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Strategies, Challenges, Experiences, and Approaches to Managing High School Student Misbehaviors

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Strategies, Challenges, Experiences, and Approaches to Managing High School Student

Misbehaviors

by

Kelly Ford-Proutt

MA, Stephen F. Austin University, 2001

BS, Jarvis Christian College, 1995

Dissertation, Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Education of Human Sciences

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

Researchers have found that removing students from instructional settings for behavioral infractions adversely influenced student learning. The problem of this basic qualitative study was that strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehavior were unknown. The purpose was to explore how high school teachers managed student misbehaviors. Bandura's social cognitive theory was the conceptual framework selected for this study. Data were collected through one-on-one semi-structured open-ended interviews via Zoom with seven high school general education teachers with at least three years of teaching experience. Saturation was evident when data became redundant at the 6th and 7th participants. Data analysis included coding with thematic analysis which led to the emergence of four themes: types of student misbehaviors, teacher interventions, challenging disruptive behaviors, and ramifications of discipline referrals. Student behaviors varied depending on the environment and teacher management strategies varied depending on the behavior and challenges they presented. Findings from this study may promote positive social change by helping administrators, teachers, and students understand how high school general education teachers' strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to managing student misbehavior influence student behavior and ultimately their academic success.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my mother, the late Ivies O. Ford. She always allowed and supported my siblings and me to be who and what we desired. She was our biggest fan and I appreciate her unconditional love. "I love you momma"!

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family: my husband, my daughters, and my dear friends for understanding and accepting the process and journey of writing my dissertation. They have watched me work tirelessly for several years completing what I started. It has taken a long time, and I am grateful to them for their support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

General education students at a midwestern southern high school may miss valuable instruction during basic core subject area classes because teachers send them out of the classroom to the assistant principal's office for minor infractions such as conduct code violations as well as more serious infractions like fighting. Teachers with poor management skills lack specific knowledge and training for dealing with increasing undesired misbehaviors and effectively managing classrooms (Egeberg et al., 2021; Ozen & Yildirim, 2020). Therefore, optimal learning is difficult if teachers are unprepared for dealing with misbehaviors in the classroom. Ozen and Yildirim (2020) indicated teachers saw classroom management as a skill that was needed for effective learning environments. Managing discipline problems involves decreasing disruptive behaviors and increasing chances that students behave in constructive, engaging, and prosocial manners (Flower et al., 2017). According to Ogba et al. (2020), teachers should build relationships, look for teachable moments, know how to encourage students, adapt their classrooms to accommodate the needs of each student, and be able to problem-solve while addressing real-life situations. Ogba et al. found teachers needed training and professional development to gain knowledge and skills that were needed to meet needs of diverse groups of students.

Students with different societal experiences, skills, interests, learning styles, and challenging behaviors make for diverse classrooms in terms of needs. Teachers must have policies and procedures in place to establish optimal learning environments (Burley et al., 2010; Martinez & Zhao, 2018). Teachers' awareness of their classroom

management skills and use of discipline referrals may create classroom environments that are more conducive to learning, therefore prompting positive social change (Kwok, 2018; Ozen & Yildirim, 2020).

I explain the background, problem statement, and purpose in this chapter. The research question is stated, followed by a description of the conceptual framework. This chapter also includes definitions of key terms to support the focus of this research. Next, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study are presented.

Background

The primary goal of any educational institution is successful instruction and student learning. However, both instruction and learning are disrupted by student misbehaviors in the classroom (Demirdag, 2015; Ozen & Yildirim, 2020). According to Hulac and Briesch (2017), teachers struggle with classroom management and tend to rely on reactive strategies including discipline referrals. Demirdag (2015) claimed teachers with effective management skills implement strategies that eliminate unwanted behaviors before they become problematic. Sucuoglu et al. (2010) said teacher behaviors that are displayed in the classroom influence academic behaviors of all students (p. 64). Sucuoglu et al. found some teachers use clear verbal directions, while others did not establish rules, ignored behaviors, and overused warnings.

Teachers' classroom management skills predicted student outcomes (Gilmour et al., 2018; Sucuoglu et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2018). This study will fill the gap in research regarding teachers' reliance on discipline referrals when managing student

misbehaviors and discipline measures which do not include discipline referrals within classrooms. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that were used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors. Administrators, teachers, and students within the study site may use findings from this study to improve student learning through alternative strategies to managing student misbehaviors. Positive social change may occur for students when teachers rely less on discipline referrals to manage misbehaviors, creating more opportunities for student success.

Problem Statement

The problem for this basic qualitative study was that strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals in order to manage student misbehaviors were not known. Challenging student behaviors can be met with less punitive discipline measures than office discipline referrals (Martinez & Zhao, 2018; Yeo et al., 2016). High school general education teachers do not know challenges that come with teaching diverse groups of students and therefore need knowledge about behavior management techniques and implementation, as many behavioral strategies have proven difficult to implement (Back et al., 2016; Thomas & Kumar, 2020). Kwok (2018) found reactive strategies to student inappropriate behaviors were indicative of ineffective classroom managers. Many teachers, with successful classroom management, utilized effective strategies that reduced and prevented office discipline referrals (Hulac & Briesch, 2017; Martinez & Zhao, 2018). My study extends the idea that there are alternative pathways to classroom discipline other than office discipline referrals.

Strategies that are implemented by high school general education teachers to manage student behaviors without using office discipline referrals may help them foster learning and influence social interactions. According to Kwok (2018), students behave better when engaged in instruction. My study fills the gap in literature and practice involving teachers who rely on discipline referrals when managing student misbehaviors.

