validity and reliability of the results from a study, however, it is

important that a study be easily replicable (Munhall, 2012). Therefore, the present study

retained the original rich and thick replies of the interview participants and presented

readers with a detailed methodology to make replication easier.

Dependability

According to Moon et al. (2016), dependability refers to the consistency and

reliability of the results and the degree to which the research process has been

documented. A study that is highly dependable uses a research process that is easily followed and critiqued. Dependability can be increased through a detailed documentation of the research design and implementation and can also be enhanced through self-assessments of researcher bias, which increase the transparency of the research process and reduce bias (Moon et al., 2016). Data triangulation is another method of increasing dependability, as triangulating the interview data with other sources and methods can help ensure that the conclusions made do not reflect the systematic biases of a certain source or method (Maxwell, 2005).

Confirmability

Highly confirmable studies are those with results that can be corroborated by other researchers and are clearly replicable and linked to the conclusions (Moon et al., 2016). In other words, confirmability describes the extent to which a study's results are confirmed to be accurate representations of the phenomenon in question. In the present study, confirmability was increased by outlining the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher (Moon et al., 2016). Additionally, reflexive journaling, in which the researcher conducts a self-assessment of their own biases, was carried out to ensure that the results were based on the experiences of the participants rather than the preferences of the researcher. The researcher also conducted member checks with a few of the participants to have them confirm the accuracy of their interview transcripts and to make sure that they agreed with the manner in which their interview data were interpreted.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical considerations form a key component of the research process and should be considered throughout its entirety. In a university setting, obtaining approval from the IRB is the first step in this process (Sin, 2005). The researcher should continuously negotiate ethical issues such as confidentiality. Due to restrictions on face to face meetings imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Walden University prohibits doctoral students from conducting this type of interview until guidelines are revised from the CDC. As a result, documents sent to the IRB contained provisions for conducting videoconferencing meetings with participants. Under normal circumstances, participants would be sent an informed consent document prior to the interview day and the researcher would review it with the participants on the day of their interview. In line with current Walden University policy, participants were still emailed an informed consent form; however, they were asked to respond to the email indicating their consent prior to the interview. Alternatively, participants gave verbal consent during the video interview, which was recorded. The informed consent document spelled out the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and the role of the participants. It also guaranteed confidentiality, that all identifying information would be kept anonymous, and that the data collected would only be used for the purposes of the study. The nature of the present study was likely to present some discomfort to participants, as they were asked to divulge information about their child's behavior and how they responded to that behavior. Some participants felt uncomfortable talking about an area as sensitive as their relationship with their child; therefore, steps were taken to minimize these risks. These steps included

informing participants of their right to withdraw from the interview process at any point, to access their interview transcript, and to view the final product. Additionally, the researcher framed interview questions in a nonjudgmental way to help avoid causing participants personal distress, which Weiss (1994) identified as being a key ethical consideration in qualitative research.

Weiss (1994) pointed out that one ethical concern is whether the interviewer has the right to ask participants about potentially painful material. There is no definitive answer to this, but generally, if the research is about potentially sensitive material, then the researcher is obligated to ask about this (Weiss, 1994). It is important that the interviewer remain an impartial presence during the interview. This is especially true when researchers are investigating potentially sensitive areas, as participants are likely to become emotional during the interview (Weiss, 1994). Rather than provide the participant with emotional support, the researcher should remain quiet until they feel the participant is ready to continue. The distinction between research interviewing and therapeutic interviewing is paramount (Weiss, 1994). Finally, since this study indirectly involved children, the researcher had a responsibility to report to the appropriate authorities if they suspected child abuse. In sum, the researcher ensured participants that their responses would be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. All data, both hard and electronic copies, were securely stored in locked filing cabinets and password-protected computer files and will be for 5 years from the date of study approval. After this time, all paper data will be shredded and all electronic data will be permanently deleted.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the research design, rationale, and methodology for the current study. A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen to solicit in-depth information about the lived experiences of parents who have a child who was subjected to disciplinary exclusion at school for behavioral reasons. Study participants were selected based on certain criteria such as child's age, household income, and citizenship status. Participants were selected via purposeful selection from school-sourced lists and were contacted by mail and then by phone. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 to 12 participants to explore their lived experiences relating to exclusionary school practices. Data was coded and analyzed with the aid of NVivo software, and procedures such as member checking and triangulation helped increase validity and reliability. In the next section of this study, I present an overview of the results.

Chapter 4: Results

Although the impacts of disciplinary exclusion on children are well known, the impact on parents is not as well understood (Hatton, 2018). Nagaratnam and Yeo (2018) found that the parents of children who had been expelled from schools in Malaysia felt confused, surprised, and devastated by their child's exclusion. Findings from this case study, however, could not be directly applied to an American setting (Hatton, 2018).

Fernando et al. (2018) posited that parenting can influence the developmental trajectory of internalizing and externalizing behaviors that can result in the development of anxiety and depression linked with exclusion. The exploration of the influence of elementary exclusion on the parents of children with behavioral problems can help school professionals develop policies to increase the positive and healthy development of children in elementary school (Bailey et al., 2019). The results of the current study added to the body of knowledge regarding the influence of elementary exclusion on parents who have children with behavioral problems and addressed a gap in the literature regarding the impact on parents when a child is suspended or expelled. The current study may further enable practitioners to better understand the outcomes of parents who have been subject to exclusionary policies in their children's elementary schools.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of parents who have a child who has been subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavioral problems in the classroom. A phenomenological approach was employed to explore and describe the ways in which parents are affected by their child's exclusion. The questions were as follows:

RQ: How are the parents of elementary schoolchildren who have been excluded from school due to behavioral issues affected by their child's exclusion?

SQa: What are the lived experiences of parents who have children who were subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavior problems?

SQb: How did parents cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion?

SQc: What is the perceived effect that disciplinary exclusion has on the relationship between parents and their children?

Demographics

Participants in this study met the following criteria: (a) were in the middle to upper-middle class income bracket and (b) had at least one elementary-age child who was subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavioral issues in the classroom.

Data Collection

There were 12 participants who completed interviews for this study. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. All interview transcripts were then uploaded to NVivo 12 Pro for organization and analysis. The data were organized by participant, and each participant was given a pseudonym. Table 1 displays participants' interview details.

