2021

Teachers' Perceptions of Working With Parents to Address High Schoolers' Chronic Absenteeism

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

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CAGS, Regent University, 2004

MSA, Trinity University, 2003

MA, University of the District of Columbia, 1991

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 16% of the U.S. public-school population was missing 10% or more of school days. Distance learning during the pandemic may have worsened absenteeism. The research problem represents a gap in understanding teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism at the high school level before and during the pandemic. The purpose and research question of this basic qualitative inquiry explored teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. The conceptual framework consisted of Epstein's model for parental involvement and the multitiered positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) framework. Interviews with 11 high school teachers in a low-income, urban district were coded and then analyzed in search of emergent themes. Findings suggested participants desired better collaboration, communication, and partnership with parents to address chronic absenteeism and poor student learning outcomes and reported receiving limited support from administrators for building relationships with parents and implementing PBIS at the high school level. School leaders may use the findings to contribute to positive social change by leveraging teacher-parent communication to reduce school absenteeism at urban high schools; guiding parents on the use of effective, home-based PBIS strategies; implementing more effective attendance policies; and fostering more effective teacher-parent communication.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother's memory, a passionate adult learner and educator, and my father, a committed Anglican Archdeacon. Also, to all those who have believed in me and supported me over the years of my education career, especially during this doctoral journey: my son, my brothers, my sisters, my nephews and niece, my colleagues, doctoral chair and committee, my peers, my college advisors, and the Walden University Library. Without each of you, this dissertation would not have been possible.

No words can convey my love, appreciation, and respect for Dr. Cheryl Keen—a scholar, higher education leader, incomparable lady, and ultimate role model. Thank you for giving your all to your family, students, colleagues, and community. You sacrificed so we could achieve; you are an awesome lady.

Acknowledgments

I would glorify God; without whom him, I am nothing. My sincerest gratitude goes out to those who supported me through this autonomous journey's ups and downs: my son, Adewale, for serving as my inspiration; my two sisters, Kehinde and Abiodun, for never doubting my inner drive; and my three brothers, John, Stephen, and Andy, who held me up from afar when I was not present.

Further, this study would not have been possible without the guidance and support from my research director and chair, Dr. Cheryl Keen, and committee members Dr. Bonnie B. Mullinix and Dr. Andrea Wilson as well as previous committee members Dr. Anita Dutrow and Dr. Wade Fish. Their collective thinking, knowledge, pushing, and encouragement helped me transform this study and shift my practice as an educational leader.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the 21st century, there is a problem of chronic absenteeism in U.S. schools (EdSource, 2020; Jordan, 2020; Kearney et al., 2019; Musu et al., 2019) with economic and sociopolitical implications (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Kearney, 2019). Nationally, elementary schools have lower rates (11%) of chronic absenteeism than high schools (19%; Cortiella & Boundy, 2018). Bauer et al. (2018) reported that approximately 15.5% of K-12 students were chronically absent due to missing at least 10% or more of the 2016–2017 school year. Bauer et al., Gentle-Genitty et al. (2020), and the California Department of Education (2017-18, 2018-19) defined chronic absenteeism as missing at least 15 full days of school (i.e., 10% or more), whether excused or unexcused, in a school year. Approximately 10,000 U.S. public schools have 30% or more chronically absent students (Cortiella & Boundy, 2018). Irwin et al.'s (2021) reported that based on preliminary data, the number of students claimed attending public schools in the United States in 2020–2021 fell by 3% compared to the 2019–2120 school year.

While it was evident in research that parental, administrative, and stakeholder support are essential in reducing chronic absenteeism (Guryan et al., 2020; Kethineni et al., 2021; Lima & Kuusisto, 2020), there was a lack of research and practices about how to engage parents in reducing chronic absenteeism. However, addressing this gap in the literature may clarify obstacles that have impeded teachers' experiences working with

parents to address low-income, urban high school students to reduce chronic absenteeism-related behavioral problems.

Poor academic outcomes have been associated with chronic absenteeism (Maynard et al., 2017). In a meta-analysis of 189 studies that included 249,198 students, Roorda et al. (2017) found a correlation between positive student-teacher relationships and engagement. The correlation was stronger in secondary schools than in primary schools and may impact academic progress. Chronic absenteeism interferes with student-teacher relationships and may, thus, impact academic progress. Maynard et al. (2017) and the Office for Civil Rights (2018) have shown chronic absenteeism is associated with additional problems, including low reading achievement and engagement in school as well as, ultimately, a higher risk of dropping out. Kearney et al. (2019) and Ahmad and Miller (2015) reported that high truancy rates could be a predictor of high school completion as early as the sixth grade. Chronic absenteeism carried through the middle and high school years may have longer range consequences. Liu et al. (2019) conducted a study on the causal impact of student absences in middle and high school on state test scores, course grades, and educational attainment. They found that lack of attendance in middle and high schools harmed student achievement in the present and over the long term.

Chronic absenteeism and truancy have been previously researched and have been the focus of national policies addressing best practices for reducing attendance problems, including those policies upheld in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015).

However, many schools moved to distance (i.e., remote) learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which created uncertainty regarding how to address absenteeism and sustain student achievement. While the root causes of chronic absenteeism are complex (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), a policy like ESSA has struggled to solve school attendance issues. In March 2020, the U.S. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education offered to consider a 1-year waiver that would allow states to exclude the attendance indicator from their 2019–2020 accountability rubrics (i.e., chronic absenteeism in assessing schools under the ESSA; Edelman, 2020).

Schools have been compelled to adapt, assist parents quickly with students' absenteeism, and develop social distancing measures for staff and students to limit the spread of COVID-19 (Blad, 2020). As part of these changes, educators have been scrambling to provide effective remote education while students stay home. Teachers are being trained in the use of software, such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Apple Clips, Quizlet, and iMovie, to create interactive content to help students stay engaged and continue to attend courses in virtual classrooms (Garun, 2020). For the Fall 2020–2021 academic school year, while every state's education department released a roadmap to safely reopened schools, Byrnes (2020) explained that to students, schools and classes will look very different than they did in March 2020.

With school buildings closed and the continued pressure to be accountable for students' learning, some districts have stopped tracking attendance while others have redefined what constituted attendance, making sure that students participated in distance

learning (Belsha & Barnum, 2020). For instance, states like Illinois and Massachusetts agreed not to count the days students missed because of public health emergencies toward chronic absenteeism totals for accountability purposes and disregarded absenteeism for the rest of the year (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). With the outbreak of COVID-19, many parents were working from home, assisting their children and supporting the continuation of teaching and learning. Reimers and Schleicher (2020) claimed that teachers and schools have worked together to bring learning into their homes.

Educators and the students' families plan events, including the distribution of breakfast and lunch to students who qualify for free or reduced lunches and provide laptops for those who cannot not afford them (Kress, 2020). Although there are disparities between income and school demographics, a survey of school meal program directors indicated that most districts were still committed to serving meals to students during school closures (Pratt-Heavner, 2020).

Bentley (2020) noted that teachers need to adapt their style of teaching to distance learning and have clear plans about how they will provide services to parents and students (e.g., advising, proctoring, coaching, directing, tutoring, etc.). This challenge is increased because 15% of U.S. households with school-aged children do not have high-speed internet access (Kroshus et al., 2020). According to Horrigan and Duncan (2015) cited in a report for the Pew Research Center (2019) as well as the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), most rural communities have difficulties meeting the standards for broadband access.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, collaboration between parents, students, and teachers was necessary to ensure support, foster ways for children to succeed, and for the formation of students' identities (Todorova, 2018). However, schools had struggled with effectively involving parents who live in urban areas and low-income families (Cunha et al., 2015). The closure of school buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous attendance and academic challenges for teachers, which I investigated in this study. Schools moving to distance learning environments made attendance more challenging than when the school day and learning takes place inside the school building because finding lost students (e.g., chronic absenteeism) gets harder outside of school grounds.

This study is essential to helping close the research gap in understanding teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism at the high school level, given the rise in absenteeism before and during the pandemic. Poor attendance affects academic achievement and may lead to lower economic prospects later in life (García & Weiss, 2017). While studies have shown that parental involvement is crucial to success in school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Kearney et al., 2019), students from low-income families, in particular, are at higher risk for academic and social problems (Baker et al., 2016).

In this study, I explored what high school teachers experience working with parents when addressing students' chronic absenteeism behavior in low-income, urban schools. In this chapter, I introduce the study by examining the background of the

problem and describing it. The purpose of this study is then explained, followed by the research question that guided this study. Then, I summarize the conceptual framework of the study and discuss the nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance.

Background

While well-intentioned education policies and practices have multilayered issues, they can often redirect their focus from roots or the causes that impact attendance and learning outcomes. Research and practice gaps also persist in the literature concerning teacher-parent relationships gaps and reasons for students' life circumstances affecting their school attendance. According to the Office for Civil Rights (2018) and Rafa (2017), chronic absenteeism can affect academic performance in later grades and is an early warning sign that a student is more likely to drop out of high school. Due to these reasons, significant numbers of states have enacted legislation to address this issue (Childs & Grooms, 2018). Additionally, chronic absenteeism has become one indicator of school quality or student success in the accountability systems under the ESSA (ESSA, 2015).

Dropping out of high school is one adverse outcome of chronic absenteeism (McFarland et al., 2020). For example, 11.4% of high school graduates missed more than 50% of the school year, and only 7.7% had satisfactory attendance in the metropolitan area of the District of Columbia in 2017 (Jenkins, 2020; McFarland et al., 2019) and at some high schools, 3 out of 4 students were chronically absent (Jenkins, 2020).

While efforts have been made to prevent chronic absenteeism and intervene with truant youths, Maynard et al. (2017) suggested there is a need to target risk factors prevalent in specific racial or ethnic groups (Fontenot et al., 2018). Wendy Hatch, a spokesperson for the Minnesota Department of Education cited by Hinrichs (2020), suggested that educators' roles of checking in on students have changed since schools closed because of the pandemic and Prestridge (2019) noted, even before the pandemic, how education has shifted abruptly to the distance learning environment with little to no planning.

The PBIS framework is an approach to preventing chronic absenteeism, using multitiered positive behavioral interventions and supports, which provides mechanisms to reduce negative student behaviors, such as chronic absenteeism. PBIS has universal foundations (i.e., three paradigms of Tiers I, II, and III) for teachers to help with specific student skill deficits (Keller-Bell & Short, 2019; McIntosh et al., 2017). However, according to Juvonen (2018), several problems occur in identifying practical prevention approaches and programs such as PBIS, because of the challenges teachers and schools face in using prevention resources to their fullest potential. PBIS also focuses on schools working with families and caregivers using the same routine established at school in their homes (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Center for Parent Information & Resources, 2020). However, this study's responses indicate the efficacy needed for this positive, proactive framework seemed not to have been well established across varying school settings, especially in low-income, urban environments. Not

enough research studies have been done about schoolwide PBIS implementation and sustainability in high-need school contexts (Clayton et al., 2020; Greene & Hale, 2017). Adams (2015) noted that schools implementing interventions such as PBIS typically need buy-in or support from at least 80% of the school staff before they are adopted. Some states have mandated implementation, including Maryland, which was the first state to mandate the implementation of specific school-based prevention or intervention through legislative action. Greene and Hale (2017) argued that mandatory attendance in a traditional (i.e., brick-and-mortar) school is easily carried out; however, the monitoring and enforcement of attendance and chronic absenteeism in a distance learning environment is less obvious. Archambault et al. (2016) explored the impact and significance of implementing a cyber-absenteeism policy, because, in distance learning school settings, the attendance policy typically requires that students log on, complete lessons, and keep up by attending classes. They described how the same laws used to monitor or guide traditional attendance and chronic absenteeism issues should also apply to distance learning students' chronic attendance issues.

Nespor (2019) examined schools as economies of institutional time (i.e., how social, economic, and cultural factors impact schools) and explored how to figure the number of hours teachers work when students study by themselves at home. Nespor used data in documents and interviews with 22 teachers from 10 full-time distance learning (i.e., virtual) schools in the United States. Cyber schooling reconfigures two processes: schooling and the accumulation of school time. The first produces students’ academic

records, and the second tracks the amount of time teachers spend working with students. Nespor found the 10 full-time distance learning schools created more problems than in-school learning due to the extra amount of time spent by learners. Nespor noted that both teachers and students worked extra hours outside official school hours, which were ignored by the state.

Technical issues arise in distance learning that individual students and families struggle to fix daily (Molnar et al., 2019). The current knowledge addressing some of the achievement and chronic absenteeism gap can not fully eliminate the issues without first addressing the teacher-parent relationship gap. This study is needed because not enough is known about how teachers can effectively work with parents of students in low-income, urban high schools to reduce chronic absenteeism, both in face-to-face classrooms and virtual classrooms. It was evident from the literature reviewed that parental, administrative, and stakeholder support is essential in reducing chronic absenteeism; however, there was a lack of research about how teachers can engage parents in reducing chronic absenteeism. Addressing this gap in the literature clarified obstacles that have impeded teachers working with parents to address low-income, urban high school students' chronic absenteeism-related behavioral problems.

Problem Statement

This basic qualitative inquiry addressed the research problem represented by a gap in understanding teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism at the high school level, given the rise

in absenteeism before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study I sought to extend existing research to improve daily student attendance rates. Most school policies, daily routines or interactions, parents' relationships, public school organization, and structural barriers can prevent these stakeholders (e.g., parents, public organizations) from accessing and applying research principles and best practices in their day-to-day work. Chronic absenteeism is a delinquent behavior that can be an obstacle to the teaching-learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning (Bauer et al., 2018; EdSource, 2020).

All participants in this study were high school teachers from the same district and did not have enough documented strategies for working with parents to address low-income, urban high school students' chronic absenteeism behaviors. In addition, the teachers may be struggling to learn how to best support these students. Chronic absenteeism has been identified as a persistent problem facing schools (Fornander & Kearney, 2020; Gershenson et al., 2017). In distance learning, teachers may lack the support and understanding to help students to log in, check in, be engaged, or complete assignments; therefore, students' attendance, emotional health, and academic progress may be affected (Gottfried et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2017; Rea & Zinskie, 2017) and need cooperation of parents to address these problems. Researchers have identified that parents may be aware that delinquency behaviors, such as chronic absenteeism, exist but may not know how to identify and manage them (Childs & Grooms, 2018; Gase et al., 2017; Gubbels et al., 2019). Large inconsistencies exist regarding the implementation of

management strategies (including PBIS) and teachers' perceptions of how to support parents to address delinquent behaviors and reduce chronic absenteeism (Heyne et al., 2019).

Many studies have found that a positive school environment leads to fewer delinquent behaviors. Horner et al. (2017) pointed out that for more than 20 years, an evidence-based intervention framework has been implemented by national experts in the field of PBIS. For all students in K–12, the PBIS framework is recognized as a proactive system for promoting success in schools with the use of a multitiered continuum of support and evidence-based behavior interventions (Fallon et al., 2015). Distance learning may require additional strategies that can include parents while students are learning from home; however, little is known about how teachers apply PBIS and other behavioral strategies in distance learning environment in collaboration with parents.

For the past 7 years, the number of local schools' chronic absenteeism was high in the mid-Atlantic, where over 20% were chronically absent (Gubbels et al., 2019). The need for this study of chronic absenteeism in the mid-Atlantic schools has caught the attention of policymakers and, due to the sudden pandemic-related shift to distance learning, this educational issue is currently receiving more consideration, audits, scrutiny, and resources (Attendance Works and Everyone Graduates, 2020; Belsha & Barnum, 2020; Future Ed, 2020; Jordan, 2020). This issue has affected the local level in the mid-Atlantic region because students have not been physically in schools during distance learning. Many did not log into Zoom classes and thus were absent for distance learning

(Belsha & Barnum, 2020; Jordan, 2020). Students have limited chances of succeeding if they are not in the classroom or attending school regularly. Moreover, in some mid-Atlantic schools, the number of students absent has stayed at the same low number during distance learning (Attendance Works and Everyone Graduates, 2020; Future Ed, 2020; Jordan, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative inquiry was to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. The purpose included exploring participants' perceptions about policy and practice changes, interventions, concerns, actionable recommendations, and innovative and practitioner-informed strategies. Conducting participant interviews with the teachers allowed for collecting the strategies they used, including PBIS, and results were coded using an open coding method.

Before the pandemic, nearly 8 million students (i.e., 16% of the nation's public-school population) were considered missing 10% or more of the school year (Belsha & Barnum, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The attendance worsened in 2020, and an estimated 9 million U.S. students do not have internet access at home and about 11 million do not have access to a computer (Future Ed, 2020). Chronic absenteeism is delinquent behavior that has been shown to hinder the teaching-learning process (Sosu et al., 2021). The results of this study may help develop a deeper understanding of teachers'

perspectives of working relationships with parents and, in particular, identify components of PBIS implementation as one way to support students and engage parents to be involved.