Back et al. (2016) postulated teachers need classroom management training as emotional support in order to combat behavioral challenges. Also, effective classroom management training is crucial to building positive relationships, reducing issuance of discipline referrals, and creating environments that are conducive to the academic achievement of all students (Back et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2016; Skrypnyk et al., 2020). Yeo et al. (2016) showed challenging behaviors were concerning to teachers. Teachers need adequate training that includes mentorships or coaching models that enable them to be in better positions for success in the classroom. Saloviita (2020) indicated teacher attitudes may hinder their success in terms of managing student behaviors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that are used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehavior. At a midwestern southern high school during the 2021-2022 school year, general education teachers wrote 509 discipline referrals for students, resulting in them missing valuable instruction during core subject areas (math, science, social studies, and English) because they were sent out of the

classroom to the assistant principal's office for various reasons according to the Director of Student Services. When high school general education teachers rely on discipline referrals to manage student misbehavior, it creates issues within classrooms. According to Ahmed (2020), successful teaching includes effective classroom management skills.

Research Question

RQ: What are the strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that high school general education teachers use to manage student misbehaviors?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework selected to frame the study was Bandura's social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory is rooted in behaviorist traditions with a focus on behavior and learning in social contexts (Bandura, 1977b, 1986b; Denler et al., 2009). Key constructs of the social cognitive theory that influence behaviors include personal factors, environmental events, and aspects of behavior. People learn from one another through observing behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors (Bandura, 1977). How one understands consequences of a behavior influences the environment and how they act. Within classrooms, behaviors displayed by students influence teacher actions and vice versa, just as behaviors displayed by teachers influenced student actions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom to capture the essence of high school general education teachers' experiences with classroom management. Further explanation of the conceptual framework, data collection, and analysis appears in Chapter 2.

Social Cognition

A basic premise of behaviorism is that stimuli cause all behaviors. One's personal factors and surroundings influence the way one acts; therefore, environment causes one's behavior (Bandura, 1971, 1986b). Bandura claimed environment causes behavior, but behavior also causes environment. Teachers who lack classroom management skills may have unorganized classrooms, be unprepared to teach, and have no student expectations which leads to down time, no structure, and student misbehaviors. The social cognitive theory extends social learning by including positive supports as a catalyst to behavior change. Teachers who desire to be good classroom managers but do not have proper classroom management training, will likely not be successful. Within classrooms where students are unruly and highly active, teachers would more than likely struggle, feeling frustrated and overwhelmed (Hulac & Briesch, 2017). Social cognition is rooted in personal, environmental, and behavioral forces. Thus, observation of student attitudes and their emotional reactions could cause teachers to rely on discipline referrals when managing student misbehaviors. Human behaviors are environmentally determined via observations (Bandura, 1977b; Denler et al., 2009).

This theory has been used in self-efficacy training programs. Bandura (1971) proposed people learn from one another via observation, imitation, and modeling, which serve as environmental influences. The social cognitive theory is central to this study to address characteristics of a reciprocated environment that influences behaviors. In this qualitative study, participants had opportunities to share strategies, challenges, and experiences, and address why they chose to write or not write discipline referrals. A more

thorough explanation of key constructs of the social cognitive theory and the classroom environment appears in Chapter 2.

Classroom Environment

Adult interaction influences student thinking. Within classrooms, stimulation may be positive or negative. By exploring strategies, challenges, and experiences of high school general education teachers regarding using or not using discipline referrals to manage student misbehaviors, stakeholders may understand kinds of stimulation which occur within classrooms. Students need to engage in social behaviors with others as they stimulate thoughts on an individual level (Vygotsky, 1978a). When high school general education teachers rely on discipline referrals to manage misbehaviors, students sent to the principal's office are not afforded opportunities to participate in continuous reciprocal interactions with their environment and therefore are not as successful as they could be.

Learning is an active and constructive process based on personal experiences that are linked to prior knowledge. Vygotsky (1987b) posited social interaction precedes development. Large and small group active conversations that take place within the classroom serve as external stimuli that involve employing collaboration, dialogue, and modeling, which stimulates learning and creates a sense of belonging (Mahvar et al., 2018; Pas et al., 2011). When students talk and share ideas and experiences with teachers and classmates, they can reflect on their behaviors and personalize different experiences. Developing socially requires working mechanically with peers and these learning experiences are not only personal, interactive, and mutual but also tailored to address individual student socioemotional needs (Hord, 2009; Tan et al., 2018).

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used a basic qualitative design. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the purpose of a basic qualitative study is to answer straightforward questions in order to develop a process, meaning, and understanding of a specific real-world situation, event, or activity. I did not choose a case study or grounded theory design as they involve focusing on actions of participants and not the phenomenon itself. In this study, I sought a target sample of 10 to 12 high school general education teachers from a total of 78 who I contacted to take part in one-on-one open-ended interviews. The central phenomenon of this qualitative study was high school general education teachers' strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals in order to manage student misbehavior. This study was designed to address why some teachers rely on discipline referrals and how other teachers manage student misbehavior without using discipline referrals. An open coding system was developed and interviews were transcribed. Analysis of interview data helped determine what strategies were learned from high school general education teachers who manage student misbehaviors without using office discipline referrals. Results of this basic qualitative study could be beneficial in terms of teachers' instruction and students' academic success.

Definitions

The following key terms were used throughout this study:

Classroom Management: Organization, teaching, responding, and acknowledgment of classrooms (Sprick et al., 1998). Classroom management also

involves active instruction and supervision of students, which provides opportunities for students to engage in lessons (Gage et al., 2018).

Discipline Referrals: Written documentation of reported infractions to administrative leaders who deliver consequences (Demirdag, 2015; Pas et al., 2011).

General Education Students: Students whose general knowledge and literacy skills are developed in a core curriculum program that prepares them for lifelong and advanced learning (UNESCO, 2012). According to Copeland and Keefe (2019), these are students without disabilities.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Comprehensive approaches to mitigating problem behaviors through educational programming (Bambara & Kern, 2021).

Self-Efficacy: Self-confidence regarding learning when people are confident in their ability to engage in certain behaviors to execute particular tasks successfully (Bandura, 1971).

Assumptions

There were several underlying assumptions for this study. One assumption was participants responded to interview questions openly and honestly. Another assumption was participants issued discipline referrals for infractions that were less serious than fighting. My third assumption was participants used classroom management approaches that were less punitive than discipline referrals.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was delimited to general education teachers of approximately 2,126 high school students enrolled in a midwestern southern high school. The study was designed to aid in exploring high school general education teachers' approaches to managing diverse student behavior. Semi-structured Zoom interviews with participants were conducted to collect data.