Table 1

Participant Interview Details

Participant	Number of transcript pages (Time New Roman, font size 12, single spaced)	Length (minutes)
Participant 1	21	68
Participant 2	21	46
Participant 3	20	49
Participant 4	25	56
Participant 5	19	54
Participant 6	18	48
Participant 7	27	63
Participant 8	17	49
Participant 9	31	55
Participant 10	18	41
Participant 11	25	66
Participant 12	24	62
MEAN	22	55
TOTAL	266	657

Data Analysis

The data were coded to identify themes after transcription. Each transcript was coded as an individual unit to allow for the creation of categories and the grouping of relevant data. I followed Moustakas's (1994) method of data analysis for analyzing phenomenological data. Steps in this process included the following:

- Statements that were relevant to the goals of the study were written down.

- All statements that were not repetitive or overlapping were listed; these statements constituted the units of meaning.

- These statements were arranged into units and grouped in themes.

- The units of meaning and themes were synthesized to form the description of various elements of the phenomenon in question and to support these descriptions with verbatim quotes.

- Imaginative variation was used to describe the structures of the phenomenon.

- A textural-structural description of the meanings and essence of the experiences was created.

- An overall textural structural description that was supported with verbatim quotes from the original data was created by using all of the individual textural structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

I conducted member checking of each individual's textural structural description to increase validity and used NVivo 12.0 software to aid in the coding process and to sort, classify, and arrange data. I also identified patterns both within the interview data and between interview data and the wider literature.

Trustworthiness

I sought to gain trustworthiness by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and authenticity (see Cope, 2014). I followed the protocol established by Callari and Young (2015) in addressing bias by engaging in reflexive journaling of the beliefs and biases that could have compromised the research. Transcript review and member checking were done to enhance trustworthiness.

In the current study, each interviewee received a copy of their interview transcript so that they could review what was said and make revisions if necessary. By providing

participants a second opportunity to think about their experiences regarding disciplinary

exclusion, I was able to confirm the accuracy of the transcript and to provide clarity to

their responses. I reached out to participants via email to conduct the transcript review; if

no email response was received, then I scheduled another in-person meeting with them so

that they could review their interview transcript. A member check of the analyzed data

was also performed by providing participants with synthesized data and allowing them

the opportunity to determine whether others' experiences were similar to their own.

Credibility

I checked participants' responses against other sources, such as participant

observation and empirical research. Although observations provide mostly descriptive

data, observations also provide insight into people's behavior and the broader context in

which it occurred (J. A. Maxwell, 2005). In the current study, member checking and peer

debriefing increased credibility. Findings from the study and questions about the research

process were shared with other experts to acquire additional perspectives.

Transferability

The current study retained the original rich and thick replies of the interview

participants and presented readers with a detailed methodology to make replication

easier.

Dependability

A study that is dependable uses a research process that is easily followed and

critiqued. Dependability is increased through a detailed documentation of the research

design and implementation (Moon et al., 2016). I conducted self-assessments of bias to increase the transparency of the research process and to reduce bias.

Confirmability

In the current study, confirmability was increased by outlining my ontological and epistemological position. In addition, I conducted reflexive journaling to document self-assessments of biases to ensure that the results were based on the experiences of the participants rather than my preferences. I also conducted member checks with the participants to have them confirm the accuracy of their interview transcripts and to make sure that they agreed with the manner in which their interview data were interpreted.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

The research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ: How are the parents of elementary schoolchildren who have been excluded from school due to behavioral issues affected by their child's exclusion?

SQa: What are the lived experiences of parents who have children who were subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavior problems?

SQb: How did parents cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion?

SQc: What is the perceived effect that disciplinary exclusion has on the relationship between parents and their children?

There were four themes that emerged from this iterative, qualitative analysis: (a) the impact of exclusion on parents, (b) the child's experience with exclusion, (c) coping strategies after exclusion, and (d) changes in parent–child relationship. Each theme encompassed several subthemes and codes.

The first theme, impact of exclusion on parents, was composed of three subthemes: relationship impacts, personal impacts, and career impacts. These subthemes developed from participants' rich and varied responses to the questions about the effect that their child's exclusion had on them. Participants detailed these effects in various aspects of their life, including relationships, career, and personal well-being.

The second theme, child experience with exclusion, was composed of one subtheme: experience with school staff. This subtheme was motivated by the diversity of responses to the questions prompting the description of the events leading up to participant's child's exclusion. Participants described their interactions with the school and school staff.

The third theme, coping strategies after exclusion, was composed of four subthemes: substance use, social support, mental health help, and attempts to fix the problem. This third theme related to participants' descriptions of how they attempted to deal with their child's exclusion. These subthemes emerged from participants' responses to questions regarding methods they used to handle their feelings and reactions to this event.

The fourth theme and final theme, changes in parent–child relationship, was composed of two subthemes: parenting changes and household changes. This theme covered ideas conveying how the parents attempted to make changes in their parenting methods and how their households were adapted to meet their children's needs.

Research Question 1a

What are the lived experiences of parents who have children who were subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavior problems?

Impact of Exclusion on Parents

One major theme was the impact of exclusion on parents, which revealed participants' feelings and experiences regarding their child's exclusion. This theme was composed of three subthemes: relationship impacts, personal impacts, and career impacts. These subthemes represented the ways that this event can impact a parent's life. All subthemes and data samples that supported these subthemes are provided in the following sections.

Relationship Impacts. Most participants (10) provided descriptions of the types of impacts their child's exclusion had on their relationships. These comments were coded as "partner relationship impact" and "isolating." Most participants (9) described examples of how this event impacted their relationships with their partner. Several participants reported that the exclusion negatively impacted their relationships and added additional strain. For example, Participant 11 described "[the event] created issues in my marriage for sure, because it was such a heavy burden to bear; it was it was literally consuming on every level." Similarly, Participant 12 said

> Yeah, it did, um, with my husband, um, it took because he was at work all day
> and was not, you know, he just wasn't experiencing what I was experiencing. It
> took him a while to really understand that something that something was indeed
> wrong. And that was a strain.

For one couple, this event contributed to their decision to divorce.