Research Question

The research question that guided this study was: What are high school teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

In this study, I used two models as the conceptual framework to guide development of the research question and the interpretation of the results. The first was Epstein's (2009) model of parental involvement that portrays the community as an integral part of child and adolescent learning and is focused on eight dynamics: school, family, teachers, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with the community, and community relationships. These dynamics or spheres of influence in an adolescent's learning overlap and can be drawn together or pulled apart. The dynamic of Epstein's model that was most related to this study was parental involvement to increase student achievement in schools. I used this model to guide the development of interview questions that would help me explore how teachers perceived they worked to involve parents.

The second model was PBIS (Horner & Sugai, 2015, 2018). I developed the interview questions for this study to align with the research question and address the gaps of multilayered causes that impact attendance, learning outcomes, teacher-parent relationships gaps, and the reasons why students' life circumstances can affect their school attendance (see Freeman et al., 2016; Gottfredson et al., 2015). PBIS offers a holistic approach to needs assessment to determine how to help high school students with coping strategies before committing acts of violence or before inconsistent attendance becomes chronic (Sugai & Horner, 2009). PBIS assists teachers with classroom management and providing preventive discipline in schools to maximize student success (Shogren et al., 2016). PBIS also focuses on schools working with families and caregivers using the same routine established at school in their homes (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Center for Parent Information & Resources, 2020). The school district study site uses PBIS as an instructional framework, and the criteria for participant selection included being trained in PBIS or having taught in a school that has sought to infuse PBIS, so that I could understand better how or if teachers working with parents of students in high school use evidence-based interventions like PBIS to limit absenteeism and increase student success (see Shogren et al., 2016).

Nature of the Study

For this study, I used a basic qualitative inquiry design (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002) involving open-ended interviews with 11 high school teachers from the same urban mid-Atlantic school district. The 11 teachers were drawn from six of the

over 20 high schools in the district. All were from schools that offered free breakfasts, which was used to determine the schools as low income. By interviewing 11 participants, I intended to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. The participants had used PBIS and had 3 years or more of full-time teaching experience with at least 2 years of experience before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. The resulting data were analyzed manually by coding, categorizing, and theming.

Definitions of Terms

In this study, the following terms were used:

Absenteeism: Instructional days that are missed by the student, which can be excused or unexcused, as well as the result of disciplinary removal from school (Jordan & Miller, 2017). ESSA guidelines allow states to set their own criteria for chronic absenteeism (ESSA, 2015).

Behavior: An inherently complex subject matter that includes the attitude and reasons behind people's actions (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

Chronic absenteeism: There is no formal definition of chronic absenteeism (Office of Civil Rights, 2016). However, when absences accumulate to 10% or more of the academic school year, schools consider students chronically absent (Future Ed, 2017; Office of Civil Rights, 2016; Ramberg et al., 2019).

Classroom discipline: The teacher's ability to develop and manage the classroom behavior of assigned students (Sadruddin, 2012).

Distance learning: Also known as distance education, e-learning, and online learning. It is a form of education in which the main elements include the physical separation of teachers and students during instruction. Teachers use various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication (Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Oxford University Press, n.d.).

ESSA: The reauthorization of the 1965 ESSA or the 2002 No Child Left Behind law signed by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015, which prompted states to focus on student attendance as a robust metric of school quality and success (Jordan & Miller, 2017; Kostyo et al., 2018; Maxwell et al., 2017).

Excused absences: Absences that are legally justified, such as illness, family emergencies, and hazardous weather (Kearney et al., 2019). Each school district establishes its procedures for excusing absences, such as when parents provide the excuse via phone call, note, or doctor's note.

Unexcused absences: These absences are not legally justifiable and are also used in identifying truancy (Kearney et al., 2019).

Virtual learning environment: A web-based platform for the digital aspects of courses of study in educational settings. The most common virtual learning forms include online learning, remote learning, eLearning, digital learning, and distance learning (Reese, 2015). Some people use these terms interchangeably.

Assumptions

In this basic qualitative study, I made several assumptions to establish trustworthiness of the data collected on teachers' perceptions. I assumed that participants would be authentic in their responses. It was also assumed they would be comfortable enough to talk about experiences that may not represent their best teaching practices or collaboration with parents as well as any related experiences with PBIS at the high school level. Another assumption was that all participants had tried to have positive working relationships with parents to support and monitor students' academic progress as well as had invested in programs such as PBIS to help monitor students' progress, have regular attendance, and reduce their chronic absenteeism both before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to participants recruited from Title I, urban high schools in the same school district in the mid-Atlantic United States. Of the over 20 high schools in the district, participants came from six schools, all of which provided breakfast, which was used as an indication of serving low-income students. I selected the mid-Atlantic United States due to the diverse culture of the region's population (see Meyer, 2021). Because participants were from a single district, albeit a large one, and because they were self-selected to be in the study, there is limited transferability of the findings.

The delimitations of this study were framed by my choice of participants and the grade levels they teach. The high school teachers I sought as participants were expected to meet the following criteria: (a) had more than 3 years of professional classroom teaching experience at the high school level, (b) taught in both face-to-face (before March 2020) and distance learning classroom settings, (c) trained in PBIS or taught in a school that seeks to infuse PBIS into the classroom, (d) had experience with truant or absent students, (e) made multiple efforts to work with absent or truant students' parents to improve behavior and academic outcomes, and (f) taught before March 2020 and during the pandemic in the 2020–2021 school year. I did not choose to interview teachers from elementary and middle school because to address the literature gap, it was necessary to focus on high school teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents of high school students to address chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning.

Limitations

As with all other research studies, this inquiry had limitations. All participants were from the same district, and the sample of 11 participants was self-selected. Another limitation of this study was that I only interviewed teachers who worked in high schools and no other stakeholders in the district. Only teachers who were familiar with PBIS were interviewed. Because of the unique nature of the mid-Atlantic region's cultural diversity, it also may be impossible to generalize the results beyond other locations with similar

diversity or background. Finally, my own bias, which I address in Chapter 3, is that I am very familiar with the district's high school settings since I have more than 35 years of experience working in the K–12 educational field and 13 years of experience at the high school level. As a result of these limitations, my findings may not be generalizable to the broader context of distance learning in urban, low-income high schools. Finally, the participants answered specific, open-ended interview questions; therefore, some insights into their perceptions may have been missed.

Significance

The results of this study may provide educators, school administrators, and stakeholders with additional means to help reduce chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high school settings, particularly during periods of distance learning. Chronic absenteeism negatively impacts a school's effectiveness (Drinkard et al., 2017). Student absenteeism affects family structures and student outcomes unless children and families have available resources (Pingley, 2017; World Health Organization, 2016). The results of this study may provide ideas for more effective parent-teacher collaboration and also may be used to help meet school and educational system improvement targets (see ESSA, 2015; USDE, 2020; World Health Organization, 2016).

Summary

Chronic absenteeism has been identified as a problem facing schools (Attendance Works & Everyone Graduates Center, 2016; Fornander & Kearney, 2020; Gershenson et al., 2017). It is imperative that students be present and active in school (both in face-to-

face and distance learning settings) for learning to occur. Among the positive indicators of high school academic achievement is regular school attendance (Aucejo & Romano, 2016; Conston, 2019; Gershenson, 2016). In this study, I explored the experiences of teachers working with parents of students from low-income, urban high schools as they address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism during face-to-face and distance learning. In Chapter 2, I will analyze the literature related to the research problem and factors associated with chronic absenteeism.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This basic qualitative inquiry addressed the research problem represented by a gap in understanding teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism at the high school level, given the high rate of absenteeism before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating distance learning. The prevalence of chronic absenteeism in U.S. schools in recent times is a cause for serious concern (Irwin et al., 2021; Maynard et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2019). Delinquent behaviors such as chronic absenteeism can have a severe, corrosive, and damaging impact on children, families, and society (Goodwin, 2017). School attendance problems may lead to dropping out, and Rocque et al. (2017) found its lingering effects can go into adulthood as well, including having an increased risk for future economic, marital, occupational, and psychiatric problems (Elmer et al., 2020; Magson et al., 2021; Procentese et al., 2020). Researchers have suggested parents and guardians can more effectively demonstrate control over factors that affect attendance than previously known (Robinson et al., 2018), while teachers exhibit limited strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism (Lasky-Fink et al., 2021; Lima & Kuusisto, 2020).

Researchers have also found significant correlations between academic development and the quality of online classes (Magson et al., 2021), with quality being influenced by adaptation of the course, workspace conditions, connections with other students and teachers, and increased boredom (Baltà-Salvador et al., 2021). Baltà-Salvador et al. (2021) suggested best practices (such as effective communication channels

via instant messages and emails like WhatsApp) and building relationships) that would be of value for future high school courses and education beyond the pandemic situation, including those related to effective communication with teachers and stakeholders like parents.

Payne and Welch (2018) studied delinquent behavior rates and found chronic absenteeism increasing in public schools, especially in secondary schools. Maynard et al. (2017) and other researchers claimed that high school chronic absenteeism needs to be mitigated. However, Goodwin (2017) and Hutzell and Payne (2018) noted gaps in the literature about how school leadership, teachers, and stakeholders affect the students' overall outcomes related to chronic absenteeism. Compounding this problem is when students return to school after several days out and do not feel obligated to comply with school routine (Daly et al., 2016). When a student's attendance is not consistent, Farrington et al. (2017) argued this as an early warning sign of academic risk and delinquent behaviors. Price and Khubchandani (2019) and Lawson et al. (2017) noted that lack of attendance has a significant impact on the schools. Consequently, school leaders' and teachers' public trust diminishes, and federal or local funds are faced with additional scrutiny.

Schwartz et al. (2021) reported the extent of the divisions in public education during the 2020–2021 school year, from the mode of delivery to the length of the school day. Their report shed light on the tremendous variation in districts' approaches to schooling before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in

distance learning. They explained how some school districts had provided fully remote learning since the outset of the pandemic, few have mostly provided in-person learning (i.e., face-to-face learning), and many others have been somewhere in between. Moreover, Schwartz et al. claimed that 17% of urban districts, compared with 42% of rural school districts, were offering entirely in-person instruction to students as of February 2021. Suburban school districts fell in between at 27%.

Chapter 2 includes an explanation of the literature search strategy, an analysis of the conceptual framework, and a comprehensive literature review related to key concepts of this study.

Literature Search Strategy

To locate the literature for this review, I used several databases, including Google Scholar, PsycINFO, EBSCO, UNESCO Databases of Resources on Education, EBSCO eBooks, JSTOR, Education Source, Google Books, ProQuest Central, SAGE full-text journals, Education Resources Information Center, ScienceDirect, Psych Articles, and ProQuest Dissertations. I used the following keyword search terms and combination of terms to find current, empirical articles and peer-reviewed literature published between 2015 through 2021: *office referral, mental health, efficacy, motivation, problem-solving, educational leadership, poverty, school violence, discipline, teacher leadership, evidence-based, teacher effectiveness, perception, implementation, theorists, intervention, educational administration, school environment, conflict resolution, inclusion, morality, school climate, incentives, respect, manifestation, school leadership, self-improvement,*

self reliance, adversity, self-control, communication, PBIS effectiveness, collaborative leadership, suspension, harassment, victimization, reinforcement, connectedness, behavior modification, juvenile education or incarceration, implications, resilience, social support, social justice, emotional learning, rejection, rules, security, perceived injustice, school reform, prevention, expulsion, behavior, school improvement, social control theory, tolerance, leadership in high school, virtual learning, think outside the box, and *classroom management.*

Most of these databases contained limited literature on chronic absenteeism in online learning, but useful search terms included: *virtual learning, classroom management,* and *the influence of PBIS on student chronic absenteeism reduction.* The limited availability of current literature related to the research problem confirmed the need for further research on this topic.

Conceptual Framework

I used two models as the conceptual framework for this study. The first one, Epstein's (2009) model of parental involvement, was used to seek a greater understanding of how families, schools, and communities are jointly responsible for children's attendance as an aspect of overall development. The second model, PBIS as proposed in 1998 by Horner and Sugai (2015, 2018), was used to help guide the exploration of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the influence of the implementation of research-based interventions in traditional and virtual classroom content teaching decisions and practices.

Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement

Schools are one of the few places where children attend almost daily (Hagborg et al., 2018). Therefore, educators (i.e., from classroom teachers to guidance counselors and social workers, nurses, psychologists, and administrators) can see changes in students' appearance and behavior. Based on Epstein's model (2009), everyone in the school, at home, and all other stakeholders become an integral part of the educational team. Each school system expects to train their educators to recognize and intervene when students cannot benefit fully from their educational opportunities (Cortiella & Boundy, 2018; Henson, 2017).

In the model, Epstein (2009) portrayed the community as an integral part of child and adolescent learning. Epstein also viewed school, family, and community relations as dynamic; their overlapping spheres can be pushed together or pulled apart by vital forces like the COVID-19 pandemic. The model includes an acknowledgment that some practices of the school, family, and community need to be conducted separately. Epstein called for essential practices to be carried out conjointly by individuals across the spheres and used the term "partnerships" to emphasize that schools, families, and communities share responsibilities for children through overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein also suggested that schools (which perhaps also applies to the online setting) should be open to more participation from various stakeholders and that educators need to show a willingness to share responsibilities for student learning with families (Yamauchi et al., 2017). Applying Epstein's model to this qualitative research study helped me better

understand how families and schools are jointly responsible for children's overall development.

In a later study, Epstein and Sheldon (2016) found it surprising that there was little research on what schools can do to increase and sustain students' daily attendance and explored how family-school-community partnerships may contribute to this goal. They found higher levels of absenteeism appeared related to lower achievement orientation, active-recreational orientation, cohesion, and expressiveness. Epstein and Sheldon also found that absenteeism levels of 10%–15% may be associated with qualitative changes in family functioning. They recommended that every school's goal should be reducing the rate of students' chronic absenteeism. The conceptual framework of PBIS and Epstein's model supported this qualitative study because one focuses on correcting behavior and the other focuses on promoting parent involvement.

PBIS Framework

Originated in the late 1990s, Horner and Sugai (2018) developed the Effective Behavior Supports program, which later became known as PBIS. The framework of PBIS was designed to assist schools in their efforts to develop and maintain safe and positive school and classroom climates and improve the school system's capacity to prevent and respond to critical incidents such as chronic absenteeism (Byun et al., 2019). Teachers and administrators who use PBIS to prevent and respond to the essential events make use of the following four core elements: (a) outcomes, (b) data, (c) practices, and (d) systems (Byun et al., 2019). Byun et al. (2019) suggested that for full implementation to occur,

careful assessment, planning, and additional support from experienced trainers (e.g., implementation coaches and specialists) with critical incident and prevention expertise are required. Byun et al. argued that PBIS has the possible effects of reducing problematic or delinquent behaviors in a nonpunitive manner, which I will discuss in the following subsection.

Tier Levels of PBIS

According to Macintosh and Hoselton (2017), three paradigms define the levels of behavior for interventions. The school-wide (i.e., Tier I or primary prevention) behavior interventions promote pro-social behavior among all students. For example, the basic rules of a face-to-face or online e-learning environment, social expectations, adhere to classroom routines, class participation, and getting along with their peers (Shields, 2019; Wolfe et al., 2016). The second tier (i.e., Tier II or secondary prevention) supports targeted behavior interventions for students at risk for exhibiting delinquent behavior. The third (i.e., Tier III or tertiary prevention) behavior interventions are intensive and designed to support students who engage in challenging severe behavior that has proved difficult to address by all other efforts (Bohanon et al., 2017; Shields, 2019; Wolfe et al., 2016). The Tier III support practices have another essential aspect: A formal process for monitoring both the productivity of PBIS and a support plan the implementation (Fallon et al., 2015).

The Key Features of PBIS

PBIS has key features focused on positive social/emotional skill development and reinforcement for demonstrating pro-social behaviors (Macintosh & Hoselton, 2017). These features include aligned approaches to meet the educational and social/emotional needs of all developing adolescents, with the inclusion of those with emotional and behavioral challenges (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Kincaid et al. (2016) and Yamauchi et al. (2017) stated that the PBIS features promote a positive school climate and encourage universal and commonly understood school-wide behavior expectations. This authors also pointed out that implementation teams demonstrate shared leadership that reflected the organization and make decisions based on data and research-based practices that are based on the influence of human behavior change. Moreover, the features made provision to support staff via a job-embedded professional development and implementation cycles carefully planned with continuous monitoring for the improvement of outcomes.