Participants were general education teachers in a public high school located in the southern region of the U.S. Only teachers who taught grades 9-12 were interviewed. Understanding and acknowledging there is a multitude of teachers throughout the U.S., this study was centered on one specific school district. Results of this basic qualitative study may be transferred to meet needs of other general education classrooms in other districts with similar demographics, programs, and sizes where there is a disproportionate amount of discipline referrals that are used to manage student behaviors.

Limitations

Qualitative research is designed to gain an understanding of experiences and meaning of actions in different contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In qualitative research, the researcher is identified as both the subject and object of the study (Queiros et al., 2017). As I was the primary researcher for this study, I was careful to address biases about how teachers should manage their classrooms and how the district supports classroom instruction. With several years of experience observing and supervising teachers, I kept my experiences with classroom environments in perspective by focusing on participants' points of view regarding their experiences. I looked beyond what I knew

and thought I knew about teachers' management of student discipline in order to keep biases from influencing this study.

Other limitations involved time constraints and transferability. Findings of this study may be beneficial for all teachers who issue disciplinary referrals to students. Only high school general education basic core subject teachers were asked to participate.

Significance

This study has the potential to address the gap involving classroom management practices among teachers who rely and do not rely on discipline referrals when managing student misbehaviors. An exploration of strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that high school general education teachers use at a midwestern southern high school to manage student misbehavior can add to current research focused on classroom management. Results of this study could influence actions of teachers, student success, and administrative staff decisions.

Findings of this study could benefit high school general education teachers by influencing their classroom management skills, attitudes, and approaches to issuing discipline referrals. Positive social change may result for students when teachers rely less on discipline referrals to manage misbehavior. Minimizing student removal from instructional setting leads to success in learning environments. When teachers rely less on discipline referrals, fewer students are sent out of the classroom. Stakeholders may benefit from findings of this study through awareness of teachers' classroom management skill levels.

Summary

The problem in this basic qualitative study was that strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors were not known. Students at a midwestern southern high school missed valuable instruction when teachers sent them out of the classroom with office discipline referrals. The goal of managing discipline problems in classrooms is to decrease disruptive behaviors and simultaneously increase chances that students behave in constructive, engaging, and prosocial manners. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that were used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehavior. Teachers' awareness of their classroom management skills and issuance of discipline referrals may lead to classroom environments that are more conducive to student learning and success, therefore leading to positive social change.

Chapter 2 contains a detailed description of the literature review. Scholarly journal articles and various studies were included that inform this research. Literature search strategies used in this study are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research problem that was addressed in this basic qualitative study was that strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors were not known. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore this topic. Discipline referrals negatively influence student academic achievement.

Student behavior is influenced by discipline referrals. The number of referrals students receive dictates the severity of their misbehaviors (Freeman et al., 2019; Gordon & Fefer, 2019). Teachers who have not built relationships with their students, not engaged them in exceptional learning experiences, or lack effective classroom management skills may have a narrow view of behaviors leading to a reliance on discipline referrals (Kwok, 2018; Ozen & Yildirim, 2020). As teachers struggle with classroom management, discipline problems remain an issue, and teaching and learning are interrupted (Ahmed, 2020; Hulac & Briesch, 2017).

School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) are valuable in terms of addressing problem behaviors as well as office discipline referrals and suspensions (Gage et al., 2018). Paju et al. (2018) claimed there is a need for a radical transformation of instructional strategies and increasing teachers' understanding of classroom management. While addressing problem behaviors, teachers should use interventions that also support students' positive social relations (St-Amand et al., 2017).

Implementing positive behavior supports can reduce disciplinary violations and improve prosocial behaviors when implemented with fidelity (Freeman et al., 2019).

Structure, commitment, and routine are essential for teachers to have when establishing behavioral expectations (Polirstok, 2015). Preservice and in-service teachers should undergo training involving proactive classroom management to regulate problem behaviors more effectively and influence student academic success (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015; Sucuoglu et al., 2010).

This chapter begins with a summary of literature search strategies followed by an analysis of the conceptual framework. I substantiate approaches to data collection and analysis. This is followed by a review of existing literature related to managing student behavior.

Literature Search Strategy

To access current scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles regarding this topic, I used the following databases: ERIC, Academic Search Complete, SAGE Premier, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. I sought to use only articles directly related to the study, including peer-reviewed articles that were published between 2019 and 2024. I used the following keywords: *instruction*, *classroom management*, *general education students*, *positive behavior interventions and supports*, *self-efficacy*, *discipline referrals*, and *teaching strategies*. Combining terms expanded the scope of this study.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the social cognitive theory outlined by Bandura. Bandura (1977b) stated the social cognitive theory involves reciprocal interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental forces. What takes place in one's environment influences how one acts and vice-versa. In classrooms where students

display challenging behaviors that impede instruction, teachers may feel overwhelmed and react to student misbehaviors rather than prevent them (Flower et al., 2017). Depending upon teacher approaches, students may ignore teacher efforts or feel intimidated and increase frequency of misbehaviors (Kwok, 2018). Teachers with poor skills tend to lack knowledge (Ozen & Yildirim, 2020).

Vygotsky (1978b) claimed learning is an active and constructive process based on personal experiences that are linked to prior knowledge. There is no universal approach to managing student behavior, but teacher knowledge is essential (Ahmed, 2020; Flower et al., 2017). The social cognitive theory was used to explore reasons high school general education teachers use or do not use discipline referrals to manage student misbehaviors.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (1977b) claimed people learn from one another via observations, imitation, and modeling, which serve as environmental influences. Student behavioral responses to teacher actions and teacher action responses to student behaviors define learning in the classroom. Direct experiences that students respond to are followed by rewards or punishments which reinforce behaviors. Some consequences to student behaviors are more effectual than others. According to Bandura, instruction fosters social interactions (observational learning/modeling), discipline referrals reflect responses to behaviors (outcome expectations), perceived self-efficacy, and goal setting, and classroom environment influences how one acts (self-regulation).