In contrast, some participants described that they felt like they were on the same page as their partner, and they were equally sharing the burden of this event. For example, Participant 10 stated, "Yeah. Because we both were equally upset. We were on the same page, you know?" Similarly, Participant 4 shared,

And I'm so lucky, because my partner is amazing. And he went through the whole process with me. He was on every single appointment, you know, he was there. But I was ultimately the one figuring it out because I wasn't working. He was working full time. And like, it does wouldn't have been fair to me to be like this is your project now.

Other participants noted the support they received from their partners. For example, Participant 3 noted, "I mean, we just never feel like we have enough time alone. And when he was supportive, he could see how unhappy I was."

In addition to relationship impacts, a few participants commented on how their child's exclusion affected friendships. For example, Participant 5 shared,

I mean, the exclusion is, you know, when you start to be quote, unquote, the behavioral problem, you know, then you don't get invited to the birthday parties. And the parents then cannot be friends with you, because then it would be awkward to then not invite you and your child to the party.

Similarly, Participant 7 said, "It was extremely isolating. So there wasn't really anybody to talk to very much. And then when we pulled him out and really didn't tell anybody."

These participants felt that they were rejected from the school social network as a result of the exclusion.

Personal Impacts. Ten participants described how the exclusion impacted aspects of their personal well-being. Many participants (8) reported that they experienced some health challenges during and after their child's exclusion. Several participants described the anxiety they felt before their child's exclusion related to telephone calls from the school. For example, Participant 10 said "It's just when you every time the phone rings, you're scared it's gonna be the school and then when you see it as the school your heart just drops. You're just like, oh my god, what?" In addition, Participant 11 recounted,

> Yeah, they would call me…especially at the beginning. But then it became like more of a regular thing. And that post December…there was a directive from the principal to his teacher of if he breaks one rule, like no more three chances or anything like if he breaks one rule he's out and you send him directly here, you know? So once that started happening more and more and more…a sense of like anxiety about getting calls.

Participant 12 described experiencing depression as a result. This participant shared, "I did become depressed because I felt like people who were supposed to support me had let me down, like, I placed my trust in this school, that they were going to take care of my child." Similarly, Participant 3 responded, "I've carried a low grade. I don't know how luckily, you know, constant depression, anxiety." Participant 7 described an intense reaction to the school: "I mean, I was like a basket case, I couldn't sleep at night,

you know, like, I couldn't do my work. I really like I couldn't even go to the school. I thought I was going to like, faint every time." Overall, participants reported health impacts that were seemingly directly related to their child's exclusion.

Career Impacts. Nine participants described how the exclusion impacted their careers. Some participants reported that the exclusion and meetings to discuss disciplinary actions frequently interfered with work. For example, Participant 2 shared, "Yeah, they just didn't, wasn't able to network enough to get more appointments." Participant 3 also described losing a contract as a result of the time spent dealing with the exclusion:

> I had a book contract for third book, when he was in first grade. It's about the contract. Number one, I got the contract was probably towards the beginning of first grade, and I couldn't do it. They finally revoked the contract, which was fine, because I just couldn't do it couldn't do anyway, it heavily affected your well being.

Participant 7 also noted, "This has been career suicide, I'm basically giving up my entire career for him because of his school."

Other participants did not experience significant career impacts. For example, Participant 4 said, "I guess in some ways, I was lucky because I wasn't working. But it also took over like it affected my recovery for sure." In addition, Participant 5 stated, "I'm so driven that it has not, it is not affected my work, it's affected my health. I mean because I just keep plowing through."

Synthesis of Impact of Exclusion on Parents Theme. In summary, the impact of exclusion on parents was frequently referenced by participants. This theme addressed the first question by demonstrating the lived experiences of parents who had children subjected to disciplinary measures. This theme was composed of several examples of the direct impacts of these measures on careers, relationships, and personal well-being.

Child Experience with Exclusion

Another major theme was child experience with exclusion, which exposed participants' descriptions of how they saw their children going through disciplinary exclusion. This theme was composed of one subtheme: experience with school staff. This subtheme represented the parents' experiences with dealing with school staff during their child's exclusion. In the following section, I provide examples of quotes that motivated these subthemes.

Experience With School Staff. Most participants (11) provided descriptions of the types of experiences they had with their children's schools and the staff within those schools. These comments were coded "no support after exclusion" or "attempted interventions." Many participants (6) identified a lack of support from their child's school following disciplinary exclusion. For example, Participant 10 stated that after the exclusion, "Oh, absolutely not. I never I never heard from them again. They just wanted to pass off and get us out of there. They did not want us at attend their school." Similarly, Participant 12 noted, "No resources, no suggestions? Nothing. Literally nothing. I mean, when I look back on it, it was just horrible. It's horrible the way they treated us." In addition, Participant 4 reported,

It was also kind of good riddance. Because once I knew how they felt about my

kid, I would anybody who would ever think about taking their kid there? I'd be

like, I would not. Because they didn't care. You know, they never followed up

after to see how he was doing.

In contrast, some participants described interventions that were attempted at their

children's schools prior to the child's exclusion. For example, Participant 5 said,

I will say he was put with the most loving, wonderful kindergarten teacher, that's

really good that we used to call her the queen of kindergarten…and she put him in

a leadership role because she heard him with a very kind of well-mannered other

child who they became best friends.

In addition, Participant 3 commented, "In second grade, that he basically gave him

magnet aid." Overall, parents did not feel that enough attempts were made to work with

their child.

Synthesis of Child Experience with Exclusion Theme. In summary, the theme

of child experience with exclusion was frequently referenced by participants. This theme

addressed the first question by demonstrating another aspect of the lived experience of

parents: how the child experienced their disciplinary exclusion. This theme was

composed of several examples of how parents experienced this exclusion with the school,

including both positive and negative experiences.

Research Question 1b

How did parents cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion?

Coping Strategies After Exclusion

The theme of coping strategies after exclusion includes information about how parents attempted to cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion. This theme includes subthemes related to the types of activities and methods that were used for coping. The subthemes related to this theme (attempts to fix problem, mental health help, social support, and substance use) highlight the variety of methods that were employed by participants. All subthemes and examples of quotes that motivated these subthemes are provided in the following sections.