The focus on the partnership of PBIS with schools is to implement evidence-based practices and conduct prevention research (Bohanon et al., 2017). Researchers have found PBIS implementation and methods to positively impact the school climate (Bethune, 2017; Malloy et al., 2018). The implementation of PBIS can help schools improve students' ability to build relationships with peers and achieve social-emotional growth, increase parent engagement and teacher morale, minimize behavioral disruptions, and create a mild overall school climate (Malloy et al., 2018). PBIS focuses on schools

working with families and caregivers using the same routine established at school in their homes (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Center for Parent Information & Resources, 2020). PBIS provides helpful strategies for responding to delinquent behavior, including when the behavior disrupts regular school routines (Byun et al., 2019).

Literature Review Related to Key Factors

Many factors have been found to contribute to chronic absenteeism among the high school student population. Some of the risk factors for youth delinquent behaviors include violence, absenteeism, low academic achievement, weak bonding with school, frequent school changes, and dropping out of school (Mazerolle et al., 2019). Maynard (2017) and Filippello et al. (2019) have found family, peers, school environment, health, and the students themselves as the leading factors leading to students becoming absent from school. Balfanz and Byrnes (2018) linked chronic absenteeism to multiple adverse academic and social outcomes. Gubbels et al. (2019) found chronic absenteeism to be one of the predictors of later school drop-out. The Minnesota Department of Education (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018) found that over several years since 2011, 12%–13% of students in Grades 1–12 had been absent for more than 10% of school days.

In this section, I review the literature on (a) risks and consequences associated with chronic absenteeism, (b) reducing risks of absenteeism in schools, and (c) chronic absenteeism's impacts or effects on other stakeholders.

Stevens and Borup (2015) and Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) recommended looking at what parents need to know about helping their students be successful and how to provide the training and expertise to parents that will help them learn critical support skills. The need to address chronic absenteeism (i.e., delinquent behavior) problems in early childhood and elementary grades is well established, and the benefits of involving community-home-school collaboration in interventions are widely supported (Read et al., 2015). However, there are limited empirical studies that provide enough data on specific behavioral interventions (Clark et al., 2016) that have a community-home-school collaboration component. Given the acceptability and effectiveness of PBIS tools in early childhood, elementary schools, and some special populations, using these tools with high school-age children is of interest.

Risks and Consequences Associated With Chronic Absenteeism

Students' frequent absences often have an impact on students' achievement in school. Gubbels et al. (2019) stated 1 day to 2 days missed might not seem like too much compared to missing several days consecutively, so parents may miss the significance of short absences. Chronic absences prevent students from getting consistent school instruction they needed most to build previously learned skills. Additionally, when students miss school, they also miss the opportunities for interventions, such as enrichment, extra help from the school, social learning, and teachers' re-teaching. Parrish (2015), Maynard (2017), as well as Filippello et al. (2019) claimed multiple causes of chronic absenteeism: school setting (e.g., teachers, academics), family (e.g., parents),

student/individual influences, and economic conditions. Makwinya (2016) found no single risk factor led to chronic absenteeism but a variety of individual, school, family, and community factors. In this section I discuss school settings, teachers' role, academic consequences of chronic absenteeism, family and parents, and students' characteristics as contributing factors.

School Setting as a Risk

Factors identified as school climate issues influencing truancy include school size and attitudes of teachers, other students, administrators, and schools' inflexibility in meeting the diverse cultural and learning styles of the students (Dembo et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). Inconsistent procedures for dealing with chronic absenteeism have also been reported by Dembo et al. (2016), the U.S. Department of Justice (2001), and the U.S. Department of Education (2019). The World Drug Report (2018) and National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (2018) found school connectedness to be the strongest predictor for both boys and girls to decrease substance abuse, early sexual initiation, chronic absenteeism, violence, and risk of unintended injury (e.g., drinking and driving; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

Based on survey results conducted by the Office for Civil Rights used by Balfanz (2016), approximately 6 million public school students (13%) were not attending school regularly, high school included. Evidence from Balfanz study found that students who exited chronic absenteeism status have a chance to get back on track. Also, Balfanz found that closing the achievement gap includes high-poverty students who need to attend

school regularly from PreK through 12th grade. Further description by Van der Woude et al. (2017) of the chronically absent students explained that students are absent regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused (e.g., illness, suspension, or the need to care for a family member).

Student failure in high schools occurs when an education system fails to provide fair and inclusive education services that lead to enriching student learning (Fuente et al., 2020). However, Raposa et al. (2016) found features common to delinquent youths and youths at risk for delinquency is their poor school behavior, including conduct problems, absenteeism, suspensions, expulsion, and dropout. Gregory et al. (2016) claimed otherwise, that what is less obvious is the potentially strong link between the cognitive deficits and these disciplinary problems. Moreover, DeVos et al. (2018), Jackson (2017), and Owens and McLanahan (2020) suggested that these school-related behavior problems may precede by warning signs related to this population's generally unfavorable opinions of their schools and teachers.

Gentina et al. (2017) found that bonding to school is a protective factor against violence, although this relationship is not strong enough. However, youth with high chronic absenteeism rates are more likely to engage in violence as adolescents and adults. Leaving school early also predicts later abuse and participating in many other delinquent behaviors (Gentina et al., 2017). They further reported findings: irrespective of age, gender, and level, the private schools scored higher on tests than the public school where students exhibit absenteeism, aggression, delinquency, and hyperactivity. Also, while the

attack is more elevated in secondary schools, delinquency and hyperactivity are prevalent in primary schools.

Gentina et al. (2017) claimed forming partnerships between schools and police who stay in excellent communication and parents who assume their children's legal responsibilities to attend school increase a truanting young person's willingness to go to school. Moreover, the partnership helps reduce students' self-reported antisocial behavior.

Teachers as Factor in Chronic Absenteeism

In a study conducted on high-need schools, McDaniel et al. (2018) found that teachers lack connectedness, low communication channels, and differing educational approaches create barriers for improving student behavior at school. They mentioned without the teachers' support of parental pedagogical approaches at home that aligned with positive, proactive teaching practices, and students lack consistent attendance. Also, schools involved in school initiatives, such as PBIS, focus on teachers and parents, in the implementation. Furthermore, their study also found that teachers need guidance on serving youth in secondary schools specifically and continue to struggle with managing school behavior and, therefore, continue to require explicit instruction.

Stevens and Borup (2015) found that parents can be the key to overcoming key concerns about some of the attrition and achievement in online settings. Norman's (2016) qualitative study explored 10 middle-class teachers' perceptions regarding the socioeconomic class of both impoverished and advantaged students with whom they worked. The research found that "teacher's positionality led them to a belief of what is

'normal" (Norman, 2016, p. 3). She also found that all the teachers in the study believed that parents were instrumental in determining their children's academic success. Perceptions based on teachers' upbringing, belief system, gender, race, and class contributed to student learning (Norman, 2016). However, the students at low socioeconomic schools were perceived by the study's teachers to need discipline and structure, opportunities to gather background knowledge, and parents' support. The students at high socioeconomic schools were recognized as leaders, well-dressed, supported by families, and in constant need of enrichment.

Academic Consequences of Chronic Absenteeism

Bishop et al. (2020) conducted a study with samples of 1,770 included primary and secondary school students (ages ranged from 10 to 20 years) from three selected local government areas. Bishop et al. found low academic achievement to lead later to delinquency and a connection between low academic achievement and chronic absenteeism. Bishop et al.'s study also shows a pattern of externalizing behavior across age, gender, school type, and the school level, with reference made to aggression, delinquency, and hyperactivity.

Kirksey (2019) found much research has concluded that attendance has a strong and positive correlation to academic performance, grades, and general standardized test scores in certain subject areas. Kirksey's study of negative impacts of absenteeism, examined three academic outcomes that prior research has consistently associated with student attendance. Chronic absenteeism was found to be a major and continuous

problem for high school students because students who are not in class are considered missing out on opportunities to learn the material that enables them to succeed later in continuous academic learning and in the future.

Family and Parents

Family related factors contribute to chronic absenteeism: (a) lack of guidance or parental supervision, (b) domestic violence, (c) poverty, (d) drug or alcohol abuse in the home, (e) lack of awareness of attendance laws, and (f) differing attitudes toward education (Dembo et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). The family's role is considered paramount in understanding why adolescents are prominent participants in delinquent behaviors (e.g., chronic absenteeism, and violent situations). Labella and Masten (2018) indicated that family provides emotional support and parental upbringing, playing a significant role in behavior development. The National School Climate Center (2018) explained that the environment inclusive of all stakeholders is an essential element of the school climate due to its impact on connectedness and staff morale.

Maguire and Naughton (2016) found parent lack of involvement a pervasive problem. Heyne et al.'s (2019) study suggested poor attendance and low attainment tend to occur with parental variables such as low socioeconomic status, conflict, neglect, a criminal record, and mental illness. There have been studies showing a connection between social disadvantages and school achievement. Stable parents' emotional status or well-being influences some of the parenting strategies that parents use to assist their children's skill development (Morris et al., 2017). Houltberg et al. (2016) suggested

parents with positive parenting set guidelines and rules for appropriate modeling of emotion that foster children in exercising emotions that are considered suitable for different situations.

Students are not the only ones who face the consequences of chronic absenteeism (Langford, 2015). They do need to attend school according to the law, but parents can go to jail for their child's absenteeism. Parents are considered the responsible party for making sure children attend school, but cannot be thrown in jail if they do not (Kearney et al., 2019). When parents do not take the responsibility to encourage their children to attend school regularly, they may perceive the school to be ineffective, risky, or unsafe (Kearney et al., 2019), The identified perceptions can create a conflict of interest with parents' desire (or obligation) in which they find themselves protecting their children's physical and psychological safety and promote their welfare (Kearney & Graczyk, 2020). Although the law holds parents fully responsible regardless of their child's age, once the students reach high school, many parents have little direct control over whether their children attend class or school regularly. Kearney and Graczyk (2020) found stakeholders' investment in promoting school attendance and reducing school absenteeism generally agree that multifaceted ecological frameworks are needed to account for these heterogeneous problems as well as differences across local education agencies and broader jurisdictions. The study recommended a multi tiered system of supports framework.

Researchers have connected chronic absenteeism with student poverty low income and poor parenting (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Often, poverty is concentrated in the southern and far western states, but it is also widespread in urban, suburban, and rural schools throughout the United States (Jiang et al., 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Suitts, 2016). Unfortunately, children from poverty are more likely to struggle with chronic absenteeism and engagement in schools (Rea & Zinskie, 2017). These authors claimed that the achievement gap between low-income and higher-income students are often placed on educators.

Jensen (2016) explained that students in poverty are not broken or damaged: Human brains adapt to experiences by making changes—and students can change. Engaging low-income students may prove difficult. In a study involving 81,000 students across the United States, students not in Title I programs consistently reported higher levels of engagement than those who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Yazzie-Mintz et al., 2018).

Student Characteristics

The cause of absenteeism is not limited to a single reason (Ottosen et al., 2017). The reasons why students fail to attend school are multifaceted and complex (Zur & Sigad, 2020). Student attributes, such as their values, attitudes, self-esteem, and behaviors, can influence and contribute to their decision not to attend a school or skip classes (Heyne et al., 2019). Research has associated student perceptions of the school culture and rigor of the academic program with student attendance (Conston, 2019;

Gottfried, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Also another research study found that students are less likely to attend school when students perceive their classes as boring or not relevant (Cui et al., 2017). Other research studies emphasized that students may not participate if they have no internet access, feel unsupported or disrespected by teachers, uncomfortable or bullied by other students, or feel targeted for discipline and other behavioral issues (Hussain et al., 2019; Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2019; Wong et al., 2018). Ramberg et al. (2019) claimed that a distance learning environment is another critical school factor affecting chronic absenteeism rates, which may be a factor contributing to absenteeism during the pandemic of COVID-19. Important is the degree to which a student participates in their school experience. Decreased student engagement levels have been associated with reduced attendance (García & Weiss, 2018; Mac Iver, 2019).

Due to students' limited opportunities for learning when students are absent from class, chronic absenteeism often has immediate consequences (Ottosen et al., 2017; Zur & Sigad, 2020). Often, youth, with chronic absenteeism behavior, are likely to experience higher rates of health issues, such as unintended pregnancies, as well as participating in criminal acts (Carnoy & García 2017; García & Weiss, 2017). They may also experience greater instability in career paths, higher rates of unemployment, and lower lifetime earnings, when chronic absenteeism leads to school failure or dropping out of school (Carnoy & García 2017; García & Weiss, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Backlund et al. (2017) found self-perceived poor health is related to both family and school-related factors and, therefore, suggests preventive health interventions need to include both school and family with attention to chronic absenteeism students. Excused and justifiable absences include illness (family or student), family emergencies, religious holidays, and preplanned time off for educational purposes (Låftman et al., 2019). Sattler (2017) found if a youth engaged in delinquent behavior, such as chronic absenteeism, which led to being placed in the juvenile justice system, the child has higher rates of risky sexual behaviors. Later, it may result in high rates of sexually transmitted infections and increased risk of human immunodeficiency virus, early or complicated pregnancy, and parenting issues. Students' demographic characteristics may also lead to chronic absenteeism, including being employed, living in a single-parent home, having high mobility or parents who hold multiple jobs, or lack of affordable transportation or childcare (Dembo et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001).

The relationship between exposure to violence and adverse behavioral outcomes is well-documented (Zimmerman & Farrell, 2017). The study of Zimmerman and Farrell's (2017) examined the effects of repeat victimization, exposure to different types of abuse, poly-victimization on property crime, violent offending, and substance use. They analyzed two data waves from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (N = 12,603). Findings from this study claimed that exposure to violence, regardless of how it is measured, increases offending risk. Gaffney et al. (2019)

suggested implementing evidence-based interventions to reduce and stop chronic absenteeism.

Reducing Absenteeism in Schools

Several efforts to reduce absenteeism have been studied. In this section I analyze research on programs focused on reducing chronic absenteeism, parental involvement, PBIS, and the role of the school leader.

Chronic Absenteeism Reduction

Although chronic absenteeism reduction programs vary, as much as the schools and districts that they serve (Ramberg et al., 2019). The intervention programs sometimes may involve school attendance review boards, alternative schools, distance learning initiatives, individual case managers, and even the court system in conjunction with social services. Many of these programs have shown short-term success in reducing chronic absenteeism rates; these programs' long-term effects are unknown (Ramberg et al., 2019).

It matters that schools understand, monitor attendance trends, and for students to attend school every day except in the case of emergency, illness, and excused absences. In many U.S. states an effort to improve students' attendance and an effort to increase guardians' awareness of absenteeism continue to be part of school's measure of accountability to the government. Gase et al. (2016) proposed that schools need to plan to reduce chronic absenteeism. The reduction of chronic absenteeism can include the use evidenced-based intervention PBIS, outreach support, and involve available stakeholders

(e.g., community, district personnel, department of children and families, court support services division, school counselor, social worker, school nurse, school psychologist, school administrators, parents, and teachers) to address attendance barriers. Families and community as part of stakeholders could play role to stay engage and deliver positive and culturally relevant information importance of attendance.

Unfortunately, Modin (2017) found the ongoing efforts at decreasing chronic absenteeism yielded no change in high school dropout rates in the United States the previous 2 decades. Ramberg et al.'s (2018) study that examined the links between school effectiveness of three teacher-rated features found that useful school characteristics may reduce students' inclination to play truant.

Parental Involvement

Alaçam and Olgan's (2019) study investigated parent involvement self-efficacy beliefs and the impact made on parent involvement self-efficacy beliefs by taking a course on parent involvement and by self-reported skills in implementing parent involvement strategies. They found that taking a class on parent involvement did not significantly impact parent involvement self-efficacy beliefs. However, a significant factor in parent involvement self-efficacy beliefs found self-reported skills in implementing parent involvement strategies favorable (e.g., groups with "competent" and "moderately competent" self-reported skills). Miller et al. (2019) found families living in poverty did not have equal access to opportunities provided within communities,

especially those that promote children's development (e.g., recreational facilities, quality education, and health services).

PBIS in At-Risk High Schools

For all students in K through 12 grades, the PBIS framework is recognized as a proactive system for promoting students' success in schools via a multitiered continuum of support with evidence-based behavior interventions (Fallon et al., 2015). Among the three tiers of PBIS, Tyre et al. (2020) stated that universal intervention has produced the broadest impact on school contexts and students as it requires a significant number of staff members and targets all student populations. The focus on supporting all students, the universal intervention is intended to prevent problem behaviors across the school by establishing and instructing school-wide behavior expectations (Hunter et al., 2015; Malloy et al., 2018).

While a majority of the schools that have implemented PBIS nationally are at the elementary level, there is promising evidence that PBIS implementation can also improve student outcomes at the high school level (Bohanon & Wu, 2020;Freeman et al., 2016; Flannery et al., 2018; Lindblom et al., 2017). Another finding supported the need to develop and monitor prosocial behavior in high schools in the study conducted by Gerbino et al. (2018). They examined the contribution of adolescents' prosocial behavior for middle and senior high school grades after controlling for the stability of achievement and intelligence. They found prosocial behavior as a strength and a crucial resource for adolescents' academic attainment.