The concept of social learning is important for high school general education teachers to effectively instruct all students (Kim et al., 2020; Knight, 2009; Samuels,

2008). When teachers rely on discipline referrals to manage student behaviors, they allow these behaviors to dominate the environment. Consequently, teachers' reactions to student misbehaviors indirectly influence student learning (Ozen & Yildirim, 2020). Students need socialization. Socialization generates within classroom environments and acts as a stimulus resulting from teacher and student personal experiences, environmental events, observational opportunities, and aspects of behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1986b).

Classroom Environment

The behaviorist social cognitive theory is evident through social conditions within the classroom environment (Bandura, 2005). Teachers and students influence and are influenced by what goes on in the classroom. Mutual interactions (reciprocated) between teachers and students create emotional classroom temperatures (Polirstok, 2015). Teachers' awareness positively influences student misbehavior by de-escalating unwanted behavior (Polirstok, 2015). Positive relationships help prevent discipline referrals and influence the academic success of all students (Back et al., 2016). Increased misbehaviors increase the chance of punitive punishments.

Discipline Referrals

High school student misbehaviors are managed through discipline referrals written by general education teachers. Discipline referrals are universal classroom management data sources used to deter unwanted student behaviors (Gage et al. (2018). This classroom management system has been misused and abused. Excessive amounts of discipline referrals are written by teachers who lack effective classroom management skills (Demirdag, 2015).

Classroom Management

Classroom management is designed to create positive environments that help increase student achievement (Wang and Degol, 2016; Wong and Wong, 2018). However, the creation of a positive classroom environment is challenging when teachers' management skills and classroom ecology are limited and they choose to rely on discipline referrals as they do not require extra time and effort to conduct (Back et al., 2016; Polirstok, 2015). Although discipline referrals are easy to administer, they create an atmosphere of negative short- and long-term consequences.

Student learning is obstructed when classroom management practices include responding with fear or anger (Egeberg et al., 2021; Weinstein et al., 2003). Teachers who and react to students' behaviors ignite negative student outcomes (Billingsley et al., 2018; Caldera et al., 2020). Looking for short-term fixes (Kwok, 2018) and inadequately implementing evidence-based practices are evidence of a poorly managed classroom (Billingsley et al., 2018). Teachers' actions within the classroom are significant for meeting students' needs.

Positive classroom environments lead to improved student behaviors. The more competence teachers show in classroom management the more behavior challenges are diverted (Varghese et al., 2019). Classroom management is an opportunity to promote student learning (Weinstein et al., 2003). According to Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] (2015), when instructional strategies include positive proactive practices, academic learning is maximized. Bandura's social cognitive theory has been used in self-

efficacy training programs to support educators who may not have the skills to successfully educate a diverse group of students (Bandura, 1977).

Self-Efficacy

A basic premise of behaviorism is that stimuli cause all behavior. Back, et al. (2016) and Gregory et al. (2016), claimed student success and behaviors are reinforced by the climate of the classroom. Teacher awareness of student intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior skills, and emotional state is important to prevent misconduct and avoid escalating unwanted behaviors (Bandura, 1977; Demirdag, 2015; Gregory et al., 2016). However, when teachers fail to see students' potential and lack understanding of classroom management skills and strategies, teaching becomes challenging (Demirdag, 2015; Wahl, 2018). Shaffer and Thomas-Brown (2015) suggested that teachers conduct a self-assessment of their teaching practice and seek to develop socially as learning experiences are personal, interactive, and mutual.

Safe supportive environments are essential for social development and student learning (Brackett et al., 2019). Learning is a social process driven by emotions and mutual interactions between teachers and students. Brackett et al. (2019) found emotions and interactions matter for learning and decision making. Positive interactions lead to compliant behaviors and negative interactions lead to non-compliant misbehaviors (Polirstok, 2015).

Classroom Instruction

Students learn from various elements in the classroom environment when including modeling, reinforcement, and emotional contact (Denler et al., 2009; Salgong

et al., 2016). With learning being a fundamental and social-emotional process (Farrington et al., 2019), teachers need to be careful and not escalate student behaviors (Polirstok, 2015). Teachers enhance their instructional strategies to create a positive learning environment (Back et al., 2016; Demirdag, 2015) by teaching students to recognize, understand, label, express feelings, and regulate emotions. When there is value placed on the expected behavior, that behavior is likely to occur more often (Denler et al., 2009). Five core competencies which lead to social emotional learning (SEL): include building social and emotional awareness skills, learning to manage emotions and behaviors, making responsible decisions, and building positive relationships (Brackett et al., 2019). Teacher actions within the classroom environment influence classroom instruction and student behaviors.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

Studies related to teacher and student experiences, managing classroom behaviors, challenges in the classroom, needed skills, disciplinary approaches, positive behavior interventions and supports, and chosen methodology are described in this chapter. The studies chosen to support my research were qualitative and quantitative. An analysis of the aforementioned studies, related to key concepts, and the phenomena under investigation will be presented.

Due to the behavior challenges teachers face in high school general education classrooms, I reviewed several journal articles and various studies consistent with the scope of this study. Researchers implied environmental forces outside and within the classroom influence student behavior and inadvertently teacher instructional

effectiveness. The key concepts and variables, researched through various methods,

indicated the importance of classroom management and teacher knowledge on student

success. With the support of these constructs, four major sections: classroom

management, classroom management challenges, classroom management and discipline

referrals, and classroom management strategies are discussed in the current chapter.