Attempts to Fix the Problem. Many participants (8) described how they tried to "fix" their child's exclusion. These descriptions were coded in two different ways: "question about medication" and "learning more." Five participants remarked that medication was considered as an option to address some of their child's behavioral problems. For example, Participant 2 described the complicated thought process involved in considering medication:

I felt like I was failing him. I felt like, you know, should he be on ADHD medication? Should he not be an ADHD medication? You know, if he isn't litigation, is there addictive qualities and impact his health. But if he's not, I'm going to be continuously shamed. And he maybe he'll be expelled from every school he goes to, his father was expelled for multiple principles and multiple lights goals for the ADHD, so instead of thinking.

Participant 3 reported the adverse effects medications had:

> We were trying him on some medications. And this one medication made him
>
> paranoid, and also have horrible, horrible, intrusive thoughts, like imagining that
>
> zombies were coming out of his closet. And that was the medication. So I mean, it
>
> was like a perfect storm. It was a nightmare.

In contrast, Participant 5 shared a positive experience with medication: "So the

medication has made all the difference like we can our kids without medication is just as

dysregulated as he was when he was three with medication use like a fully functioning

wonderful kid."

Attempting to learn more to address these problems was another approach

frequently described by participants. For example, Participant 11 responded,

> I basically had to read a lot of books. I had to go meet with a lot of experts. I did
>
> throw a lot of money on it to go do a lot of different types of, you know, you
>
> know, because everybody was like, well, we don't know, maybe I am your
>
> answer.

Similarly, Participant 8 identified a helpful book: "I went to a conference once with this

guy that wrote a book called *Simplicity Parenting*."

Several participants mentioned that they needed to do research on schools because

they could not find schools that would fit well with their children. For example,

Participant 12 commented, "You know, because the problem is the private schools, there

weren't any. There weren't any therapeutic schools that, you know, were right for him

socially, and behaviorally and academically, academically, because he's very bright."

Similarly, Participant 7 shared, "I don't think any amount of support at the end of the day

would have made it a functional environment for him, because the ratio was just too large." These parents felt at a loss for where they could place their child. Participant 3 aptly stated, "I felt like we were refugees. I literally felt like we were refugees. It was horrible. I felt like he didn't belong anywhere and scared just running scared."

Mental Health Help. Many participants described the different mental health services they used to cope. These responses were coded "therapy" or "health measures." Eight participants commented on their use of therapy during and/or after their child's disciplinary exclusion. Participant 12 simply stated, "I was also in therapy. I mean, I had a therapist that I saw every week." Participant 2 also described an experience with therapy in a community setting:

> Our synagogue diversity daughters report, I did get counseling. I did look into other extended sort of programs. But I Palo Alto, Jewish community Family Services, and, but often and most of the programs have waitlists, or were very expensive.

Participant 4 also stated, "I've had a therapist consistently just because of everything I've been through." Participant 5 described therapy as part of their normal routine before this exclusion experience: "I went to therapy on a regular basis. So I'm a trauma survivor. So I always have on to the therapy."

Contrastingly, a few participants did not seek out therapy for themselves but did obtain a therapist for their child. For example, Participant 2 described, "He did receive some therapy, not as much as I would have liked. We had to pay for an ADHD and private evaluation. So that helped." Similarly, Participant 8 shared,

I mean, my son's in therapy still, and he was unhappy when he went to like, this

thing called campus freeze, which like, was adopted by a local, like a local

hospice thing. And he had a relative die, they have a counseling camp for you to

go to. And then it has been in therapy for like a while.

These participants identified therapy as a helpful tool either for their own use or their

child's use.

In addition to therapy, participants also discussed other health measures they took

to address mental health concerns. Two participants had responses coded as "health

measures." Participant 12 described overall health methods: "I tried to you know,

exercise. Keep up my fit, to eat well, yep, get enough sleep." In addition, Participant 8

shared that mindfulness was helpful:

We try as a family to incorporate more mindfulness into our lives. So we how

wonderful instead of I'm just like, I'm adamantly against punishment. And so we

never did like a punishment is that anything about it is already shamed enough,

you know, right. So we did more like, how we feel more inclusionary as a family

and how he builds his resiliency and his love of self.

Social Support. Many participants (8) described how social support helped them

to cope. Some participants described how their families and friends supported them and

showed concern for their well-being following the exclusion. For example, participant 11

noted, "My husband was very concerned about it." Similarly, Participant 4 said, "I had

friends and family that kind of knew what I was going through. And that helped. That

was helpful. I mean, I've never lacked for support. Thank God, I'm very lucky."

Participant 6 also commented, "I do still like the friends that we have are very supportive." These participants had existing support systems that provided scaffolding for them during an exceptionally challenging time.

In addition to family and friends, other participants identified other parents as support for them. For example, Participant 12 mentioned,

I bonded with other moms who were like, in the, in the social group that that I was in, like, we really bonded because we shared this experience of like, being kicked out of schools or, you know, having it not work in schools, or, like we're always everybody was always trying to find the right school, you know, we were like always exchanging information about you know, but we you know, we all kind of bonded because we had been through similar experiences.

Similarly, Participant 11 stated, "I had to lean on people that I saw having success with my kid and then learn from them. And then like, very academically bring it into our house." The reliance on social support as a coping mechanism appeared to be successful for many participants.

Substance Use. The fourth method described by participants as a coping strategy was substance use. Three participants shared their experiences with substances. For example, Participant 12 said, "I was starting to drink too much, you know." Similarly, Participant 5 noted,

I'll admit it, like, we got my husband, I got in a pattern…And I think it's gotten worse during a pandemic…you end up you know, cooking food and drinking great wine. And, you know, the, the wine that you drink during dinner becomes

the wine that you're drinking after dinner, and then you just go to sleep…I didn't

feel good. I mean, I remember feeling like clinically depressed, and I would feel

better and better and less depressed as the next day would go on. And I realized it

was due to the like hard alcohol. So I actually cut it out myself, because I don't

like this. Because of those dark days. I don't like the sensation of that heavy

alcohol. It just reminds me of depression.

In addition, Participant 8 tried a different substance: "We started smoking pot. Yeah.

Yeah. I wanted to know how we could keep ourselves calmer."