Jackson (2018) and other researchers of behavior and student achievements (Fomina et al., 2020; Gustavsen, 2017) claimed that students' behavior index or subjective well-being (Steinmayr et al., 2018) is a much stronger predictor for future success more than test scores. According to several studies (e.g., Caprara et al., 2000; USDE, 2020), high school student social behavior is one of the strongest predictors of their future academic success. Most authors who have written about the implementation of PBIS in high schools claimed the influence of the high school context on implementation (Flannery & Kato, 2017; Swain-Bradway et al., 2015). Another benefit of PBIS is being recognized in education at the middle and elementary school for helping reduce misbehaviors (Peters, 2019).

According to Joseph (2020), the number of high schools implementing PBIS has increased over the previous 5 years. Showing some level of implementation of PBIS is approximately 2,595 high schools reported fidelity scores to the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Support in 2012-2013. Between 2014 and 2015, the number of high schools remains increased using PBIS. Based on Flannery et al.'s (2018) study, between 2016-2017 the number for high schools implementing PBIS had risen to 3,367 from all states represented in their data, and 17 states (33%) because it showed implementation occurring in at least 20% of their high schools. Moreover, the National Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports report that only 13% out of over 21,000 schools are implementing PBIS in all 50 states is high schools (Horner, 2015; see also www.pbis.org).

The results of Bohanon et al.'s (2017) study do not indicate that the implementation of PBIS caused the reductions in dropout rates or behavior problems, or the improvements in student achievement and engagement because of lack of data from a control or comparison school and groups. Ramberg et al. (2018) found when schools' leadership and teachers strengthened, the ethos tends to reduce chronic absenteeism among students and protect against the negative consequences related to absenteeism indirectly.

Contributions of the School Leader to Reducing Absenteeism

High school student absenteeism has captured the attention of stakeholders, including district personnel, school administrators, parents, and teachers, according to Gase et al. (2017). As described by Gase et al., stakeholders are school administrators, teachers, and the school district, who consistently have difficulties with chronically absent students. Based on new efforts to minimize chronic absenteeism promoted by ESSA, administrators from schools are required by the state, district, and school report cards to include student absences. Therefore, many U.S. states chose to focus on this issue in their state ESSA plans, and schools make a phone call to parents from the school when their child misses school for any reason.

Chronically absent students are more likely to experience absenteeism in other grades, drop out of high school, or engage in behavioral issues that lead to suspension (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Kearney et al., 2019; Melvin et al., 2019). School administrators must include teachers and parents in the decision-making process of how

to address those students who are chronically absent (Tash, 2018; Tschannen-Morand & Gareis, 2015). Moreover, they noted that school administrators need to collaborate with all stakeholders to improve student achievement and minimize chronic absenteeism. Another study by Northouse (2016) found that a collaborative climate permits the team to integrate their ideas, thus contributing to its success. Furthermore, Northouse and Önder (2017) posited that a collaborative climate causes team members to stay focused on issues when they emerged, improve their capacity as risk-takers, listen and engaged in alternative opinions.

Research has shown that school leaders can make a difference in school and student performance (Kor & Opare, 2017), most especially if they are granted autonomy to make crucial decisions (Dou et al., 2017). While chronic absenteeism does not require routinely measured and reported, the federal government neither needs nor asks states or school districts to report chronic absenteeism. However, as part of the No Child Left Behind reauthorization of the ESSA, most states in the United States choose to report the average daily attendance of elementary and middle schools' second required accountability measure.

Levin and Bradley (2019) found school principals' role as essential for providing strong educational opportunities and improved outcomes for students. Substantial principals can enhance teachers' practice, motivate school staff, and maintain a positive school climate. Levin and Bradley claimed that school leaders build the conditions stated over time and require continuity of strong leadership. Day et al. (2016) investigated

associations between the work of principals work in effective and improving primary and secondary schools in England and student outcomes as defined (but not confined) by their national examination and assessment results over 3 years. Their study included an in-depth case study of a subsample of 20 schools. The research of Day et al. provided evidence of how successful principals, directly and indirectly, promote improvement over time by combining transformational and instructional leadership strategies. They found schools' abilities to improve and sustain effectiveness over the long term are not primarily the result of the principals' leadership style, but rather of their understanding and diagnosis of the school's needs and their application of clearly articulated, organizationally shared educational values through multiple combinations and accumulations of time and context-sensitive strategies that are layered and progressively embedded in the school's work, culture, and achievements.

A significant influence of instructional and transformational leadership on teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment may be mediated by the indirect impact of school climate and teachers' self-efficacy. Dou et al. (2017) came to this conclusion through survey results from 26 senior secondary schools in China, including 528 teachers and 59 principals and assistant principals.

Summary

Often, teachers are the first to notice the impact of their students' chronic absenteeism behavior patterns and are routinely searching for strategies to assist students in being successful socially, academically, and emotionally (Houchens et al., 2017).

However, the research found teachers faced limitations on how they can address students' chronic absenteeism behavior because they had limited in-service training to handle the negative student behaviors, lack of adequate funding, large classrooms and responsibilities, lack of parental support, little experience in working with parents and stakeholders, and lack of administrative support (Shuster et al., 2017). Sugai et al. (2016) found that PBIS was a useful behavioral framework and I chose it for part of the framework for this study.

It was evident from the literature reviewed that parent support, administrative and stakeholder support are essential in reducing chronic absenteeism; however, there was a research gap in understanding teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism at the high school level, given the rise in absenteeism before and during the pandemic. Addressing this gap in the literature clarified obstacles that have impeded teachers' experiences working with parents to address low-income urban high school students to reduce in chronic absenteeism behavioral problems.

This review of the literature on chronic absenteeism indicates that chronic absenteeism in the U.S. public school system are common occurrences. The research found that the possibility of students missing school now and again is inevitable. Occasionally, students may spend a day sick in bed, out for a family obligation, personal snow day off, or take a parent-allowed day off; the fact is that students will not make it to every single day of school during the year. However, when absences become a pattern,

the negative impacts quickly add up. At first, the absences may not appear like a big deal, mostly if a student is missing just 1 or 2 school days a month. Over time, those days of lost learning can lead to years of academic struggles, as well as challenges beyond the classroom.

The defined number of school days, usually about 10% or about 15-18 days in most school districts, are considered chronically absent. And both previous and current research found chronically absent students are not only at serious risk for falling behind in school but also become susceptible to a slew of other harmful consequences. Mazerolle et al. (2018), along with other researchers, found that school attendance problems may lead to dropping out, and its effects can go into adulthood as well (e.g., increased risk for future economic, marital, occupational, and psychiatric problems). Berkowitz et al. (2017) found delinquent behaviors are more prevalent at the high school level than in the lower grades. Hutzell and Payne (2018) claimed that teachers need to play a vital role in preventing and effectively intervening when students exhibit any of the misconduct behaviors. When a student's attendance is not consistent, Farrington et al. (2017) argued this as an early warning sign of academic risk and other delinquent behaviors (e.g., chronic absenteeism, other disruptive behaviors, etc.).

Indicators of School Crime and Safety (2017), Zhang et al. (2018), and Musu-Gillette et al. (2018) found 30% of factors influencing delinquent behaviors (i.e., chronic absenteeism, etc.) were more likely to be reported than others as a lack of, or inadequate, alternative placements or programs for disruptive students. Instead, Musu-Gillette et al.

claimed that the reports should be on strategies that would not limit schools' efforts to reduce or prevent crime on violence, chronic absenteeism. Chapin (2017) and Romain (2018) found most teachers and school leaders lack knowledge of crisis prevention and management, updated special education regulations, core staff development to address individual variability, address adversity, and support resilience.

In Chapter 3, I present the methodology that I used to conduct this study. This methodology incorporates recruitment, sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods. In addition, Chapter 3 includes a discussion of ethical procedures and trustworthiness, my role as a qualitative researcher, a description of the research design and rationale, participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative inquiry was to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. In this chapter, I discuss the research design, the rationale for the design, the researcher's role, the methodological approach for the study, evidence of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question addressed by this study was: What are high school teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning? To gather an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, I used a basic qualitative inquiry approach (see Kennedy, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) as the design of the study and to guide the interviews with teachers. This basic qualitative research design allowed me to develop an understanding of the teachers' perceptions of their experiences while working with parents to address the challenges of high school students with chronic absenteeism.

My justification for choosing the basic qualitative research design instead of any other qualitative designs (e.g., a case study, ethnography, narrative, or grounded theory) was based on the aligned aspects of this method. For example, basic qualitative research provides flexibility when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data and information.

The method is practical, flexible, more realistic, and helps practitioners to view the world (e.g., events, issues, etc.) from the perspective of the research participants (Wiseman, 2018).

Another design considered for this study but not selected was a descriptive or exploratory case study. A case study is a research strategy that is used to investigate a phenomenon within its real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The reason I did not choose a case study to address the research problem in this study was the lack of feasibility to use the design to observe parent-teacher interactions. Patton (2015) claimed a substantial amount of time is needed for a case study in a setting, which also may not be feasible, particularly during the pandemic and virtual learning.

I also considered a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research accommodates or illuminates individuals' lived experiences of a phenomenon, which are necessarily not bound by time and space (Vagle, 2016). Given the brief time teachers have been working in the virtual and previrtual format, there might not have been adequate experience to have justified lengthy interviews with small numbers of participants using the phenomenological approach.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this study was to interview the participants, attempt to access their thoughts and feelings, and safeguard them and their data. I am a high school educator in the mid-Atlantic part of the United States with a background in mathematics, deaf and special education, and organizational leadership. I have worked

over 35 years in elementary, middle school, and high school settings as a mathematics inclusion specialist, special educator, mentor and teacher trainer, and administrator in different roles. My role as the researcher in the study was as an interviewer and a data analyst. I had to sustain objectivity because of the following subjective risk: I teach at the same school as three of the 11 teachers in the district from which the participants were recruited, although they work for different departments with no affiliations with me other than accepting invitations to be interviewed. My aim to remain an objective researcher continued throughout the data collection and analysis, and I kept a researcher's journal to reduce subjectivity in my collection and analysis of the data.

Methodology

The purpose of this basic qualitative inquiry was to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. In this section, I describe the methodology for this study, including the participant selection logic; data collection instrument; interview protocol; and the procedures for participant recruitment, participation, and data collection. Lastly, I discuss how I analyzed the data.

Participant Selection Logic

I used purposeful sampling for this study. Teachers in low-income, urban high schools in one mid-Atlantic district were recruited to take part in the study. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative sampling technique used to identify and select information-rich

for a study (Patton, 2015). I purposely selected participants who were knowledgeable about the phenomenon (i.e., chronic absenteeism) studied. However, purposeful sampling does not control for selection bias (Patton, 2015), but to reduce any sense of coercion to participate, I invited participants who volunteered and met the following criteria:

- high school teachers in low-income schools who had 3 years or more of full-time teaching experience at the high school level with at least 2 years of experience before March of 2020;
- taught in both face-to-face (before March 2020) and virtual settings during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning classroom settings and was familiar with the differences between both settings;
- had training in PBIS or taught in a school that sought to infuse PBIS;
- had experience with chronically absent students during traditional setting and distance learning setting; and
- made multiple efforts to work with students of chronic absenteeism to improve behavior and academic outcomes, including outreach to parents.

Instrumentation

I used an open-ended, self-designed, semistructured interview approach because it enabled flexibility in interviewees' responses and allowed me to probe for more understanding while posing the same core questions to all participants (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Using a semistructured interview format allowed me to focus on the research question and express little control over responses (see Rubin & Rubin,

2012). The interview questions and probes centered on the conceptual framework and the research question and were also suggested by the literature review (see Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Here are some sample interview questions: How do you feel chronic absenteeism affects your teaching? Would you describe some of these strategies you are using as PBIS to support student attendance? How do you perceive the use of PBIS in particular, to impact students' outcomes and reduces chronic absenteeism, if at all?

I strategically developed the first set of interview questions to collect general information about the teachers and their background knowledge about the impact of PBIS on chronic absenteeism. The questions became more specific by asking about the teachers' perceptions on working experiences with parents and how chronic absenteeism impacted their teaching. The questions also focused on gathering data on the participants' prior teaching experience at the high school level and their training in PBIS or teaching in a school that seeks to infuse PBIS. I practiced the interview questions with three people with similar teaching experiences and improved the questions as a result. In writing the interview questions, I also sought the advice of my committee and other teaching professionals who were engaged in research themselves.

Procedures for Participant Sampling and Recruitment

Participant recruitment began once Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted me approval (Approval # 05-03-21-0090926) to conduct the study. Given that teaching experiences before March 2020 and during COVID-19 were a focus of the

study, I recruited the participants through social media and sent emails to teachers using their school email addresses because I was operating under the COVID-19 restriction school district guidelines for teachers. I also reached out to possible participants on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Linkedln (professional networking) social media. I put an invitation on my social media pages and urged qualified and interested teachers to contact me. All teacher participants came from high schools in one urban district in the mid-Atlantic region. All participants were asked to find a private place for the virtual interview, and I did the same in my setting to maintain confidentiality.

For this study, the first 11 respondents who met the research study's qualifications and submitted informed consent forms constituted the group of participants. However, purposeful sampling does not control for selection bias (Patton, 2015). Selection bias was unavoidable in that I sought participants who would volunteer and meet the criteria rather than use random selection. The potential participants thought they could give rich information regarding their perceptions of their experiences working with parents of students to address chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning.

Once potential participants had expressed interest, I sent them an email regarding informed consent that also highlighted the inclusion criteria for study participation to review and my contact information. I stopped taking volunteers at 11 because I had already reached saturation. In other words, reaching saturation determined my sample size (see Lowe et al., 2018).

Procedures for Data Collection

In the plan approved by IRB, I stated my intention to use two communication channels to collect data, the Zoom platform and phone, due to COVID 19 restrictions. Had there been no COVID-19 restrictions, I could have held face-to-face interviews in which I could have observed and listened to the interviewee and maybe adapted the discussion based on the nonverbal communication cues from the interviewee (see Patton, 2015).

In email correspondence, I offered participants the options of being interviewed over the phone or in Zoom, from which I could make audio recordings. I urged them to choose a time and place during which they could feel relaxed and speak freely. Before being interviewed, they had to send me an informed consent form with an "I consent" response or expressed consent on the audio recording. I estimated that the interview would last 60 minutes. Once the interviews were finished, I kept the responses confidential and used an app to convert the recording to text. The gathered data will be stored for 5 years in a locked file.

I conducted all the interviews from my computer using the Zoom platform. The recording capabilities on my phone and computer were used to audio record each interview. In addition, I used a reflexive journal to take notes and reflect on my beliefs or assumptions. The interviews were planned to be a one-time event for 45 to 60 minutes; eight of the interviews went beyond 45 minutes but were less than an hour in duration,

and three went beyond 60 minutes. I observed that most of the participants did not notice the length and did not seem to be in a hurry.

I asked the interviewees for permission to follow up by phone or email if I needed more information from them. The interviews started with questions that were intended to allow me to connect with them, make the participants feel at ease, and learn a little information about them. The questions were informal, such as asking how their day was going or their plans for the evening. East starting conversations provided an opportunity for opening up the dialogue. Upon completing the opening conversation, I informed the participants about the study and the ethical considerations. All participants were informed that they could exit the interview at any time and that I would establish a pseudonym to represent them. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participant. Each participant was asked if they had anything else to add regarding their experiences. Doing so allowed the participants to ask questions. While some participants had nothing else to add, a few used the opportunity to offer additional information.

I sent each participant their transcribed interview via email and offered them the chance to review it for accuracy. The grace period was 5 days for requested changes, and if no response or edits were suggested within this 5-day window, I assumed that they agreed with the transcription. All participants received an email of appreciation and a $30.00 e-gift card within 2 days of their interview.

Data Analysis Plan

Once I had transcribed the interviews, I took several steps to gain a better understanding of the data. I first reviewed the transcripts from the interviews and journal. The purpose of using the software (i.e., MAXQDA) was to support the process of coding, analysis, and identifying of the themes presented in the transcripts. I reviewed each transcript and began open coding based on Saldaña's (2016) manual, coding the interview responses without being too focused or oversimplifying to avoid hampering the process. The coding approach suggested by Saldaña's guided and enabled me to make in-depth connections between the participants' experiences and the research question. I identified keywords to generate the codes, then I grouped the codes into similar keywords and excerpts of the transcripts as suggested by Patton (2015).