Classroom Management

Blazar and Kraft (2017) examined whether general and content-specific teaching

strategies/practices developed successful student attitudes and behaviors. A student

survey was used to answer the research questions: To what extent do teachers affect

students' attitudes and behaviors in class; To what extent do specific teaching practices

affect students' attitudes and behaviors in class; Are teachers who are effective at raising

test-score outcomes equally effective at developing positive attitudes and behaviors in

class? Data indicated student learning is comprised of more than academics. Teacher

emotional support increases student efficacy and teachers' influence on student outcomes

does not equally affect other attitudes and behaviors. Blazar and Kraft concluded general

and content-specific teaching practices did influence students' attitudes and behaviors;

strategies were needed to improve teachers' skills; and unfortunately, all teachers are not

equipped to govern student success with academics, attitudes, and behaviors. An

examination of ways teachers can create classroom environments that effectively support

student academics, attitudes, and behaviors are needed (Blazar & Kraft, 2017).

Understanding teachers' approaches to managing student misbehaviors may inform

stakeholders of professional development needed to build teachers' knowledge, increase student success in academics, attitudes, and behavior.

Hussain (2017) shared her opinion that the idea of teaching students how to behave is important to include in behavior management practices. Basic principles essential to maintaining order within the classroom were consistency, fidelity to structure, commitment, and routine (Hussain, 2017; Polirstok, 2015). Teachers are encouraged to respond proactively, have high expectations, help students to develop a growth mindset and model the expected behavior they want to see in students. However, this would be difficult for teachers who have limited support, a lack of skill, and limited experience (Blake, 2017; Simonsen et al., 2020). Implementing classroom management strategies takes time and is not easy to communicate without prior knowledge; the reality is that strategies do not eliminate behavior issues (Hussain, 2017; Polirstok, 2015). Teacher knowledge was not addressed in either study but the researchers did indicate that important fundamentals to classroom management are teacher enthusiasm, motivation, a solid grounding in engaging teaching techniques, and an understanding of student levels of learning. Hussain's article supports the purpose of my research as it defines strategies, challenges, and experiences of teachers to be important factors of classroom management.

Ozen and Yildirim (2020) suggested teachers defined classroom management as an opportunity to create an effective learning environment. Teacher awareness of the classroom environment, students' ability to think and question, and the establishment of rules are imperative for classroom management; however, teachers struggle with it

(Blake, 2017; Hulac & Briesch, 2017; Lester et al., 2017). The strategies teachers choose to employ in classroom management include student behavior, student success, and relationships (Kwok, 2018). According to the results of Ozen and Yildirim's research, a change is needed to foster effective instruction, communication, relationships, knowledge, and practice. Although the physical arrangement of a classroom could help to manage student behavior, there has not been much discussion about it (Kwok, 2018). The study conducted by Ozen and Yildirim supports the idea that teachers' ability to successfully manage a classroom affects the dynamics of the classroom environment – relationships, learning, and behaviors.

Juta and Wyk (2020) conducted a qualitative study to probe how the prospect of implementing effective classroom management can contribute to improving Mathematics education. Juta and Wyk based their research on the idea classroom management includes organizational actions of teaching including time management and communication. Through interviews, the researchers found that teachers have not only instructional issues but also physical facilities and material issues. Nonetheless, teachers were able to effectively manage their classrooms because they planned and developed a plethora of teaching materials. It was also found that mathematics teachers were charged with the responsibility of building relationships with students while teaching them. Positive student-teacher relationships are important (Robinson, 2019), Through the organization of student groups and motivation, teachers encompassed many functions that helped to manage teaching and learning. In conclusion, Juta and Wyk found the skills, attitudes, behaviors, curriculum implementation, and the availability of resources influence

classroom management. This finding of Juta and Wyk is parallel to the focus of my research and supports my conceptual framework.

Gage et al. (2018) conducted a latent class analysis to identify teachers' classroom management practices that support the likelihood of students' success. A fifteen-minute Multiple Option Observation System for Experimental Studies (MOOSES) - observation and recording software that records frequency and duration in a code that reflects environmental factors: the time teaching, feedback, opportunities to respond, engagement, and disruptive behavior - was used during reading, math, social studies, and science instruction to generate the data to support this study. The participants were 1,242 diverse teacher–student dyads from 65 urban and rural elementary schools. Gage et al. (2018) agreed with Blazar and Kraft (2017) that student outcomes are influenced by what teachers do in their classrooms. The purpose of Gage et al. study was to examine how teacher classroom management practices coincided with student achievement. Analysis of the data revealed that there is a correlation between teachers' classroom management and students' success. Teachers with good classroom management strategies produced environments that were engaging for students more so than teachers who lacked classroom management skills. Gage et al. determined future research should extend prior research and their study by focusing on finding effective strategies that facilitate change in teacher classroom management practices and the relation to student outcomes. Knowing what strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals high school general education teachers use to manage student misbehaviors have the

potential to extend this study by identifying classroom management practices that may support student success.

Classroom management strategies used by teachers are proactive or reactive in nature. Alasmari and Althaqafi (2021), conducted a mixed-method study to elicit a description of proactive and reactive classroom management practices and the difference in how they are applied by novice and experienced teachers. The research also explored teacher self-efficacy and classroom management relationships. Alasmari and Althaqafi used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect data from 80 novice and experienced Saudi, English as a foreign language, teachers. The researchers found classroom management includes discipline, supervision of student learning, behaviors, teacher instructional practices, and social interactions. Proactive strategies include everything a teacher does within the classroom environment physically, instructionally, and socially before administering a consequence for behavior. Reactive strategies include using discipline measures that cause extinction, response cost punishment, and punishment with aversive consequence. Teachers with experience tend to utilize proactive classroom management strategies leading to an association between positive classroom management strategies and teacher self-efficacy. This study is relative to my proposed research as it encompasses teachers' approaches to managing student misbehaviors and influences of those approaches.

Classroom Management Challenges

This section of the literature review includes descriptions of ways researchers approached the problem of teachers' management of student behavior. The idea of

managing student behaviors is challenging for many teachers (Demirdag, 2015; Everett, 2017). Both qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted to examine general education teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and abilities, classroom management skills, and the use of discipline referrals.