Synthesis of Coping Strategies for Exclusion Theme. In summary, the coping

strategies for exclusion theme had many references, and most participants contributed

opinions to this theme. This theme addressed the second research question by showing

the various methods that participants used to cope with their child's exclusion. These

experiences shared by participants also further demonstrated the impact of exclusion on

parents.

Research Question 1c

What is the perceived effect that disciplinary exclusion has on the relationship

between parents and their children?

Changes in Parent Child Relationship

The theme of changes in parent child relationships includes information about

changes that resulted from the exclusion both within the household and within each

parent participant. This theme included subthemes related to parenting strategies that

evolved and household practices that were born after the exclusion. The subthemes

related to this theme (parenting changes and household change) highlighted the effect of disciplinary exclusion on the relationship between parents and their children. All subthemes and examples of quotes that motivated these subthemes are provided in the following sections.

Parenting Changes. Most participants (9) described how they changed as parents after their child was excluded. Several participants noted that their parenting styles changed over time. For example, Participant 10 shared, "Well, they changed over time, but I don't think it was a result of that weren't actually no, because just growing over time, and having help with that from other people, maybe learning to figure out." This participant went on to say that the exclusion motivated this parenting change: "Learning as we go I don't think it was a direct result of that. That was just the like I said, it was the catalyst like that was the first thing that set everything in motion." Similarly, Participant 11 simply stated, "Yeah. 100%." Participant 12 also said, "Absolutely. But I have to say like, probably for the much better. You know, I had to learn how to be much more flexible." Participant 2 also described an increase in patience:

I think that I was harsher on him than maybe if there was a lot of No, no, no, no, no, rather than slowing down and listen to him, as like early on, when that happened, and even a year later, and now it's getting a little bit better.

Similarly, some participants were actively trying to adapt their parenting styles. For example, Participant 7 shared,

I was very actively looking for strategies at that point when I was feeling like, you know, kind of desperation. And so, you know, I was researching it. So I got into a

Ross Greene. And I can't say that I follow it like to the tee, but I definitely try to

follow his general advice to be more collaborative, and more empathetic and, like,

try to understand what's happening.

Participant 6 also mentioned, "I think we were always questioning our parenting

strategies and trying to find strategies." It was clear from these interviews that parents

and their parenting were greatly affected by the disciplinary exclusion.

Household Changes. Many participants (7) described different changes that

occurred within their households as a result of their child's disciplinary exclusion. Some

participants described getting additional help within their household. For example,

Participant 4 shared, "We had to hire additional support services. And so and I had to pay

for those. My husband didn't want to pay for them. So it caused additional financial

tension in our household." Similarly, Participant 6 stated, "We got a babysitter." In

addition, Participant 9 mentioned having an au pair who was unhappy with the work and

described the measures the family took to keep her: "So we went through, we went

through like Internet, like, they call it transition meetings, or like, you know, mediation

meetings with her support network because of the problems that we are having." Overall,

participants identified a few changes that were made within their households as a result of

their child's exclusion.

Synthesis of Changes in Parent Child Relationship Theme. In summary, the

theme of changes in parent child relationships was referenced often, as several

participants contributed opinions to this theme. This theme addressed the third research

question by showing the perceived effect of disciplinary exclusion on the parent child

relationship. The experiences shared by the participants provided evidence for changes that occurred as a result of their child's exclusion. Overall, these changes appeared to be beneficial and advantageous to both the child and the parent.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the research findings from the qualitative interviews that were conducted with 12 parents of children who faced disciplinary exclusion. Three research questions were addressed by the data from these interviews. The analysis of these interviews revealed multiple themes that were related to each of the three research questions.

The first research question was addressed by two themes: impact of exclusion on parents and the child's experience with exclusion. The first theme was composed of three subthemes: relationship impacts, personal impacts, and career impacts. Participants shared how their relationships with partners and friends were negatively impacted by the disciplinary exclusion and also detailed health and career impacts. Many participants noted negative mental health and career consequences that resulted from their child's disciplinary exclusion.

Another theme that addressed this first research question, the child's experience with exclusion, was composed of one subtheme: experience with school staff. Participants described their interactions with the school and school staff. They shared whether staff attempted any interventions before their child's exclusion. There was also an overwhelming report of a lack of support from schools following exclusion.

The second research question was addressed by one theme: coping strategies after exclusion. This third theme was composed of four subthemes: attempts to fix the problem, mental health help, social support, and substance use. These subthemes arose from participants' responses to questions regarding methods they used to handle their personal responses to this event. Many participants sought mental health services, such as therapy, to alleviate their stress. In addition, participants relied on social support as another form of coping. Other participants attempted to fix their child's exclusion. Lastly, a few participants mentioned using substances, such as alcohol and marijuana, as a coping method.

The third research question was addressed by one theme: changes in parent child relationship. This theme was composed of two subthemes: parenting changes and household changes. Parents described how they changed themselves and their households to adapt to their child's needs. Many parents mentioned how they tried to become more flexible in their parenting style and increase their patience. Participants also noted that they hired some help in their households when possible. These themes were supported by direct quotes from participants. In Chapter 5, I present additional insights, findings, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of parents who have a child who has been subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavioral problems in the classroom. A phenomenological approach was employed to explore and describe the ways in which parents are affected by their child's exclusion. In the United States, one of the most common forms of exclusionary discipline is elementary suspension, when a child and their family are asked to leave the school temporarily or permanently (Gage et al., 2018). The early school years are critical for the development of socio-emotional and regulatory skills. Children who are excluded from school are unable to build and maintain the self-regulatory skills that can help them develop successful relationships with adults (Bailey et al., 2019). Disciplinary exclusion can also leave children more vulnerable to the development of negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression (Fernando et al., 2018).

Although the impacts of disciplinary exclusion on children are well-known, less is known about how this phenomenon affects their parents (Hatton, 2018). The current study addressed this gap by investigating the effects of disciplinary exclusion through interviews with parents. The study may enable practitioners to better understand the outcomes of parents who have been subject to exclusionary policies in their children's elementary schools.

Interpretation of the Findings

I determined the research findings based on analysis of the qualitative interviews that were conducted with 12 parents of children who faced disciplinary exclusion. One

overarching research question and three subquestions were answered by analysis of the data from these interviews. The analysis of these interviews revealed multiple themes related to each of the questions.