To mark codes, I used colored highlighters on a paper copy of the transcript to ensure all the data were addressed, based on Rubin and Rubin's (2012) suggestion. After identifying the key codes, I then arranged codes into related categories or themes as they emerged by breaking them up into meaningful groups and patterns (see Patton, 2015). I adhered to an essential aspect of data analysis strategy, denoted by Patton (2015), by using a research journal and making notes, referred to as memos (see Creswell & Poth, 2016), which helped with coding participants' responses. The transcripts were reviewed several times to avoid omissions or the mistaken categorization of any idea.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The data presented for this study needs to be regarded as trustworthy. I focused on the following four key components that establish trustworthiness in my research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As Patten and Newhart (2017) stated, the researcher is regarded as the most critical person in collecting and interpreting data. Therefore, it was essential to the integrity of my research to demonstrate that all aspects of trustworthiness were met.

Credibility

As each interview was happening, to establish credibility, as recommended by Saldaña (2016), I kept a journal with brief notes, relevant phrases, and dates during each of my interviews and reflected post interview. By exercising and maintaining consistency with a planned process in the data, collection steps ensured credibility. I maintained consistency with a planned process by confirming participants' qualifications, controlled new information when they emerged in each interview, and journaling throughout the process. To capture words, phrases, and body language that could assist in the coding Elliott (2018), I made a note-taking pattern part of the routine (Saldaña, 2016). Each step for the interview also limits bias as data were collected, verified, and interpreted. Finally, I shared the transcripts with the participants to review and ensure that their words were captured with accuracy and credibility.

Transferability

Creswell and Poth (2016) defined transferability or external validity as the applicability of research findings from one context to another. In the effort to enhance the transferability in this study, I categorized the codes, as described by Saldaña's (2016) textbook. The categorization of codes allowed the particulars of the specific research study to be applied to potentially comparable contexts, the categories and themes may transcend the setting and allow a reader to look at the bigger picture of the experiences reflected (Saldaña, 2016). Through analyzing the experiences that teachers shared with me in the study, I attempted to understand their perceptions shared and communicate their experiences with thick data so that others might consider the extent of transferability of the findings.

Dependability

Guba and Lincoln (1981) described dependability in qualitative research as the consistency and stability of data over time. Reviewing my journal data, interview recordings, and notes of the interviews allowed for ongoing checks of quality data and transcriptions. I kept a field journal of calls and emails. I kept all data separated for each interview, and thus, these thorough checks of data to ensure replication of research with similar results. As outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), to establish dependability, my data set up needs to be thick with detailed descriptions. My chair and I reviewed data collected to ensure dependability is met and ensure that the participants' words captured

accurately. The participants also were given the opportunity to discuss their transcribed data to ensure their words accurately captured.

Confirmability

Confirmability, as defined by Guba and Lincoln (1981), is the ability to base findings on the participants' interview responses and data collected by the researcher. To ensure confirmability, I coded and categorized transcribed responses. Also, by reviewing my data continually and objectively, I maintained a journal and took notes during the interviews and follow the coding process to reduce bias and maintain objectivity. Also, I asked my committee members to help me identify potential biases that may influence my data results. Additionally, I ensured confirmability by keeping my gathered data stored for 5 years before shredding or destroying the information.

Ethical Procedures

One requirement for selecting professional teacher participants was their willingness and individual consent (responding "yes" to a consent form). Upon the approval of IRB, I recruited participants and conducted interviews. I maintained confidentiality throughout the study by using pseudonyms and disguising information about participants. Before volunteering to participate in the study, I allowed prospective participants to:

1. go over the informed consent letter and consent,
2. feel free to ask questions about the requirements of the study, and
3. have the flexibility to withdraw from participation at any given time.

To ensure confidentiality of the records, the reviewing of transcripts and recordings of the interviews occurred at a secured location within my home office. All of the written transcripts and audio recordings of interview conversations or responses remained secured within the home office. Since the purpose of this study was solely for research, all collected data will be kept secured for 5 years. For all ethical considerations, the information kept secured will be destroyed after 5 years.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I outlined the research method for my proposed basic qualitative study. A basic qualitative study was selected for exploring teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents of high school students to address chronic absenteeism. This study also examined teachers' perceptions of their role, which offer support to parents of low-income urban high school students who lack attendance or chronic absenteeism problems in a virtual and face to face environment during the epidemic.

This chapter included a description of the qualitative research, selection process, data collection, and analysis procedures. The interviews were conducted once Walden University granted IRB approval. Finally, a plan was presented regarding data collection, analysis, and the secured storage of transcripts and recordings. The trustworthiness of the study was addressed to ensure all ethical considerations were met. In Chapter 4, I identify the research question that guided this study. I then describe the setting for this study, the participant demographics, the procedures used for data collection and analysis, the

processes used to ensure trustworthiness, and the findings from my research analysis of the data.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative inquiry was to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. Chronic absenteeism is a delinquent behavior that can be an obstacle to the teaching-learning process, particular during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning (EdSource, 2020; ESSA, 2015; Estrapala et al., 2021). The following research question guided this study: What are high school teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning?

In this chapter, I describe the setting and recruitment process of the study during the later stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were still engaging in distance learning. Then I discuss the participant demographics, data collection and analysis processes, evidence of trustworthiness, and results before concluding with a summary.

Setting

I recruited the participants through social media and sent them emails using their school email addresses because I was operating under the COVID-19 restriction school district guidelines for teachers. Possible participants were also reached out to on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Linkedln (professional networking) social media. I posted an invitation on my social media pages and urged qualified and interested teachers to contact

me. Teachers came from high schools in one urban district in the mid-Atlantic region. All participants were asked to find a private place for the virtual interview, and I did the same in my setting to maintain confidentiality.

Demographics

Based on my selection criteria, I recruited high school teachers from the same school district who had 3 years or more of full-time teaching experience at the high school level with at least 2 years of experience before March of 2020. Teachers had to have taught in both face-to-face and distance learning classroom settings and been trained in PBIS or have taught in a school that sought to infuse PBIS. The participating teachers also had to have experienced chronically absent students during both traditional and distance learning settings and made multiple efforts to work with chronically absent students to improve their behavior and academic outcomes, including outreach to parents.

Participants' years of experience as teachers ranged from 3 to 33 years. Nine of the 11 participants had more than 10 years of teaching experience in public school systems at the high school level. Their ages ranged from 30 to 56 years old. Eight participants were women and three were men. The participants reported they were all familiar with the impact of PBIS on student behavior. All participants were full-time teachers at their schools. Each participant was given a pseudonym: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, and P11. Two of the participants obtained their certification through the mid-Atlantic board's teacher induction program, while the others had received their teaching certification through accredited degree programs. The high schools they taught

at were all Title I high schools in the same district. Title I high schools are part of the ESSA, which provides supplemental federal funding to state and local education agencies to help schools with high concentrations of students from low-income homes (e.g., single parents, foster homes, low income, etc.; Estrapala et al., 2021).

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I posted a flyer seeking high school teachers in the district on social media (e.g., Facebook, Linkedin, professional networking, etc.) and had no response after 6 days. I then sent emails to teachers in the low-income high schools in the district, using the public website to find their email addresses.

I invited those who volunteered to participate to review the consent form and send me an email stating that they consented to participate in the research study. Before the interviews, I confirmed the date, time, and location with each prospective participant via email. each of the interviews were conducted at a time, date, and location selected by the participants.

I asked all participants to find a private place for the virtual interview, and I did the same in my setting to maintain the participant's confidentiality. Each interview began using the same script (see the Appendix for the interview questions), following which the purpose and voluntary nature of the study, confidentiality, and the conclusion of the interview procedures were reviewed. Before beginning the interview, I asked each participant if they had any questions and if I had their permission to audio record their

responses. During each interview, I asked all the interview questions and probes, although sometimes the participants volunteered their perceptions before I had asked about them. All 11 participants answered every question with relevant follow-up probing questions for clarification. I perceived the participants' enthusiasm during the interviews and that every teacher had a story or experience they wanted to share. Each interview lasted between 45–70 minutes, except for the first one that lasted about 40 minutes.

After each interview, I transcribed the audio recording and shared a transcribed copy with the participant. Each participant was asked to review the transcript for accuracy, add any additional information they deemed pertinent, and return it to me. None of the participants requested changes to the transcripts. I offered the participants a $30 gift card in appreciation for participating in the study. 6 of the 11 participants expressed that the gesture was appreciated, but they did not accept the gift. After I had conducted 11 interviews, I noted that no new information was emerging and I stopped data collection, following the recommendations of Rubin and Rubin (2012) regarding saturation.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis was to transcribe each of the interviews (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The data analysis consisted of open coding, including for critical word frequency. I began by implementing open coding of the first interview transcript and then the transcripts of the rest of the participants. I checked for the frequency of phrases and experiences in the transcripts, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012), and transitioned

from coded sections of the transcripts to categories and then themes, as described by Saldaña (2016). Since there was only one research question, all the categories and themes addressed that one question. Finally, I named my themes from the codes and categories in relationship to the research question (see Table 1). Some of the categories became subthemes, as demonstrated in Theme 1. Quotes from the participants that reflect each theme are included in the Results section.

Table 1

Themes/Subthemes, Categories, and Codes

Themes and subthemes	Categories (in italics) and codes
Theme 1: Teachers desire change to address inadequate collaboration with parents to increase student engagement	1.1 *Parent understanding of absenteeism impact on student learning*-Improvement, parents, level of commitment, empathy, overwhelming, shut down, unmotivated, responsiveness to the emotional needs, improvements, progress, adjustments, missing assignments, decrease. 1.2 *Parent understanding of absenteeism impact on teachers, curriculum and instruction* - overwhelming, delayed, slow, poor grades, poor understanding, repetition, lack of critical thinking, below grade level.
Theme 2: Teachers expressed the desire to establish a partnership with parents to address chronic absenteeism. ***Subthemes:*** 2.1 professional responsibilities in communicating with parents. 2.2 teachers' disappointments when partnering with parents and teachers	2.1 Expectations, information and instruction, exchange, wellness pursuit, positive relationship, professional partnership, routine, clear, expectations, individual students, avoid, under-mining, main problems, address, structure, environment, overlook the obvious, social-emotional, disrespect, gesture, nonchalant, attitude, clear role, disregard, parenting, breakdown, disunity, involvement, connect, nurtures, miscommunication, language, exchange, lack of support, agreement, responsibility, role, inconsistent, misbehavior, disciplining, disrespectfulness, assist, attention, homework, health, engagement, focus, accountable talk, facing the facts, accountability, negligent, support system, comfort, partnership, home visit, meet physical needs, assumption, background, medical, social. 2.2. Communication, parents' invitation, encourage parents, parents' contact, collaboration, upbringing, education level, address, parent concerns, nonresponsive, comfort, assumptions, individual, dialogue, sharing information, academic and/or social progress, supportive, consistent, support system.
Theme 3: Teachers are challenged implementing PBIS to address chronic absenteeism at the high school level.	3.1. *Clarity defining chronic absenteeism* - clarity, implementation, program definition (3-days, 10-days, 10%, etc.), absenteeism program definition (3-days, 10-days, 10%, etc.), 3.2 *Addressing chronic absenteeism* - no favoritism, positive reward system support for absenteeism, inconsistency, 3.3. *Implementation of PBIS* - buy-in, accountability measures, cultural differences, real life expectations, impact of consistent attendance, professional development, motivation, social-emotional, social emotional learning, home visits.
Theme 4: Teachers' perceptions of policies that could reduce chronic absenteeism	4.1 *Clarity of expectations/rules* - Assisting parents with diversity to overcome existing barriers, school policies, malfunction, need of clear expectations, in/out, 4.2. *Unified strategies to reduce absenteeism* - need of consistent consequences, common or a unified discipline policy, definition and classification of chronic absenteeism, consistent need of district wide referral protocol, home visits by other staff members ensure consistent accountability measures, ineffective platform set up for parent contact/information, nature of interference need to change, 4.3. *Supporting parents with regular updates* - routine, update, contact information, emails, phone number, share, 4.4. *Supporting teachers in parent out-reach* - schedule, parents-teacher conference, administrator, assign, mediation, participation of administrator, guidance counselor, monitor, support, arrange.

The themes are presented in the Results section in order of commonality among the participants. While the codes for Themes 1 and 2 came from all 11 participants, the two other themes reflect common perspectives among the majority of participants, as is common in qualitative research. Theme 3 was expressed by 9 out of 11 participants, and Theme 4 was expressed by 8 out of 11 participants Theme 3 represents some discrepancy. While all 11 teachers saw the potential of parent involvement in a PBIS program, two of the teachers thought PBIS could be effectively implemented in high schools, while the majority of the teachers thought PBIS is not a good fit for high schools. Theme 4 did not contain obvious discrepancies; rather, three of the teachers had little to say about policies.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This study adhered to Walden University's ethical standards, IRB guidelines, and scholarly methodological practices. I discuss the following criteria (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) to prove the evidence of trustworthiness in the study.

Credibility

Concerning reality, an integral component of research is rigor and the congruency of findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I included a review process to ensure the accuracy of the data collected for each interview. The participants were asked to review the transcripts and confirm that the interview information reflected their

responses. Additional interview notes were documented in a research log during the interview process as they emerged.

Transferability

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that the concept of transferability focuses on the extent to which a study can be applied to other settings. In this study, I identified the purpose, location, and academic level of the organization. I precisely described participants from the mid-Atlantic high schools who met the criteria for this study. The details of the research design and the data collection process have been delineated to facilitate transferability. This study may help develop a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives of working with parents and further identify the components of the PBIS that may need to be changed to improve implementation of the approach in high schools.

Dependability

According to Guba (1981), the dependability in qualitative research is based on the sufficiency and consistency of the data to authenticate the results. To address the dependability, I consistently kept a research log of interview notes, email details, and highlighted comments related to commonalities and differences related to evolving themes.

Confirmability

To maintain adequate objectivity criterion, I reflected on each step of the data collection process thoroughly. Detailed notes for this study and the steps were recorded in a research log during the coding process to reduce researcher bias. The confirmability of

this study was supported by my prior analysis of the subject matter, frameworks, and questions created (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, I also demonstrated confirmability in this study by documenting the data analysis processes, interviews, and when acknowledging my personal biases.

Results

I identified four major themes that addressed the research question. The four themes that emerged from the data analysis were:

1. Teachers desire change to address inadequate collaboration with parents to increase student engagement,
2. Teachers expressed the desire to establish a partnership with parents to address chronic absenteeism,
3. Teachers are challenged implementing PBIS to address chronic absenteeism at the high school level, and
4. Teachers suggest policies that could reduce chronic absenteeism.

These four themes represent the significant ideas that emerged from the participants' detailed responses during the interviews. They discussed their experiences working with the parents before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. Participants shared how the emergency of the pandemic changed the overlapping spheres of schools, the flow of communication with family, and the community by not pushing them together.

An example of one of the themes that emerged from the interview is Theme 1; in which teachers shared their desire for a change to address inadequate collaboration with parents to increase student engagement and attendance. All participants described the curriculum and instruction as strenuous for the chronically absent students whenever parents were unable to be reached them. Very often teachers found some parents contacts are not working for them to bring students up to date on missing concepts. For example, all of the teachers in this study claimed that parents receive one syllabus per each content area (e.g., English, mathematics, history, etc.) that aligned with the curriculum guide. The syllabus before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning provided a way for parents to monitor each concept by quarter and assist their children in study or practice, especially when they miss classroom instruction. According to the teachers, some parents liked to provide a tutor at home as extra support for what teachers teach at school. However, one of the participants, P9, indicated that whenever parents did not help enough it place the responsibility back on the teachers:

> So, if the parent involvement is not strong with the teachers, it will affect the children's chronic absenteeism. What I think is that a child's failure or success ultimately is the responsibility of the parent. It's the parent's job to monitor their child, and it's their job to work with their child when they come home to ask them questions and to check their grades to make sure they know what they're supposed to know…is pure irresponsibility and passing parenting.

Theme 1: Teachers Desire Change to Address Inadequate Collaboration With Parents to Increase Student Engagement

The first theme reflects teachers' expressed desire to collaborate more often with parents. Teachers said they need more collaboration with parents to effectively deliver the curriculum to chronically absent students before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. All the participants explained that chronic absenteeism affects the delivery of their individual instruction and students' learning outcomes and creates challenges in keeping up with the district's curriculum pacing guide. Furthermore, the teachers said that students with chronic absenteeism often present a variety of reasons and challenges to explain their lack of attendance. Before (March 2020) and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning, most of these children have faced disruptive upbringing or lifestyles, single parents, medical problems, inadequate transportation, lack of motivation, poor nutrition, parents with job issues, parents with poorly paid occupations, and much more. These challenges are something the teachers said they wanted to communicate to the parents and seek their help before (March 2020) and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning.

P11 shared some of the problems students face in the following experiences about why students are absent from school. She and four other participants shared that most students missed school because they're experiencing basic and fundamental needs (e.g., daily food, stable home, etc.). P11 shared:

> You have to meet their basic human needs before trying to show them or teach them anything. And because there's so much unpacking to do for one child when you have a class of 45, that's not possible. It could be medical, yeah, but not that they just overslept. That's not the mass majority. It's some emotional, mental, maybe, you know, something as simple as the household has to work.