All students benefit from classrooms that exude compassion and empathy as they are faced with many challenges before entering the classroom. Bilias-Lolis, et al., (2017) suggested that students who carry their non-positive experiences to school with them are less likely to display positive social behaviors. Teacher pedagogy and understanding are very important when communicating with students and managing the classroom (Back et al., 2016). Bilias-Lolis et al. used a conceptual synthesis to explore culturally responsive classroom management. Understanding what students need and a desire to meet those needs is an act of compassion needed by students with multiple social and emotional challenges (Bilias-Lolis et al., 2017). Carter's (2019) systematic review contributes to the growing literature highlighting teachers' approaches to discipline in mainstream classrooms that may include students with trauma induced behaviors. Student strengths and needs are necessary for effective classroom management that supports student academic achievement (Bilias-Lolis, 2017). The researchers suggested additional research is needed in urban learning environments.

Carter (2019) stated in an American Psychological Association journal article that various forms of discipline have been used consequently to combat bad behavior. Many of the consequences worsen behaviors and lead to persistent behaviors that interrupt the learning environment (Carter, 2019). This may be specifically true for novice teachers as

they typically learn classroom management through trial and error (Kwok, 2018). In a

mixed-method study that investigated teachers' causal attributes for behavior problems

and the strategies the teachers used to manage the problem behaviors, Paramita et al.

(2020) found teachers' participation in professional learning increases the likelihood that

teachers would use both proactive and reactive strategies when addressing students'

behaviors. Instead of sending students to the principal's office for disruptive behaviors,

assess the reason for the behavior within the classroom and teach students how to manage

it and interact with peers (Carter, 2019; Freiberg et al., 2020). Knowing the reason for

behaviors is beneficial for teachers in determining how to manage the behaviors.

Understanding student behaviors is just as important as knowing what experiences

students have had. Traumatic events, students experience, inadvertently trigger emotional

tension in the classroom that requires pedagogical tools that promote social-emotional

learning (Zembylas, 2020). According to the multifaceted study on emotions, effects, and

trauma conducted by Zembylas, positive relationships are valuable as traumatic

experiences are part of social development. Unfortunately, strategies used in the

classroom may not be a catalyst to managing students' traumatic behaviors (Zembylas,

2020). Research performed by Gordon and Fefer, 2019 and Zembylas revealed that

behavior problems that students display stem from home, social contexts, gender and race

issues, academic history and carry over into the classroom imposing challenges to

instructional practices. In a mixed-method study, Varghese et al., (2019) posited optimal

learning environments are possible with effective classroom management. Zembylas'

multifaceted research contributes to my proposed study by supporting the fact it is important for teachers to understand student behaviors to better serve them.

Back et al. (2016) was concerned with the instructional challenges high school teachers faced in the classroom and suggested school climate is a conciliator between classroom management and teacher knowledge. Student misbehavior coupled with learning and social issues presents classroom challenges. An urban school district collaborated with Back et al. and allowed them to examine the influence of classroom management, school climate, and staff relations on academic success. Using a Sobel Goodman test, Back et al. concluded classroom management, staff relations, and school climate were linked to student achievement. A Sobel Goodman test is used to determine the significance of an observed relationship between an independent, mediation, and dependent variable. Back et al.'s ecological research supports my study as it suggests the classroom environment is anchored to what teachers know and do in the classroom.

Student engagement is indirectly influenced by the learning environment (Shernoff et al., 2017). Shernoff et al. conducted an analytic study of the classroom environment and learning support in high school classrooms in the U. S. A total of 104 students from seven different classrooms participated in an Experience Sampling Method; data were collected via video and observations. Shernoff et al. wanted to capture the relationship between the learning environment, student engagement, and student learning. Teacher approaches to classroom management and instruction make up a portion of the classroom environment thus stimulating student engagement and indirectly influencing student success. According to Shernoff et al., motivation and relationships are

needed supports of the learning environment. The results of this analytic study supported

the idea that engagement directly influences learning; contrary to popular belief, it was

found that learning was not necessarily influenced by challenges within the environment.

However, when students are sent out of the classroom as a consequence for challenging

behaviors, student success is hindered. My study has the potential to support Shernoff et

al.'s idea that the learning environment should include authentic collaboration by

exploring what high school general education teachers do to manage student

misbehaviors.

Preparation for Classroom Management

Kwok's (2018) mixed methods study explored first year urban teachers'

classroom management actions. The following research questions guided Kwok's study:

What classroom management actions do first year, urban teachers use; How do urban

teachers' classroom management actions change over the course of their first year?

Participants were 87 first year charter school, public school, and state-operated public-

school teachers (recruited from a two-year preparation program) who had to attend

seminars and be observed once a month, attend a six-week summer training classroom

management program prior to enrolling in a 'CERT'ification program. Data were

collected via surveys, video recordings of teaching practice, field visits, teacher

interviews, and an electronic classroom management journal kept by participants.

Findings from Kwok's study indicated behavioral actions were prioritized by CERT

teachers and some emphasis was placed on academic and relational actions. Teacher

participants in Kwok's study used behavioral, academic, and relational actions to manage

student behaviors. Warnings were given, conversations were had, severe consequences (calling an administrator) were administered, student engagement was increased, and personal relationships were built. Over time, with experience, CERT teacher participants refined certain actions and learned from students as they developed as classroom managers. Preparation programs which include academic and relational concepts may promote a better understanding of classroom management (Kwok, 2018). This study supports my study as it highlights what teachers do and the importance of them learning and growing.

Flower et al. (2017) conducted an exploratory research study which examined the behavior management content included in general and special education teacher preservice preparation programs. Flower et al. posited that instruction in classroom management practices for preservice and in-service teachers should include behavior management to indirectly influence student achievement. Surveys were used to collect data that reflected the quantity and quality of behavior and classroom management strategies offered in post-secondary education. The results of their research indicated special education programs were more likely to offer behavior and classroom management courses than general education programs. This is unfortunate as general education high school student misbehaviors are increasing causing teacher concerns (Blake, 2017; Simonsen et al., 2020). Flower et al. (2017) found teachers need skills and training in behavior management for students with diverse behaviors; however, teachers without adequate skill and knowledge "to reinforce appropriate behavior and reduce challenging behavior" (p. 166) feel unprepared. In conclusion, the researchers have

determined teacher training, on how to reduce or prevent challenging behavior, is beneficial for instructional effectiveness and student achievement as opposed to focusing on responding to behaviors rather than preventing them. As with my current study, knowing the strategies and challenges high school general education teachers face could lead to the possible need for training to prevent student misbehaviors.