The first subquestion (What are the lived experiences of parents who have children who were subjected to disciplinary exclusion due to behavior problems?) was addressed by two themes: (a) impact of exclusion on parents and (b) child's experience with exclusion. The first theme was composed of three subthemes: relationship impacts, personal impacts, and career impacts. Participants shared how their relationships with partners and friends were negatively impacted by the disciplinary exclusion. Participants also detailed health impacts and career impacts. Many participants noted negative mental health consequences and career consequences that resulted from their child's disciplinary exclusion. These findings were novel because no study had addressed the impact of disciplinary exclusion on parents. The participants reported that some of their relationships (e.g., friendships and spousal relationships) were negatively impacted by their child's disciplinary exclusion. Having some type of support resource in place for parents following disciplinary exclusion could reduce some of these impacts. For example, support groups, couple's counseling, or family counseling could be one method to support parents following the exclusion of their child. Another set of impacts included career impacts. There were several participants who noted that their professional pursuits were impacted by the disciplinary exclusion.

Lastly, many participants described health impacts that affected their personal well-being. One finding that was mentioned in several interviews was the anxiety

associated with hearing about their child's behavior from the school offices. Many participants mentioned the anxiety they felt regarding phone calls with the schools. This anxiety could indicate a poor relationship or poor communication between schools and parents.

Parents' health problems are concerning even beyond the direct impact on the parent. Previous research indicated that parental stress can impact children's behavior. In a longitudinal study of parents of 9-year-old children, Roetman et al. (2019) found that the presence of a mental disorder in a parent increased the risk for the child's disruptive behaviors in adolescence. Participants were part of a larger longitudinal study on parents of 8,906 twins in Sweden born between 1992 and 1999 (Roetman et al., 2019). Baseline measures of 4,492 twins who completed two follow-ups to baseline measures of parent-reported disruptive behavior at age 9 revealed that fathers' mental disorders predicted the 9-year-old children's disruptive behaviors and subsequent antisocial behaviors more than mothers' mental disorders. The gender-specificity could be due to fathers' typical role in children's rough-and-tumble play (Roetman et al., 2019). Alternatively, mothers' anxiety was significantly related to parenting stress at the child's preschool age, which led to more externalizing behaviors in children (Tsotsi et al., 2019). Parents' health represents another important consideration for school professionals as they deal with children's behavioral problems. As a complex phenomenon, the parent–child relationship may be influenced by several underlying factors. The reciprocal effects of children's behavioral problems on the parents and their subsequent parenting practices add to this complexity.

Another theme that addressed this first subquestion, the child's experience with exclusion, included information about participants' experiences with school staff. Some participants noted that their schools or teachers attempted an intervention before their child's exclusion. Previous research indicated the importance of the school environment and the teachers' instructional quality and classroom management abilities in attenuating risk for classroom adversity. Müller et al. (2018) found that teachers played an important role in fostering a supportive environment for students to lessen the effects of classroom adversity. Their study involved a 3-year longitudinal investigation of lower secondary schools in Switzerland. Their main finding indicated that the number of disruptive behaviors in a classroom predicted future incidents of disruptive behavior. Notably, Müller et al. found that teachers' level of support and students' perceptions of the lessons as interesting served as moderators for the effect of classroom adversity on students. For instance, students who were highly interested in the lesson would focus on it more than on their peers, and they would be less influenced by their peers' disruptive behaviors. The findings of the study highlighted the important environmental factor of the classroom setting and the level of disruptive behaviors and adversity within it. These findings could help explain why students from certain classes are more prone to disruptive behaviors than others. If teachers and other school professionals could find a way to reduce class adversity, it could reduce the need for exclusionary discipline. The current study demonstrates that, despite some teachers' attempts to intervene with children at risk for disciplinary exclusion, this is not a cure-all for the problem.

In addition to the description of some interventions, participants also reported an overwhelming lack of support from schools following exclusion. Previous research demonstrated the importance of having a strong parent–school relationship. Hatton (2013) indicated that parents' relationship with the school could influence the decisions regarding the use of exclusionary discipline. The way that parents perceive the school climate can be a valuable factor in their children's education and overall development. The parents in the current study expected more support or resources from their child's school. Previous research also demonstrated a discrepancy in parent versus school expectations. Generally, teachers expect more effort from parents to develop their children's prosocial skills. These expectations may color the teacher–parent relationship, which is a vital part of parents' school climate perception (Rattenborg et al., 2018). The disparity in teacher–parent expectations regarding social skills may cause confusion as to who is more responsible for a child's problematic behavior. As much as parents represent a critical factor in their children's problematic behaviors, the school climate may also play a role in the situation. This disparity was identified in the current study as well, indicating a need for improving relationships between parents and schools to improve child outcomes.

The second subquestion (How did parents cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion?) was addressed by one theme: coping strategies after exclusion. This third theme was composed of four subthemes: attempts to fix the problem, mental health help, social support, and substance use. These subthemes arose from participants' responses to questions regarding methods they used to handle their feelings and reactions to this event.

Many participants sought mental health services, such as therapy, to alleviate their stress. In addition, participants relied on social support as another form of coping. Other participants attempted to fix their child's problem of being excluded. Lastly, a few participants mentioned using substances, such as alcohol and marijuana, as a coping method. These coping strategies are important to understand because they can be suggested to parents facing a child's disciplinary exclusion in the future.

The third subquestion (What is the perceived effect that disciplinary exclusion has on the relationship between parents and their children?) was addressed by one theme: changes in parent–child relationship. This theme included information about adjustments participants made following the disciplinary exclusion. Participants described how they changed themselves and their households to adapt to their child's needs. Previous research demonstrated the important role that parenting styles play in influencing children's school outcomes. Specific parenting styles have been explored in the literature to determine which ones promote problematic behaviors in children. Indulgent parenting has been noted to increase children's risk of behavioral and emotional problems until young adulthood (Cui et al., 2019). Children with indulgent parents may be deprived of opportunities to develop life skills, such as self-regulation, to deal with challenges because parents freely grant their every desire. Overindulgence can be considered a negligent parenting style because it neglects the child's maturation and development of self-regulation.