Teachers claimed that the school administrators rarely share information with them because most information is considered confidential. Some students in their classes before (March 2020) and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning could be experiencing varieties of problems such as parents out of work, medical concerns, housing issues, and much more. P11 added the following statement, similar to the comments made by all other participants:

> So, now the child has to work, and I don't think that's fair, but I think each case is different. And because there is a stigma of chronic absenteeism, I believe that there is a baseline assumption that because the student is not always there, they don't get, you know, the balloons when they finally do show up. They don't get "we are so glad you're here," they get the stack of paper, here. They are already potentially not motivated coming in the door for whatever reason, whether it's personal or emotional, whether it's management.

As described by all of the teachers, absenteeism was not just about the chronic aspect of lack of attendance, but also about students not being active in a virtual classroom or the face-to-face environment. In particular, teachers described how they

need to explain to parents what absenteeism looked like in the online class and the problems it causes. One teacher stated that most of the students in one of her classes (during distance learning) would log into the Zoom platform and then secretly sign out of the class while the class was still in session. Other teachers shared that some students would log into the Zoom or Google platform, only answer when the teacher took the attendance, and go back to sleep, leaving the computer running for the duration of class. Teachers emphasized that this dynamic of absenteeism made it harder to work with parents because there was no rule that enforced visibility of the students during online classes in the district that they were all from.

P7 described student academic outcomes were affected by absenteeism, including missing the concept instruction and missing review which put the student in jeopardy of motivation to succeed or to gain clear understanding:

> Of course, when a student is absent they miss so much of the explanations and review and reading material…so unless we have a highly motivated chronic absentee student, which is not likely…then that student will always miss all of that instruction. Especially now, because they aren't willing to stay on after class was over to get assistance.

P11 used a TV analogy to describe how delivery of instruction is affected by students not being consistently present. "You know … I'm not a television show; you can't pause me and pick up where you left off because you stopped watching for 3 days."

Most of the teachers claimed, from experiences working positively with some parents whose child is experiencing chronic absenteeism, that students showed improvement over time, despite the effect their absenteeism had on the delivery of instruction. All the participants claimed that when parents have some level of commitment, empathy, and responsiveness to their children's emotional needs, their students are more likely to show improvement before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning.

All teachers described the curriculum and instruction as overwhelming for the chronically absent students whenever parents cannot be reached or are not working with teachers to bring students up to date on missing concepts. For example, teachers shared that parents received one syllabus per each content area (e.g., English, mathematics, history, etc.) that aligned with the curriculum guide. The syllabus before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning was intended to provide a way for parents to monitor each concept by quarter and assist their children in study or practice, especially when they miss classroom instruction. According to the teachers, some parents like to provide a tutor at home as extra support for what teachers teach at school. However, P9 felt parents didn’t help enough and put the responsibility back on the teachers:

> So, if the parent involvement is not strong with the teachers, it will affect the children’s chronic absenteeism. What I think is that a child’s failure or success ultimately is the responsibility of the parent. It’s the parent’s job to monitor their

> child, and it's their job to work with their child when they come home to ask them questions and to check their grades to make sure they know what they're supposed to know. So, you can get them whatever support they need. The attitude that teachers are supposed to be everything to children, that is their guidance counselor, their parents when they're not there, is pure irresponsibility and passing parenting.

P2 also described the concern that parents weren't attending to their children's behavior during remote learning:

> So, the teachers are left wondering how to inform the parents who often say, "Well, they are high school students, I thought I could trust them to do what they're supposed to do." Well, turns out parents can't. I mean, some of my students have told me all they do is sleep during school hours. But because they log on, that makes the teacher accountable for that student whereabout.

All the teachers shared that many aspects of the students' academic outcomes are affected when students miss school days, regardless of intelligence or frequent communication or collaboration with the parents. Along with other teachers in this study, P9 and P6 expressed that students' learning outcome regression endangered most students with chronic absenteeism to the point of failing and repeating the course, especially when teachers could not reach the parents, custodial parent, or legal guardian. Teachers claimed that these issues are often discussed with parents but often get unexpected results of parents not following the student and correcting the behavior as they promise. In other

words, when teachers reach out to individual parents and notify them of inconsistent behavior, such as lack of attendance, completion, and submission of assignments, etc., teachers explained they see no changes in student behavior. Some of the students even joke sometimes that the teacher's effort is of no use because their parents don't care about discipline.

P9 and other teachers in the study felt cooperation with parents was essential for the success of chronically absent students. P9 said:

> But until a child and their parents value education, their performance will not improve; it will worsen. I also think that will not improve any of the attendants, because why should they come? The consequences are not for the parents. Parents should say, "I need to reach out to my child's teachers," and the teachers should prioritize reaching out to parents.

However, in that outreach to parents, all teachers in the study claimed that while some parents mentioned their frustrations about getting too many calls concerning their children not being in school and promised to take action by rendering consequences or closely monitoring them, only a few of those parents' promises get fulfilled.

Theme 2: Teachers Expressed the Desire to Establish a Partnership With Parents to Address Chronic Absenteeism

The second theme captures teachers' expressed desire to establish a partnership merged while analyzing teachers' perceptions of strategies they used to reach out to parents to respond to or prevent chronic absenteeism in their schools. The teachers talked

of their work with parents before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning with varying emphasis on their role and comfort in responding to parents' concerns about problems experienced with their child's lack of attendance. Each teacher shared some of their strategies to reach out to parents to respond to chronic absenteeism during and before the pandemic. Before reaching a level of comfortable communication with parents, each of the teachers mentioned that they experienced frustration (e.g., negative, hostile, nonresponsive, arguments, blame, expectations, nonworking contact information). While they reported some parents were available most of the time to work with teachers, some parents were hard to reach during school time, and others were not reachable.

Due to the diversity of parents (e.g., different languages, educational background, expectations), all participants described several strategies they have used to help the parents. The students' parents in the urban district are largely working class and low income. Students in these challenging environments attend Title I high schools. Teachers told me that before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning, they arranged for interpreters, shared email messengers, followed up on the school's robocall, helped parents set up parent-teacher conferences with the guidance counselors, provided occasional after school tutoring, and more.

Two subthemes related to Theme 2 provide more substantial evidence for the theme. They are teachers' disappointments when partnering with parents and teachers'

professional responsibilities in communicating with parents before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning.

Subtheme 2.1: Teachers' Professional Responsibilities in Communicating With Parents

Teachers reported that before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning, about 90% of parents don't help their child with homework and show minimum levels of communication with teachers or school. They also shared that some parents have limited expectations of their child's high school achievement and often neglected to support children with school-related activities. Participants mentioned that they each adhere to the professional practice of communicating with parents by sending out letters, made frequent emails and phone calls to parents. The platform provides students and parents with the opportunity to communicate and monitors progress daily, weekly, and quarterly.

8 out of the 11 teachers mentioned that they sent out a letter at the beginning of the school year that contained information about them and how parents could contact them. Besides this letter, they continue to share updated information about students' progress each quarter as students continue to demonstrate competency in their subject area. Parents received both good and not so good calls and when students need to work on behavior such as missing homework, improved work habits, and lack of attendance. P7 gave the following explanation:

> Well, early in the year, when I see that a student fails to attend, I call home, and I speak with whomever I can get a hold of in the absence of a parent. And I will do

> that twice; after that, no more because if the student is not going to come to school, they will not come … anything that I can do on my end if it doesn't change after two phone calls home, it's not going to change. That has been my experience for the last 16 years.

P4 said that:

> If the teacher and the parents can form a way to communicate, it works out so much better for the student whether the parent likes the teacher or vice versa. Both the parent and the teacher would be on the same page … students will have to, you know, conform to what the parent and the teacher want the best for them. … If they understand that you care for their student positively, they will change the students' minds.

All participants claimed they maintained ongoing rapport with parents and students' individual guidance counselors to monitor the teacher-parents conference as needed throughout the school year. However, they did not feel their level of communication was enough to reduce chronic absenteeism. According to P10:

> To being in this virtual school and communicating with only email, you know what, if a person never checks their email, or what if a person checks their email only like every other day or week. You know, what if they're just not an email person because they don't have that kind of job. So, if you're trying to reach that parent and the only way to do it is by email, and then you never hear from them.

Despite these challenges, teachers said they often maintain positive responses to parents' requests and concerns. Each participant explained their frustration of the matter concerning remaining professional regardless of the gravity of the problem. They tried not to share their phone numbers because they will get in trouble with their school district if they did. Yet nine mentioned that they found themselves sharing cell phone numbers because of students' lack of attendance, participation, poor grades, and engagement.

P11 talked about how tempted she was to give out her phone number. She said that:

> Parents and students are receivers of information instead of getters of information. They're not initiating, or they're not sure how to reach out, and even when they do because I've had some parents who … check [the countywide platform for grades and communication] faithfully. My cell phone is No No.

P10 added that:

> A teacher has one responsibility, and that is to take the attendance of the student. Whether that is true or not. OK, anything beyond that is extra and sometimes could get you in trouble. When we are asked a question like, "what are you doing about this absence?", there's not a lot. [it is] not my responsibility as much as I wanted to be.

Two of the participants observed that parents become complacent about communicating with teachers when students entered high school. Parents feel that they do not need to do anything about the attendance situation, even though the attendance or

grade may be uncertain. Before they realized that they could not be complacent about attendance or subject status, the situation became unbreakable.

P11 explained that:

> Parents who feel that you're bullying their child because you're calling them about something that should have been corrected a long time ago, which is absenteeism. Parents who think that they have done all they can, and they are not appreciated. But they're not looking at the actual picture about a child who will be an adult in a couple of years.

P10 explained,

> Let's say a student is violent…You're trying to motivate them to perform academically or attend classes regularly, and the teachers like myself reaching out to parents…Then there's this disconnect, right, so that could be seen as you know there needs to be better communication. In general, I think one of the biggest problems just in the school system itself is communication. I think a lot of the problems could be resolved if people have open conversations about individual students routinely.

All teachers attested that some parents volunteered to participate in meaningful, intellectually challenging tasks (e.g., quarterly projects, field trips, etc.) to ensure mastery by holding their children accountable for their learning using incentives learned via PBIS. At their schools, parents' participation allows individual students to earn extra points toward their grades (e.g., "behavior points system," "tokens and accumulated tickets,"

and “kudos grade points”). While the participants mentioned that they used differentiated instruction to teach and kept diversity in mind when working with parents, participants also noted that students needed tutoring support when they missed school for more than 3 days.

Subtheme 2.2: Teachers’ Disappointments When Partnering With Parents

All of the teachers expressed that both teachers and parents are accountable for students’ success. It is part of the school policy for teachers to call parents when needed. Teachers can only call during school hours using the telephone as provided at the school location. However, teachers explained this was very inconvenient during online teaching from home. They shared that before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning, it was difficult for parents to identify the caller (because they were not allowed to call on their personal phone) and could not call them back. The online platform teachers used to communicate vary from Google Meet to Hangouts and more. Teachers claimed that they often left messages to set up an appointment when they called.

Parents could be at work or working from home, which made communication difficult. P8 explained the responsibility of both parents and teachers, noting that it is the parents’ job is to contact the teachers, and teachers also need to do the same. However, eight of the 11 participants claimed that this shared accountability is not the case for the most part. P8 said:

> For absent students … teachers are expected to call home…Parent involvement is absolutely essential. Absolutely, if a parent is not involved in their child's education, and you know, making absolutely certain that their children are attending class whether virtually or in person, then, it's an impossible task for teachers or school…I'm just saying it has to be done together; it has to be a commitment on both ends. Often, parents don't follow up with their children's teachers. I mean, clearly all they have to do is go on platform for grades to find out what, and the school calls to tell them on a regular basis that their child was not in class or at school. If schools are giving those notices and nothing changes, I can only put that on the parents.

Teachers explained that they think parents need to show their children that they value their education and thus teach them how to take ownership of their studies. This included parents being accountable for knowing the school's academic expectations, monitoring assignments for homework, forming a routine of work and attendance habits, and maintaining communication with teachers. Teachers claimed that parents should be accountable for teaching their children how to take ownership of their academic performance when they receive a disappointing grade and not blame the teachers. For instance, P11 added:

> Well, I think accountability is a big piece. And so, when you have that whole circle of accountability when it comes from the teacher and a parent, there is no

> break for the student. You know that accountability … encourages participation in the homework, making sure that they're grasping the learning concepts.

Participants shared that their individual and school's professional practice to form a relationship with parents has changed for over a decade due to the legal aspects. The shift and the level of trustworthiness in establishing and maintaining relationships made teachers nervous because too much connectedness could cost them their jobs.

Other teachers in this study, including P11, explained that they are frustrated with parents who only reach out to them or the administrators when their child fails a course. Some parents will not respond to email or telephone messages concerning lack of attendance, missing assignments, and low grades. However, the same parents are quick to call the administrators to report a teacher's disrespectful attitude. Often the response comes after teachers already documented students' progress in the online grade book. P11 explained:

> So, they don't need to talk to me because I put if the child is absent and why they have the grade they do. For example, they have a "0" if they didn't do well … However, some parents will call teachers with frustration to ask why their children have a zero. Meanwhile, the online comment space indicated if the students didn't do assignments, they received a score of "0," and I put it there if they are tardy.

P11 further explained that she put students' late arrivals, left early without permission or dismissal, and the records when they do things well such as coming into

class early. However, she said that despite her documentation being made available to parents to read and address, parents who did not keep up until too late have failed to monitor all that information right in the grading platform. P11 also complained that parents will call and vent their frustration and anger on teachers instead of taking responsibility for their delayed actions in monitoring their children. P11 felt parents assumed teachers were bullying their child:

> because you're calling them about something they should have corrected a long time ago, which is absenteeism. Parents who feel that they have done all they can, and they are not appreciated. But they're not looking at the actual picture about a child who will be an adult in a couple of years. So, now that the issue has to be looked at by parents, they'll see a partnership will work if they work with the teacher.

Other teachers described how they are often bombarded with parents' emails and phone calls concerning not knowing which office to call when overwhelmed with students not going directly to the school building. P5 said:

> The parents themselves are overwhelmed. They are devastated because they have to go to work and supervise their homes simultaneously. They get worried when they know that the students are on the computer, but they are not in class because I called to inform them. That's one of the problems that I encountered with some of my parents. The students are on the computer, but they are not in class nor

> logged into the Zoom, so we knew the parents were overwhelmed when they communicate with us, and the district often failed to monitor the students.

P10 also mentioned that a more substantive connection is needed between teachers, the school, and parents to maintain good academic progress and consistent attendance for most students:

> But, you know, I think we're going back to that same problem of trying to reach parents. We also have parents who don't try to contact us, and you know, and then, in the end, they get all angry, because they didn't try and get the answers that they wanted or anything as well.

Some teachers shared that most parents are not taking advantage of the open-door policy during school hours and school invitations for odd hours (weekends), but they instead abuse the invitations. According to the teachers, some parents make an appointment for a meeting to resolve concerns about attendance but will not show up and don't reschedule.

Theme 3: Teachers are Challenged Implementing PBIS to Address Chronic Absenteeism at the High School Level

The third theme pertains to teachers' perceptions of some challenges and setbacks of PBIS implementation address chronic absenteeism at the high school level related to chronic absenteeism and contact with parents. Teachers identified the parents' involvement and consistent school policies as pivotal stakeholders in the success of PBIS implementation at the high school level. They believe parents are familiar with their child

and could increase teachers' awareness of different behavioral expectations and provide information on how schools can assist in improving the student's attendance. While all 11 participants addressed the importance of the role of parents in carrying out PBIS, three of the teachers represent a discrepancy in that they thought PBIS could be effective with high school students. P9 is among the nine teachers who explained their perception that PBIS implementation is not working properly for high schoolers, particularly feeling it is not suitable to address attendance issues. P9 said:

> I think PBIS will work well with ninth grade and 10th grade, or students in middle school. I believe, then, after that, you have to take the kid gloves off right; I mean, we can't just reward students all the time. Life isn't about, you know, constant reward systems. And so, I think you have to start to rein that in as they get a little older. I can't see doing PBIS with an IB senior student; it's just not going to happen. You know, but maybe with a freshman group, sure, it'll work. I don't think we should reward kids for doing what it's supposed to do, but that's old school, I guess; I don't know, maybe I'm a little harsh.

P9 further claimed that he is not the kind of person that likes to reward students for participation. P9 also said that chronic absenteeism is about events happening outside or in students' homes or an outside school such behavior impacts the student. However, P9 said that PBIS is like a motivator or tool for participation; because that's how he thinks of it, and he believes that's not going to work for older kids in high school settings (distance learning or face-to-face).