Unacceptable and challenging misbehaviors of secondary school students and the reasons behind them were identified through a qualitative research study conducted by Menikdiwela (2020). Twelve Sri Lankan secondary school teachers shared their perceptions of secondary school students' behaviors during semi-structured interviews. Five main sources as reasons behind student misbehaviors were revealed: family, education system, teachers, students, and society and three common unacceptable behaviors: disrespect, engaging in irrelevant tasks, and verbal aggression. Menikdiwela posited that although teachers experienced stress from students' unacceptable misbehaviors, they were partly responsible. Teachers' personality, communication with students, and teaching methods are assumed to cause stress for students which leads to misbehaviors. The findings of Menikdiwela's study parallel that of Paramita et al. (2020) as it included teachers need proper training on teaching strategies and behavior management. Identifying sources and types of high school student misbehaviors is important to my study as it could lead to better understanding the strategies and challenges high school general education teachers face when managing student misbehaviors.

Classroom Management and Discipline Referrals

The management of student behavior in high school general education classrooms has become punitive; students are sent out of the classroom with discipline referrals. Polirstok (2015) approached this problem by proclaiming teachers should limit the use of discipline referrals as a means of punishment and practice proactive classroom management strategies. A significant finding in Polirstok's qualitative study was that teachers should be committed and practice consistency when implementing different strategies. In an online survey, conducted by Woolf (2018), classroom management strategies included critical skills (i.e. instructional flexibility, professional development, and an understanding of students' disabilities) that had been identified in a previous study. Unlike Polirstok and Woolf, Back et al. (2016) approached the aforementioned problem from the standpoint of understanding how classroom management contributed to academic achievement. One conclusion of Polirstok's study was that student success is influenced by school climate which is predicted by relationships.

Relationships are hard to build when emotional pressures and social behaviors exist. Demirdag (2015) conducted a quantitative study with the purpose of investigating teachers' perceptions of how their classroom management skills impacted student attitudes. His study focused on teachers' classroom management, self-assessment, and the number of discipline referrals they had written. Data were collected via document analyses and from a questionnaire completed by a non-random selection of teacher participants. Demirdag suggested due to teachers uncertaintany about their own classroom management assessment, it is diffifcult to determine the relationship between

their perceptions of their classroom management skills and the number of discipline

referrals they had written. Sigstad (2017) along with Demirdag determined that certain

conditions must be in place in the classroom for fewer discipline referrals and student

success. Payne (2015) conducted a pilot case study of behavior management techniques

that paralleled those of Demirdag's; he found a better understanding of classroom

management approaches is needed (i. e. positive school to home feedback, understanding

of student responses to rewards and punishment). Demirdag concluded schools should

provide teachers professional development on classroom management to prevent using

crucial instructional time managing student misbehavior.

      According to Gonzalez, et al., (2019), current discipline policies, which lead to

excluding students from instruction, could make traumatic experiences worse. Discipline

measures which removed students from instruction simply did not address the underlying

problem stimulating unwanted behaviors (Gonzalez et al.). Unlike Flower et al. (2017),

who determined focus should be on preparing students by teaching them independent

social and emotional skills, Gonzalez et al. stated schools use predetermined punishments

to manage student behavior. However, students need non-exclusionary discipline which

aids in building relationships within the classroom and reduces unwanted behaviors

(Gonzalez et al.). I found this source to be helpful to my research as it supports the idea

that the students are more socially healthy and successful inside the classroom as opposed

to outside.

      Discipline is important when establishing a positive learning environment

conducive to meeting instructional goals and providing an effective education. In 2020,

Cetinkaya and Kocyigit conducted a qualitative case study which examined the records of a secondary education institutions' disciplinary committee's decisions on why high school students were punished, and how they were punished. This study was conducted in nine Turkish high schools where 384 disciplinary cases were recorded and analyzed between 2016-2020. According to Cetinkaya and Kocyigit, discipline is an adaptation to the environment, following rules, showing responsibility and respect. However, when discipline strategies are challenged by student misbehavior, the learning environment, instruction, student success and socialization are negatively affected (Cetinkaya & Kocyigit).

Cetinkaya and Kocyigit noted in their study that the disciplinary regulation for high school students included condemnation (60.0%), short-term suspension from school (39.0%), change of school (0.2%), and exclusion as punishments due to misbehaviors (0%). The disciplinary offenses of students were examined in terms of gender and grade level, the number of students, and the ratio of punishments to total school population. Cetinkaya and Kocyigit found more punishments (overall) were given to students in the 9th grade and fewer were given to senior students. Ninth-grade males received more condemnation as punishment. In terms of gender, males received more punishments than females. Males also had fewer punishments to be removed from their file based on the types of behaviors displayed, the condition under which the behavior surfaced, and the psychological condition of the student during the misbehavior. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that discipline issues in school can be examined in more detail to reveal the underlying reasons that cause students' behaviors and disciplinary problems.

Cetinkaya and Kocyigit's qualitative case study supports the need to understand the strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches high school general education teachers use to manage student misbehaviors.

In comparison of the studies, there is evidence that implies environmental forces influence student behaviors and teacher instructional effectiveness. Classroom management is indicative of teaching practices that influence student attitudes and behaviors (Blazar & Kraft, 2017). When student attitudes and behaviors disrupt instruction, teachers tend to exercise consequences that worsen behaviors and result in student discipline referrals to the office. Teachers need skills and training in behavior management and suggested pre-service and in-service programs are where this professional development should take place (Flower et al., 2017).