Conversely, parents who use overly restrictive parenting styles may also influence children's behavioral problems (Coto et al., 2018). Booker et al. (2019) found that family

permissiveness and hostile behaviors, which represent opposite ends of parenting styles, led to severe externalizing behaviors in children with ODD. Parental monitoring, which connoted a more positive parental supervision that was neither too permissive nor too restrictive, was found to predict fewer externalizing behaviors. It appears that the optimal parenting style for reducing problematic behaviors involves the right balance between indulgent parenting, or being too permissive, and hostile parenting, or being too restrictive. In the current study, many participants mentioned how they tried to become more flexible in their parenting style and increase their patience. Participants recognized that some aspect of their parenting style was not working with their child and adjusted accordingly to accommodate the new behaviors and to meet their child's needs.

In summary, findings from the current study aligned with several findings from the literature and introduced new observations. In the current study, several participants identified negative mental health or relational and career consequences that resulted from their child's disciplinary exclusion. Therefore, having some type of support resource in place for parents following disciplinary exclusion could reduce some of these impacts. For example, support groups, couple's counseling, or family counseling could be one method to support parents following the exclusion of their child. The current study also demonstrated that despite some teachers' attempts to intervene with children at risk for disciplinary exclusion, this is not a cure-all for the problem. Lastly, participants recognized that some aspect of their past parenting style was not working with their child and adjusted accordingly to accommodate the new behaviors and to meet their child's needs.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study was the generalizability of the findings. This research furthered the understanding of the phenomenon because it pertained to a certain population and provided guidance for more extensive research in the future. Additionally, the data in a phenomenological study are dependent on observations and participants' experiences and interpretations of their experiences. Subjectivity and interpretation of lived experiences must be based solely on participants' accounts to ensure reliability and validity. I used member checking to verify interpretive accuracy because this process allowed respondents to review the interpreted data to promote reliability (see Harvey, 2014). In addition, the similarity of responses across participants reinforced the quality of the research instrument and the accuracy of responses (see Stevenson & Mahmut, 2013). Despite these efforts, it is possible that subjectivity was still present in this analysis.

Another limitation for this study was potential errors in the analysis process. Because there was only one person conducting this analysis, transparency and objectivity were important to obtain results and conclusions based solely on participant perception without data contamination or unreliable or invalid interpretation. A potential barrier to this research was voluntary self-identification of participants in response to advertising. To mitigate the risk of data contamination, I recruited 12 participants to ensure that the sample size was sufficient for data saturation.

Recommendations

The current study was limited to a small participant pool using qualitative methodology. This approach prevented generalizability of findings to the larger

population and allowed for generalization only to highly similar contexts. The participants in this study were middle to upper-middle class parents who had at least one child who was excluded from school for behavioral reasons. Therefore, the applicability of these findings might be reduced when considering lower income populations. To combat this limitation, researchers could expand this study to a larger participant pool. This aim could be accomplished using quantitative or mixed methods on a larger scale. Quantization and operationalization of the concepts covered in the current qualitative study would need to occur prior to initiating a quantitative study so that the concepts could be quantitatively assessed.

Using surveys or another quantitative methodology would allow for data to be collected from a larger population that could be analyzed more rapidly than qualitative data. In addition, using quantitative methods would enable the researcher to assess the strength and direction of relationships in the data sets. This would allow future researchers to more easily determine the effect of disciplinary exclusion on parents. The resulting data, assuming they were obtained from a sufficient sample, would be generalizable to the larger population.

Another recommendation would be a case study of parent participants in a different population. For example, the study could be changed by interviewing parents in lower income populations. In addition, the population could be changed by interviewing parents in a couple as a dyad. This type of study would provide a new unit of analysis, the dyad, that could provide different information than would be obtained from interviews with individual parents.

Implications

The current study provided a better understanding of the impact of a child's disciplinary exclusion on their parents. Several categories of impacts were identified, including relational, career, and health. There were many social implications from these findings. One finding was the significant mental health impact of disciplinary exclusion on parents. Many participants reported that they experienced some health challenges during and after their child's exclusion. Several participants described feeling depressed or experiencing anxiety before their child's exclusion regarding telephone calls from the school. These findings suggest the need for greater support of parents with children experiencing behavior problems and support for parents following disciplinary exclusion. Fortunately, in the current study, many participants described the different mental health services they used to cope. Eight participants commented on their use of therapy during and/or after their child's disciplinary exclusion. Other participants described some maladaptive coping methods, such as using drugs or alcohol to cope. Previous research has pointed to the influence of parents' poor mental health on children. Poppert Cordts et al. (2020) highlighted the physical demands of parenting, especially for younger children. They indicated that having poor physical health may reduce parents' self-efficacy in regard to parenting and thus may produce more disruptive behaviors in the child. At the same time, parents' mental health was also related to their self-efficacy in negative parenting style (Poppert Cordts et al., 2020). These findings demonstrate the necessity of addressing parent mental health during disciplinary problems and after disciplinary exclusion. Counseling or other resources should be offered to parents both while their

children are experiencing discipline problems and after their child's exclusion from school.

In addition, participants described the struggles they had with school staff and administrators. Many participants shared that they did not feel supported by their children's schools following their child's disciplinary exclusion, which highlights the burden that parents and students face after an exclusion. Many parents are unfamiliar with the steps they need to take to address their child's needs. This unfamiliarity can worsen impacts on both parents and their children. Previous research has suggested that parents may not have enough resources to support their children or may not realize their own neglect (Hecker et al., 2019). It may be helpful to examine if a child displaying disruptive or problematic behaviors has their basic needs met. Therefore, taking steps to connect families with resources following exclusion should be adopted into the regular procedures that are followed by school staff and administrators. This effort could alleviate some burden on parents and their children and potentially reduce the risk of disciplinary exclusion.

Conclusion

In addition to the future research directions this study motivates, the findings of this qualitative study have implications for practice. I aimed to fill the gap within the existing literature regarding the impact of elementary expulsion on parents of children with behavioral issues. Filling this gap advanced existing knowledge regarding exclusionary discipline and also provided practical implications for parents and school leaders alike regarding possible alternatives to exclusionary discipline. It also informed

school wide or even larger scale policy regarding the use of exclusionary discipline.

These findings suggested that a child's disciplinary exclusion impacts parents in a

number of ways, such as professionally, personally, and relationally. This study also

showed some methods that parents used to cope with their child's disciplinary exclusion.