Teachers explained that reducing and monitoring chronic absenteeism in high school settings is ineffective due to parents' involvement. Teachers expressed the need to improve the PBIS implementation in high schools to develop and monitor prosocial behaviors. One of the teachers, P1, commented on what other teachers expressed as needed for buy-in PBIS implementation:

> I think it has a positive area that is of structure. I believe it will have to modify a little so that all teachers can view it as a positive tool for students with chronic absences. There have been some positive things for the PBIS in a school setting, but such limitations put on it may not give the student what they want. It may intrigue, I would say the ninth grade students, but the 12th grade students may not like it. They need something a little more because as you grow older, you have higher expectations, and that's what I think PBIS can help on one end, but maybe a failure on older antisocial behavior.

Theme 4: Teachers' Perceptions of Policies That Could Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

Despite the ongoing issues with the inconsistent school rules, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning, to reduce chronic absenteeism in the district, eight of the 11 teachers shared their experiences of the current policies to reduce chronic absenteeism is represented in this fourth theme. The other three had little to say about policies, but did speak of the need for better channels to contact parents. The participating teachers in this study shared frustrating experiences about

school policies on how to account for students' lack of attendance without so much support for teachers by the administrators.

P7 made the following comment to express teachers' need for support under the district attendance policy:

> If I cannot reach the parents on time, any situation with students worsens, and the lack of attendance becomes chronic absenteeism. The easy cases, you know, if handled in time, make some easy solutions turn into more complex solutions because of the time factors. If there is a support system (e.g., free tutor), it will help parents help their students.

Teachers explained that they experienced unclear absentee policies and follow-up expectations set by the district for the schools to follow. For example, seven teachers could not say what exactly defines chronic absenteeism, nor its policy; including P11, who noted:

> I think chronic is more than 10%. Is it the year or the quarter? I like to go back and look at the absentee thing. I'm pretty sure it's 10%. I think it's 10%. Yes, the chronic is as far as with the absenteeism, it has to be. It's supposed to be consecutive days. However, they do look at sporadic attendance as well. So, like if a student, you know, comes to school every other day for three weeks, that's noticeable as I don't know if they consider it chronic because of the lack of them, because it not being back-to-back, but still days, 3 days.

P2 said that,

> According to the policy, anyone who's been absent more than three times is chronically absent. I forgot the number of days, but I know it is; yeah, I used to remember the policy. I forgot the number of days that makes you, I think 3 days, so every 3 days, the child is supposed to receive a phone call home, and the policy used to be if you were absent more than 10 days in a quarter, you were supposed to fail the class automatically.

Although teachers mentioned calling the attendance office to verify, the information is not clearly defined. P10 added that the school district does not have a clear definition. "I don't know if the school district even knows it. But, I guess what I've always considered chronic absenteeism is that once a student gets over 10 unexcused absences, it becomes a chronic absentee issue for that student."

Another example of a needed policy is something that would assist parents with diverse challenges to overcome barriers, such as language, because communication is blocked due to the lack of a language interpreter. Teachers described challenges encountered when communicating with the parents about their child not in school or failing and more. P7 expressed this when saying:

> I think that the administration puts too much on teachers. They do; I mean, I have my job, and that is to prepare my classes, take attendance, keep accurate records, and grade papers. When I have to go away from that focus, it deprives the students who are doing what they're supposed to be doing and inhibits me from giving them what they need. So, to me, the administration should be on top of

> that; that's not a classroom job…When we get to the interpreter, it's days and days and maybe even weeks and weeks because many of our parents work more than one job, and the student doesn't know how to contact their parents.

Teachers explained that administrators should make available an interpreter and time without extra request by the teachers whenever there is a need to communicate with parents for whom English is not the native language. Before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the school district claimed to have an office for interpreters when participating in distance learning. Still, 10 out of 11 participating teachers explained having no immediate access to make a convenient request to both parents and teachers, as expressed by P4:

> I think the school can do better with having interpreters that are more readily available to avoid information getting lost. Maybe even someone in the building can have an interpreter at a meeting or just someone we can call upon to convert the comment to the parents' language. The interpreter could maybe make a phone call with you, you know, or attend a meeting with you. Suppose you want to say something to a parent who speaks a different language before school ends. You could schedule for that person to come with you in a phone call, and the problem that the child is having could be addressed quicker. But you can't do that if there's no one readily there to interpret for you…Still, you are frustrated when it comes to being seen as a barrier because an interpreter is not accessible.

Based on the explanations by teachers, policies concerning parental involvement have not made resources (such as telephones, interpreters, emails, updating contact information, technology platform, grading criteria, etc.) easy for teachers in communicating with parents. The only platform that houses parents' contact information is not updated regularly, creating frustration to teachers in communicating with parents.

Regarding classroom discipline policies, teachers said that they have yet to experience clear and consistent expectations on having a common or a unified discipline policy to go about the correct type of consequences concerning chronic absenteeism. In addition, they believe the definition of chronic absenteeism needs classification. According to the teachers, the district-wide referral protocol of chronically absent students need quick and thorough processes to reduce the number of absences weekly or monthly.

All 11 participants shared that besides the designated school administrative staff effort to check on the students with absentee issues, make phone calls, or sometimes home visits, immediate resources would be more effective with extra paid nonteaching support staff. Teachers explained that the school system office should have additional strategies to hold parents accountable who are negligent in making sure they attend. This current research has revealed that teachers perceive consistent policies as essential because they help teachers, other staff members, and stakeholders know the established rules. Procedures to follow, standards of quality for learning and safety, modifications to policies created or initiated, and expectations and accountability are needed. In addition,

all 11 participants in this study shared that without these consistent policies to guide teachers when working with parents of students with chronic absenteeism, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, when participating in distance learning, schools lacked the structure and function necessary to provide the educational needs of students, other staff, and stakeholders.

Summary

I presented in this chapter the demographics, setting, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results. The findings suggest that PBIS needs better implementation in high schools to reduce chronic absenteeism. Teachers discussed their need for support to improve working with parents, furthering parent partnership (relationship and involvement) and communication, and follow-up on overcoming the setbacks and barriers. Most of the participants observed the above events happening, and that teachers need support when working with parents and implementing PBIS in high schools to reduce chronic absenteeism. In addition, while some help occurred, like interpreters to assist non-English speaking parents, support for a non-site tutoring session for students with chronic absenteeism when they return to campus did not. The participants emphasized the need for an ongoing flow of communication between teachers and parents to build a good relationship. They reported that about 90% of parents do not help their child with homework and show minimum levels of communication with teachers or school.

Teachers expressed the desire to establish a partnership with parents to help them respond to or prevent chronic absenteeism while simultaneously analyzing perceptions of current strategies they used to reach out. According to the participants of this study, both the teachers and parents are responsible for ensuring students' consistent attendance. Teachers also shared that both parents and teachers should be held accountable for students' success, regardless of before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. Teachers in this study also expressed the desire to collaborate more often with parents to deliver the curriculum to chronically absent students effectively. Although it is part of this particular school district's policy for teachers to call parents when needed, this current research has revealed the importance of having consistent policies to support implementations of interventions and teachers. Teachers shared the critical aspects of why schools' procedures could affect quality standards for learning and safety, modifications to policies created or initiated, and expectations and accountability needed for improvement.

In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings, discuss their limitations, present the recommendations for future research, and discuss the implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative inquiry was to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address delinquent students' chronic absenteeism in low-income, urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. I conducted individual, open-ended interviews with 11 high school teachers using PBIS, who had 3 years or more of full-time teaching experience with 2 years of experience before March 2020. The participating teachers had experienced chronically absent students during both traditional and distance learning settings.

The data analysis led to four main themes regarding participants' perceptions of teachers' desire and challenges while working with parents of chronic absenteeism students in high schools: (a) teachers desire change to address inadequate collaboration with parents to increase student engagement, (b) teachers expressed the desire to establish a partnership with parents to address chronic absenteeism, (c) teachers are challenged implementing PBIS at the high school level address chronic absenteeism, and (d) teachers addressed policies that could reduce chronic absenteeism. In this chapter, I interpret the findings in light of the conceptual framework and empirical literature as well as address limitations of the study, offer recommendations and implications before ending with the conclusions.

Interpretation of the Findings in Light of the Conceptual Framework

In this section, I address the interpretation of the findings of the study in light of the conceptual framework, which was comprised of two models: Epstein's (2009) model of parental involvement and the framework of PBIS as proposed in 1998 by Horner and Sugai (2015, 2018). In the following subsections, I address the findings as they relate to each model in turn.

Interpretation of Findings in the Context of Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement

I utilized Epstein's (2009) model of parental involvement to guide probing questions asked of the study participants. The teachers shared their perceptions of what was necessary to consider when addressing chronic absenteeism and working with parents. Teachers also included some of their concerns regarding the implementation of the interventions of PBIS and its policies. The current study findings are related to four of the typologies of Epstein's model: communicating, collaborating with the teachers and community partnerships, and evidence of good parenting involvement (see Allen et al., 2018; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). In addition, in the model of parental involvement, Epstein saw the community as an integral part of child and adolescent learning.

Communication

The first construct in Epstein's model that aligned with the findings is how teachers shared their perceptions of their role in establishing positive communication with parents. The findings suggest that teachers perceived consistent parent and teacher

communication as the most critical support factor for working with parents. They believed communication and the frequency of interactions between teachers and parents need to improve. According to the teachers, new federal policies require every school to communicate effectively with all parents and the community about students' achievements and the quality of the school's environment. Based on the results of this study, it is clear that educators need to know more about effectively communicating, sharing ideas, solving problems such as chronic absenteeism, and working together as partners, as Epstein (2009) suggested. Similarly to the findings of this study, Epstein viewed parents' communication with the school, understanding the dynamics of individual student's families, and building community relations by the school as important to reducing chronic absenteeism. The overlapping spheres of schools, the flow of communication with families, and the community can be pushed together or pulled apart by vital forces like the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning.

Parent Involvement

The second construct in Epstein's (2009) model related to the findings of this study is teachers' perceptions of their role in assisting parents' sense of efficacy; whether they can get involved in their child's education; and whether their efforts to help and support will result in positive outcomes, such as reducing chronic absenteeism. In the model, Epstein postulated that the identification and analysis of the methods and extent of parent involvement in schools might be helpful when aiming to increase overall effectiveness. The participants in this study shared a similar view to that of Epstein's

model concerning new directions: teachers and administrators need to include improved parental involvement, school and family partnerships, and community relations. Teachers claimed that school staff members (i.e., teachers, administrators, and other staff members) need to understand parents and relate to them because they could reliably improve student achievement and regular attendance.

Collaboration as a School Community

The third construct in Epstein's (2009) model that aligns with the findings is teachers' perceptions of how parents may perceive their invitations to get involved and put forth more effort to support students. Theme 1 addressed the participants' desire to address inadequate collaboration with parents to increase student engagement, and Theme 2 addressed teachers' desire and willingness to establish a partnership with parents. Participants confirmed research regarding parents' need to understand the impact of chronic absenteeism on learning outcomes and how their children's teachers assist their children's learning process (see Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). To effectively support their students' learning, parents need guidance. The teachers suggest providing information and ideas to parents about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions on maintaining regular attendance, and making good choices.

Community Partnerships

The fourth construct in Epstein's (2009) model that related to the findings of this study is teachers' perceptions of working with parents and the school community to better

implement interventions like PBIS to motivate regular attendance. In this study, Epstein's model supports the views of the teachers concerning teachers being open to more participation from various stakeholders and showing a willingness to share responsibilities for student learning with parents. Teachers shared that they need to improve their role in identifying and providing resources to strengthen student learning outcomes. Epstein described parents as the source of basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, health, and safety) for students. Parents are also responsible for providing school supplies, making room for students' homework assignments, and maintaining a home environment that encourages learning and good work habits in school.

In sum, based on Epstein's (2009) model, these four constructs reflect teachers' perceptions in the current study of working to get parents involved in the educational process. The results indicate the importance of communication: Teachers perceived consistent parent and teacher communication as the most critical support factor working with parents. Regarding the second construct of parent involvement, the results suggested that teachers' perceptions of their role assisted parents' sense of efficacy in their child's education and increased teachers' hope that their efforts to help and support will result in positive outcomes, such as reducing chronic absenteeism. Regarding the third construct of collaboration as a school community, the current study results indicated teachers' perceptions that they have invited and provided support to parents so they can support students at home with homework, other curriculum-related activities, decisions on maintaining regular attendance, and making good choices. The final construct of

community partnerships was reflected in teachers' views of how they should be open to more participation from various stakeholders and show a willingness to share responsibilities for student learning with parents.

Interpretation of Chronic Absenteeism in Light of the PBIS Framework

Theme 3 addressed teachers' challenges when implementing PBIS at the high school level. The buy in from teachers is necessary for implementation of PBIS in schools, with modifications as needed (Estrapala et al., 2021; Horner & Sugai, 2015, 2018). Based on the participants' responses, parents' involvement and consistent school policies are pivotal in the success of PBIS implementation at the high school level. Byun et al. (2019) found PBIS as a model to establish and maintain safe and positive school and classroom climates and improve a school system's capacity to prevent and respond to critical incidents, such as chronic absenteeism. However, Byun et al. suggested that high school implementation needs adjustment in correlation with the perceptions of the teachers interviewed. In the current study, the teachers claimed that the adjustment must focus on careful assessment, planning, and providing additional support to reach out to parents. They also reported that prevention experts are required in addition to the school staff assigned to monitor student attendance to initiate interventions to help improve attendance and take necessary legal action when no improvement occurs. In the current study, teachers shared information similar to other studies when mentioning that the assigned school staff typically work from the assumption that parents are familiar with their child, in a better position to support them, and could increase teachers' awareness of

different behavioral expectations and provide information on how schools can improve student attendance (see Hamlin, 2021; Shields, 2019; Wolfe et al., 2016).

Macintosh and Hoselton (2017) described the three levels of organizing behavior for interventions (i.e., Tier 1, 2, and 3) in the PBIS framework, all of which align with participating teachers' explanations of their experiences with the exception that teachers have not fully bought in to influencing chronic absenteeism. For instance, teachers complained that the school-wide behavior interventions (i.e., Tier I or primary prevention) to promote pro-social behavior among all students worked well only with students regularly attending school. Hamlin (2021), Shields (2019), and Wolfe et al. (2016) also found, as I did in this current study, that teachers perceive most high school students conform to the basic rules of a face-to-face or online e-learning environment and social expectations as well as adhere to classroom routines, class participation, and getting along with their peers. However, most teachers in the current study implied that rules are only effective with students with near-perfect attendance and not with those chronically absent from school.

Based on the explanations shared by the teachers, the second tier of the PBIS framework (i.e., Tier II or secondary prevention) supports targeted behavioral interventions for at-risk students for exhibiting delinquent behavior such as chronic absenteeism. Teachers in the current study claimed that more effort is needed to reach out to parents and students before students formed or broke absenteeism patterns. However, the teachers reported their attempts to work with the school to implement PBIS and with

parents to target behavior such as chronic absenteeism were perceived by the school administrators to be ineffective, as reflected in the teachers' evaluation ratings. The participants shared that they need additional support from the administrators to assist parents and their children in improving attendance (see Bohanon et al., 2017; Clayton et al., 2020; Shields, 2019; Wolfe et al., 2016).

In the third tier (i.e., Tier III or tertiary prevention), behavior interventions are intensive and designed to support individual students who engage in severe behavior that has proved difficult to address by all other efforts (Bohanon et al., 2017; Clayton et al., 2020; Shields, 2019; Wolfe et al., 2016). All teachers described that this third level needs additional support in implementation and required trained teachers to monitor students for a good outcome. The third theme is similar to the findings of McIntosh et al. (2018) because it pertains to teachers' perceptions of some of the challenges and setbacks associated with PBIS implementation as it related to lack of absenteeism and contact with parents. Macintosh and Hoselton (2017) claimed that Tier III practices have another essential aspect: a formal process for monitoring both the productivity of PBIS and a support plan for the implementation.

In sum, the current study findings suggested that the challenges of implementing PBIS at the high school level could be reduced if the schools prioritized encouraging buy in from teachers and parental involvement as well as consistent school policies. Moreover, this study revealed that all three levels of organizing behavior for interventions of the PBIS framework (i.e., Tiers I, II, and II) need management with fidelity to gain a

better result (Horner & Sugai, 2015, 2018). In the following sections, I provide an interpretation of the findings in light of the review of empirical research.

Interpretation of the Findings in Light of Empirical Research

In line with previous research on chronic absenteeism, I found that the relationship between parents and teachers plays a significant role in students' motivation, learning outcomes, and attendance as well as has disproportionate impacts on specific low-urban high schools (see Estrapala et al., 2021; Fornander & Kearney, 2020; Kress, 2020; McFarland et al., 2020). In this section, I discuss these priorities and circumstances to show how the four emergent themes confirm, disconfirm, and/or extend prior literature.