Lastly, the study revealed how the parent child relationship changed following

disciplinary exclusion. Given the qualitative nature of the study, I recommend that a

larger, quantitative research study be conducted on the basis of the current findings in

order to expand the generalizability of the study.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What were your initial thoughts on learning about your child's disciplinary exclusion from school?

2. What were the events leading up to your child's disciplinary exclusion? Why were they excluded from school?

3. How has your child's disciplinary exclusion personally affected you?

4. Did this perception change over time?

5. What strategies did you use to cope with your child's disciplinary exclusion?

6. Did you receive any support from the school after your child's exclusion? If so, what kind of support did you receive? If not, what kind of support would you have liked to receive?

7. Did you receive any support outside of the school, such as through friends, family, or counseling services?

8. Has the nature of your relationship with your child changed as a result of their disciplinary exclusion? If so, how?

9. Do you think your parenting strategies have changed, or will change, as a result of the disciplinary action that was taken at school?

10. What are some of the steps you took in addressing your child's behavior as a result of their disciplinary exclusion?

11. Describe how your child's disciplinary exclusion affected your home-life.

12. What factors enabled you to successfully address the challenges posed by their disciplinary exclusion?

13. What recommendations do you have for other parents with children who were excluded from school due to behavioral issues?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not talk about?

Appendix B: Initial Codebook

Name	Files	References
adult challenges	1	1
adult outcomes	3	4
losing friends	1	2
changes in parent-child relationship	9	14
child history	6	7
diagnosis	9	10
disciplinary problems	12	29
early drug seeking	1	2
experience with school staff	10	22
attempted interventions	3	3
no support after exclusion	6	11
teacher trying to redirect student	2	2
frequent calls	4	4
recommendation to repeat year	3	4
child reaction to challenging school interactions	3	3
child temperament	3	4
clinician help	5	9
comparison to siblings	4	6
coping strategies after expulsion	4	4
alcohol	2	2
learning more	2	2
mindfulness	1	1

smoking pot	1	1
social support	6	6
therapy	8	11
trying another school	2	4
trying to stay healthy	1	1
experience with other children	6	7
extra needs	1	1
feeling like a bad parent	5	7
felt like refugees	1	1
future failures connected to first failure	1	1
household changes after expulsion	7	7
impact of exclusion on parents	5	8
career impact	9	16
divorce	1	1
health problems	6	7
other children	1	1
partner relationship impact	8	14
isolating	1	1
lack of schools that work for child	3	4
lawsuit	2	3
other parents	1	1
parent experience with child trauma	2	3
parent reaction to child being asked to repeat year	9	17
waiting for another incident to happen	2	3

parent trying to get away	1	1
parent-child interactions	1	1
parenting changes	9	13
perceptions changing over time	8	8
question about medication	5	6
recommendations for clinical help	1	1
sibling interactions	2	2
suggestions for support	2	2
sympathizing with other parents	3	3
teachers that children connected with	1	1
the kids that need love the most asked for it in the most unloving ways.	1	1
tried different programs	1	1
types oof exclusions	1	1

Appendix C: Final Codebook

Theme	Subtheme	Code	Example Quote
Impact of exclusion on parents	Relationship impacts	Partner	"I mean, for a mother, my husband was very concerned about it and stuff, but it wasn't like, probably a combination of being the mother. And, and because like, this was my role in the family was like, I took that on, like, I'm going to spearhead This is that like, there was no there was never enough time in the day to really try to understand these

			things and try to get to the bottom and nothing was ever a silver bullet."
	Isolating		"It was extremely isolating. So there wasn't really anybody to talk to very much."
Personal impacts	Health problems		"I think in terms of depression, I did become depressed because I felt like people who were supposed to support me had let me down."
	Career impact		"Yeah, they just didn't, wasn't able to network enough

			to get more
			appointments."
Child experiences with expulsion	Experience with school staff	No support after exclusion	"h, absolutely not. I never I
			16:04
			never heard from them again. They were they just wanted to pass off and get us out of there. They did not want to their school. And quite frankly, you know? Good. I'm so glad we're out still there."
		Attempted interventions	" The inclusion program worked really well because

of the Gen Ed. At

the time, having

Gen Ed kids help

that scaffolding to

sort of get him to

the level that he

needed to be he

needed to mirror

and parrot their

behavior. And there

were kids with more

severe issues. I

don't remember

specifics. I just

remember knowing

that it was just it

was not a great fit

for him."

| Coping strategies after exclusion | Attempts to fix problems | Question about medication | "I felt like I was failing him. I felt like, you know, |

		should he be on
		ADHD medication?
		Should he not be an
		ADHD
		medication?"
	Learning more	"I basically had to
		read a lot of books.
		I had to go meet
		with a lot of experts.
		I did throw a lot of
		money. on it to go
		do a lot of different
		types of, you know,
		you know, because
		everybody was like,
		well, we don't
		know, maybe I am
		your answer."
Mental health help	Therapy	"Yeah, I never
		thought sought
		psychotherapy. I'm

		just starting actually this week to start that. I mean, that's not true. I started with somebody a couple months ago, but I found them useless. That's sort of the new person."
	Health measures	"That was helpful. I tried to you know, exercise. Keep up my my fit. is trying to eat well, yep, get enough sleep."
Social support		"I had to lean on people that I saw having success with my kid and then learn from them. And then like, very

		academically bring it into our house. Yeah. You know, and I really trained my husband to and like, I mean, the lists, they, you know, programs, the stuff. I mean, I've got an entire book filled with all the stuff I've done."
	Substance use	"I mean, yeah, we like, started smoking pot. Yeah. Yeah. I wanted to know how we could keep ourselves calmer,"
Changes in parent-child relationship	Parenting changes	"No, well, maybe for the worst.

Because if your child is his spouse through kindergarten, age, and then you will your child goes to first grade in second and third and fourth. And you keep hearing each year more complaints. How can your sick parent change is saying everything is peaches and cream? No, you can't. Right. You know something's wrong."

Household changes

"Um, well, so we had to hire

additional support

services. And so

and I had to pay for

those. My husband

didn't want to pay

for them. So it

caused additional

financial tension in

our household."