All four themes were related to the research question and confirmed previous research studies that parent involvement is integral to quality education. Langer (2010) found that most teachers reported parents as their primary support mechanism, more so than other stakeholders. All the participants in the current study said that parents should be involved in their children's education somehow. Matos (2015) found that the parents' level of education had no bearing on how teachers viewed them as supports because if those members could not help in one way, they could help in others. In the current study, most of the participants mentioned different ways parents could be involved but that there were hurdles to them being as involved as they could be, such as language barriers, use of technology, and much more.

Ramelle et al. (2021) argued that clear-cut standards generally dictated a school's operational plan (e.g., daily operations, processes, and routines) before the pandemic emerged. Still, as the pandemic continued and extended into a second school year, there was a shift from the in-school teaching settings to home-based online learning that prompted amendments in structures, policies, practices, and norms of conduct among learning institutions. The current study results confirm Ramelle et al.'s findings related to the impact of truancy committed by students during online classes, its implications on student learning, and policies for interventions that guide attendance. Cacault et al. (2021) found that attendance is affected when students attend lectures via live streaming by lowering achievement for low-ability students and increasing achievement for high-ability students. Cacault et al.'s findings have similar implications for the effective design of education policies for distance learning. Both studies confirm the importance of how a consistent, structured setting is required to monitor students' learning outcomes and teachers' ability to build a relationship with parents. Cacault et al. also argued that daily activities, such as engagement in traditional school settings that give room for flexible structure such as working in small groups, could not be used during distance learning to easily track attendance.

Literature Related to Theme 1: Teachers Desire Change to Address Inadequate Collaboration With Parents to Increase Student Engagement

The first theme reflected teachers' desire to change to address inadequate collaboration to increase student engagement. The current study's findings that more

collaboration between teachers and parents is needed to provide adequate support for students who missed their instruction due to extended absence from school confirms research that suggests that certain aspects of parent involvement are more closely related to student achievement and learning outcomes than others (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019). Javier and Jubay (2019) found a significant difference in collaborative activities before and after parent-teacher partnership. Research studies such as those by Flannery and Kato (2017) and Swain-Bradway et al. (2015) have shown that without the teachers' support of parental pedagogical approaches at home aligned with positive, proactive teaching practices, the students' consistent attendance lags.

George (2019) noted that absenteeism levels might increase 10–15% in association with changes in family functioning, which likely interfere with parents' ability to focus on their children's learning. Stevens and Borup's (2015) findings are consistent with the current study. They found that parents can be the key to overcoming key concerns about some of the attrition and achievement in distance learning settings.

Most of the participants in this study assumed that students' learning outcomes and their own delivery of curriculum and instruction would improve with reduced absenteeism levels. This study's findings that teachers perceived that students retain more information and skills when teachers can do minimum repetitions of instruction on the same concepts when their students’ attendance is good, as confirmed by other other studies (see Finning et al., 2019; Gubbels et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2019). This interest in participation in outreach was confirmed by Yamauchi et al.'s (2017) findings, which

emphasized that teachers should be open to more involvement from various stakeholders and show a willingness to share responsibilities for student learning with parents. The current study's participants asked for support, as did Cortiella and Boundy's (2018) and Henson's (2017) studies which claimed that each school system expects to train its educators to recognize and intervene when students cannot benefit fully from their educational opportunities.

Literature Related to Theme 2: Teachers Expressed the Desire to Establish a Partnership With Parents to Address Chronic Absenteeism

In the second theme, teachers expressed the desire to establish a partnership with parents. The second theme relative to research question reflects participants' perceptions of establishing positive partnerships with parents to maintain constant communication. While teachers in this study explained that some parents participate in communication activities regularly, other parents were said to rarely respond to teachers attempts to reach them. The forms of communication with parents that teachers desired include the following: attending parent-teacher conferences, scheduling meetings via the guidance counselor, communicating with teachers via the phone and emails, writing notes to teachers, getting information about a child’s accomplishments and difficulties, and discussing personal and family matters with the teacher. Gentina et al. (2017) claimed forming partnerships between schools and parents, including teachers and police, who stay in excellent communication and parents who assume their children’s legal

responsibilities to attend school increase a truanting young person's willingness to go to school.

Research suggests that certain aspects of parent involvement are more closely related to student achievement than others, mainly communicating with the school, volunteering, attending school events, and participating in parent-teacher conferences. Most of the research suggests that the more a parent is involved in all aspects of a child's education, both at home and school, the more academically successful that child will be (Derrick-Lewis, 2001; Epstein, 2009; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Tracy, 1995).

Literature Related to Theme 3: Teachers are Challenged Implementing PBIS to Address Chronic Absenteeism at the High School Level

Some of the participants questioned whether PBIS was appropriate at the high school level. The teachers' questions confirmed suggestions from Kincaid et al. (2016) and Yamauchi et al. (2017) on what PBIS features promote a positive school climate and encourage universal and commonly understood school-wide behavior expectations. To summarize their experiences, teachers shared that PBIS will work well with ninth grade and 10th-grade students or students in middle school because they still need full teachers to support, regular motivation, and rewards. As they age or transition to 11th and 12th-grade, teachers should not continue to motivate them with prizes all the time because real-life expectations or experience become necessary compared to the constant reward systems suggested by PBIS. Therefore, these findings also confirmed observations by the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Center for Parent Information

& Resources (2020). PBIS implementation needs modification to work with students with chronic absenteeism behavior in high school. Teachers indicated that using the PBIS steps to manage the completion of what is required or expected does not warrant reward systems at the high school level, except maybe with a freshman group, conflicting with conclusions of Byun et al. (2019).

Participants shared that if teachers are not persistent in trying to implement PBIS, it is destined to fail in high schools. A similar conclusion can be seen in Periman's (2017) study, which found that teachers who reported more positive perceptions of PBIS also had more positive perceptions of their school improvements in students' attendance and other positive changes. This study supports the implementation of PBIS to create a more positive school climate and build parent-teacher relationships and confirms the study by Meyer et al. (2021) that suggested advanced tiers in high school from lessons learned from the initial implementation. Scott (2018) found that even when teachers felt comfortable and confident teaching PBIS, there was a lack of teacher PBIS training for implementing the framework and a lack of school-wide attainment and teacher buy-in. Scott posited that teachers supported PBIS implementation, but more training was necessary to achieve program fidelity.

According to Joseph (2020), the number of high schools implementing PBIS has increased over the previous 5 years. According to several studies (e.g., Caprara et al., 2000; Davis et al., 2020), high school student social behavior is one of the strongest predictors of their future academic success. Authors addressing the implementation of

PBIS in high schools have claimed the high school context negatively influences implementation (Flannery & Kato, 2017; Swain-Bradway et al., 2015). Also, schools involved in school initiatives, such as PBIS, focus on teachers and parents in the implementation. Furthermore, McDaniel et al. (2018) found that teachers need guidance on serving youth in secondary schools specifically and continue to struggle with managing school behavior and, therefore, continue to require explicit instruction. Schools need to develop and monitor prosocial behavior in high schools (Gerbino et al., 2018).

Literature Related to Theme 4: Teachers Suggest Policies That Could Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

The fourth theme addressed teachers' suggestions that policies that could support work with parents to reduce chronic absenteeism. Despite the ongoing issues with the inconsistent school rules to reduce chronic absenteeism in the district, teachers shared their experiences of the current policies in place to reduce chronic absenteeism. Teachers explained that they experienced unclear expectations set by the district for the administrators and schools' staff, confirming the study of Levin and Bradley (2019) that posited that school principals' role is to have consistent policy in place. Sebastian et al. (2016) claimed that the administrators' way of transferring the proper systemic policies to teachers and other school staff members matters. The participants in this study shared that they looked up to their school administrators to be the primary drivers of school policies improvement and implementation to ensure effective teaching and learning. However, the expectations were unfulfilled. Teachers explained that they expect the administrators to

lead the implementation of PBIS, reduce chronic absenteeism, facilitate parents' and teachers' partnership, and lead professional development to support them to bring about improvements in their practices and increase student success in their classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in one district in the mid-Atlantic United States. Although the results could be generalizable to other districts due to the thick data presented, local characteristics and teachers' experiences may be specific only to the host regional school district. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the tremendous variation in districts' approaches to schooling was apparently nationally in the news. While some school districts have provided complete remote learning since the outset of the pandemic, few have offered in-person learning and others somewhere in between (Belsha & Barnum, 2020). Schwartz et al. (2021) revealed the extent of the divisions in public education during the 2020–2021 school year, from the mode of delivery to the length of the school day. Also, my bias as the researcher needs to be considered, especially since I am a teacher in the same school district. I strived for objectivity and was reassured that no participants complained about the way the interviews were conducted or the accuracy of the transcripts they reviewed. Although the results confirm findings from past studies, the fact that all of the participants were experienced high school teachers and 8 of the 11 participants were female which may lead to skewed data that might not address the perceptions of newer teachers or male teachers. If teachers had participated in this study

whose schools are not low-income but experienced chronic absenteeism, the responses and feedback could have been different.

Finally, conducting interviews in a virtual setting may have been different enough from in-person interviews to influence results. One of the challenges could have time restrictions for the participants because many of them had busy workdays (such as meetings, training, and other school-related responsibilities). Therefore, time constraints could have limited the interviews to before, during, or after participants' scheduled school workdays or limited to weekends only. The interviews in person instead of face-to-face could have impacted the result because several interviews could be rescheduled more than once due to the work schedule.

Recommendations

Upon completing this study, I have recognized there are concerns and unanswered questions in need of further investigation on the research gap that persist in the literature concerning teachers' parents' relationships gaps and reasons for students' life circumstances that can affect their school attendance. In particular, research on how to improve the implementation of high school PBIS used to address chronic absenteeism may help address the concern of teachers to reduce chronic absenteeism. I recommend the following areas of research for future exploration:

- use quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to uncover new information about the same topic, gleaning results from a larger group of teachers,

- interview administrators who have effectively provided support for teachers concerning accurate parent contacts,
- a case study of a school providing effective supports for parents to help their children to improve their attendance,
- a case study of a school where teachers were used effectively as the first line of communication with parents regarding lack of attendance before it became chronic absenteeism,
- a case study of a university effectively preparing new teachers to reduce chronic absenteeism or a longitudinal study to follow those students through their first years of teaching, and
- a case study design in a high school that has successfully implemented PBIS, consistently applied policies to improve student behavior, and reduced chronic absenteeism.

Future research can focus on other regions of the United States regarding teachers' perceptions of working with parents to reduce chronic absenteeism. In addition, future studies could tighten their scope to include particular school settings (e.g., private, parochial schools, etc.) to look for any differences. Another study might focus on comparing teachers' perceptions of working with parents to overcome technology barriers versus language barriers.

Implications

This research study yielded in-depth interview data gathered from mid-Atlantic regional high school teachers regarding perceptions of their experiences working with parents of students at low-income urban high schools to address chronic absenteeism before March 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. Although all of the participants for this study were from the same district, Chronic absenteeism is delinquent behavior that can hinder the teaching-learning process. This study addressed the knowledge gaps in research and practice that persist in the literature concerning teachers' parents' relationships gaps and reasons for students' life circumstances affecting their school attendance. The findings of this study, if applied, could lead to possible implications for positive social change, as well as specific implications for practice. The participants of this study confirmed what research suggests: when students' attendance is not consistent, indicates an early warning sign of lack of academic progress and other delinquent behaviors (Farrington et al., 2017). Also, this study revealed what was noted by Price and Khubchandani (2019) and Lawson et al. (2017) that lack of attendance significantly impacts the schools. Elliott and Parks (2018) found that improvement of education enacts positive implications for individuals, communities, and society. and other researchers suggested that certain aspects of parent involvement are more closely related to student achievement and learning outcomes than others (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019).

Teachers have great expectations for students and value opportunities to prepare them for life to become productive citizens. This research reflected the need for teachers' and parents' relationships to spark social change, as Dewey (1938) argued. When teachers, parents, and other key stakeholders form a partnership, it can give students a sense of belonging, care, connectedness, experience emotional well-being, build confidence, and benefit their larger community.

Helping teachers form relationships with parents to serve their students may better allow students to have a greater chance of developing good attendance habits, contributing to society, and being successful which may be transferable to others in their circle of influence (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021). Encouraging punctuality and regular attendance may empower students to learn responsibility, ownership of their progress, and train them in real-life work ethics (Childs & Lofton, 2021).

Public schools in urban settings that continue to operate in a face-to-face or online environment should continue examining their practices and policies to see how they impact parents' involvement and reduce chronic absenteeism, including students with unique circumstances that led to chronic absenteeism. Teachers need help to find ways to communicate information about individual students directly to parents in their dialect (language other than English), especially those with a language barrier. All parents may need to have effective access to resources such as online grade platforms.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with parents to address students' chronic absenteeism behavior in low-income urban high schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic when participating in distance learning. This is especially important for those low-income urban high school settings that hope to promote attendance, increase the graduation rate, and provide students with skills and knowledge to be productive citizens. The responses of the teachers in this study indicated that the teachers see potential in working with parents both during face-to-face and distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, due to limited support of effective intervention, policies, and resources, the teachers were concerned about several challenges. Most of the teachers also indicated that PBIS implementation in the high school remains a viable strategy for reducing chronic absenteeism, considering modification/adjustment by educators who need buy-in. Helping students sustain punctuality, and regular attendance will help them become responsible adults in the communities and society, which is critical for future citizens. This interview experience was an eye-opener and made me realize that there are different ways to get involved and make an intervention, such as PBIS, work for all students and teachers to fulfill the expectations.

In the informal conversation during the interviews, all participants reflected on their own journey to achieve a high school diploma and commented that they grew up in a well-structured and supportive homes, irrespective of their socio-economic background.

Attending school was the utmost expectation at home and on their own minds. These experiences also played a significant factor in how they, as parents, raised and trained their children regarding the importance of regular attendance. The results of the study have fomented much reflection on my part, and I hope it does the same for the reader.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____pseudonym_____

(Briefly describe the project & interview procedures, ensure confidentiality, and remind the interviewee, he or she has the right to decline questions and/or the right to stop the interview at any time.)

Introductory Statement –

(Intro will be read to participants)

The purpose of this research project is to understand the perceptions of low-income urban high school teachers' experiences working with parents to address students' truancy behavior and to promote positive teaching-learning process /learning outcomes. This interview process is scheduled to last approximately 45-60 minutes and will be recorded via audio while I take notes, with your permission. Do you have any questions before we start?

Research Question: What are high school teachers' experiences working with parents to address students' chronic absenteeism behavior?

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself as a teacher?

    Possible probes:

    a. How long have you been teaching?

b. How long have you been a teacher at your current school?

c. What subject/content area do you teach, and what age group?

2. What defines chronic absenteeism within your school district, if you know?

Possible probes:

a. What, if anything, is your school or school leaders doing about chronic absenteeism?

b. Is there anyone or any office in the school systems that help you? How?

3. How do you feel chronic absenteeism affects your teaching? (Are there any ways that chronic absenteeism affects your teaching?)

Possible probes: Before the pandemic? During the pandemic? In the delivery of curriculum? Workload? Classroom management?

4. Would you describe some of these strategies you are using as PBIS to support student attendance? Can you tell me more?

5. Are there aspects of student outcomes you see being affected by chronic absenteeism?

Possible probes:

a. Motivation? Time on task?

6. You responded to my invitation seeking teachers who were working with parents in some way. Can you tell me what are some of strategies you are using to reach out to parents to respond to or prevent chronic absenteeism?

Possible probes:

a. How do you see your role in responding to parents' concerns about issues they are experiencing with their child's lack of attendance?

b. How comfortable are you in establishing a positive relationship with parents? What supports any comfort you feel?

7. In what ways do you perceive the parent involvement and teacher relationship may affect children's absenteeism and learning outcomes?

Possible probes:

a. attendance, motivation, participation, homework, the student learning strategies?

8. How do you perceive the use of PBIS in particular to impact students' outcomes and reduces chronic absenteeism, if at all?

Possible probes:

a. What are your perceptions of how PBIS intervention improves students' attendance and supports their overall academic success?

b. What other opportunities or aspects of PBIS would recommend as beneficial to chronic absenteeism reduction?

9. How do current school policies support what you did or are doing to reach out to parents?

Possible probes:

a. What is the nature of those policies? Do they interfere in any way?

b. How do they affect any of the following outcomes: The student learning strategies? Motivation to learn? The role of technology? Influence of environment? Peer Pressure? Cognitive ability? Classroom structure? Teachers teaching methods? Social emotional learning?

10. Are there any other existing barriers that might hinder you from establishing a relationship with parents? Can you tell me about it?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add?