Classroom Management Strategies

There are many forms of misbehavior that interrupt the learning environment. According to Nadernejad et al. (2020), the source of misbehavior is not always known and requires resolve by the classroom teacher. Nadernejad et al. conducted a qualitative study to investigate the causes of misbehavior of high school students in Sanandaj and how to manage them. There are a variety of factors that stemmed from internal motivators and caused students to misbehave: the need for attention, want to be in charge, feel inadequate, and falling victim to labels given by teachers. Another contributing factor to misbehavior is teachers' perceptions of it. For instance, some teachers believe students are in full control of their behaviors and that punishment is the best way to manage them. However, what teachers fail to realize is that students are not to bear the

blame alone. Poor methods of instruction, authoritative attitudes, lack of classroom management and professional competence are elements of the school environment which contribute to student misbehaviors. Nadernejad et al. suggested misbehaviors could be managed by creating a classroom environment where students have ownership, feel safe, and teachers use proactive management skills to influence student behaviors.

Shamnadh and Anzari (2019) researched and in a discussion highlighted causal factors of misbehaviors and strategies for addressing them. They posited, to effectively manage student misbehavior, teachers should be aware of causes for the misbehavior. Three main sources of misbehaviors in the classroom were identified as the student, the teachers, and the society. Students get bored and engage in attention seeking behaviors that interrupt instruction and negatively influence the classroom environment. What students observed inside and outside the classroom influences what they do (Shamnadh and Anzari, 2019). Teachers with weak instruction and reactive discipline strategies negatively influence students' actions. It is better to prevent misbehavior before it interrupts the teaching and learning process. Establishing boundaries and building mutually respectful relationships early on, establishing clear rules and expectations, praise, interactive teaching, and knowing student capabilities are strategies that helped to prevent and manage student misbehaviors.

Understanding the causes of student misbehavior is vital to creating and maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. Even more important is knowing how teachers manage student misbehaviors (Sueb et al., 2020). Through a qualitative study, Sueb et al. found that discipline strategies varied. Semi-structured

interviews were conducted of nine Malay Muslim teachers considered to be experts with vast teaching experience. The purpose of Sueb et al.'s research was to examine teachers' influences about what causes misbehaviors and strategies used to combat them. Data indicated three main themes (preparation and activities, interaction, and consequences) that form teacher strategies in managing student behavior. However, within their study, Sueb et al. only discussed findings from the theme -related to preparation and activities. Teachers believed challenges were presented upon students return from holiday and seasonal breaks and for the beginning of school. That is why they deemed it necessary, when students return to school, to arrange student seating, schedule daily instructional events, create lessons beforehand, and learn students' names.

Classroom management is needed to preserve the teaching and learning environment. Unfortunately, student misbehavior was serious enough to disrupt teaching and learning and threaten student achievement (Nadernejad et al., 2020; Shamnadh & Anzari, 2019; Sueb et al., 2020). According to Sueb et al. and Shamnadh and Anzari, teachers needed a variety of management strategies as student misbehaviors vary. Knowing what students need is important to prevent reacting inappropriately and making matters worse (Shamnadh & Anzari; Nadernejad et al.). According to research, a vast majority of teachers found managing student behaviors to be challenging. However, Sueb et al. have determined some teachers, with diverse experiences and exposure to disciplinary strategies, to be excellent in their craft. "The quality of the teaching and learning progress can be achieved once students' misbehaviors are managed effectively" (Shamnadh & Anzari, p. 320).

PBIS

According to (Freeman et al., 2016) the most reported student behavior outcome in elementary and middle school was student office referrals which served as the primary measure of student behavior. Freeman, et al., (2016) found, via a quasi-experimental interrupted time series design, that positive behavior intervention and supports, if implemented with fidelity, reduced office discipline referrals. A descriptive analysis of four variables: attendance, academic performance, behavioral indicators, and risk factors was performed to determine to what extent schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) were associated. The reduction in behavioral outcomes indirectly influenced student academic performance. Freeman et al. suggested additional research is needed on positive behavioral interventions and support at the high school level.

Gage et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of the relation between schoolwide positive behavior interventions and support (SWPBIS) and disciplinary exclusion including office discipline referrals. The purpose of their study was to ensure internal and external validity of evidence reported on experimental group design SWPBIS research. Findings of this study are socially important because SWPBIS are designed to reduce suspensions. Gage et al.'s systematic review was carried out in three phases: coding of electronically searched abstracts, review of 33 full quasi-experimental designed texts, and coding and data extraction of the four identified studies included in the research. Although the findings of Gage et al. study were limited, the researchers highlighted the need for additional experimental research to continue the support needed to scale-up SWPBIS.

Freeman et al. (2019) fulfilled the need for additional research at the secondary level through an examination of the relation between PBIS implementation fidelity and student level office behaviors (discipline referrals), attendance, and academic outcomes. Data were collected via a Qualtrics online survey platform where information was uploaded by school personnel. According to findings from Freeman et al.'s qualitative study, reductions in office discipline referrals and improvement in student outcomes are direct results of implementing PBIS with fidelity; however, the relationship between PBIS and academic performance may be indirect.

Teacher Education and Professional Development

The literature review includes the importance of teacher knowledge of classroom management and the need for adequate teacher training in meeting student needs (Guojonsdottir & Oskarsdottir, 2020). The preparation teachers undergo to become certified is included as initial learning opportunities. After this, professional development, and its relationship to improved instruction, classroom management, student behavior, and student achievement are recognized. Then, managing student behavior is discussed to show how environmental factors influence the learning environment. The research methodology chosen and presented includes a description of how it impacts learning and student behavior and can foster teacher instruction well enough to meet the diverse needs of students in a general education classroom.

The key concepts related to the literature review were the importance of teacher training and classroom management, teacher preparation, teacher professional development, and teacher management of student behavior. Each of these concepts will

be synthesized and discussed in detail in this section to show meaningfulness to my study. Several seminal studies have been included to support this study. A summary of the chapter concludes the section.

Importance of Teacher Training and Classroom Management

Scholarship is important for school and student success, especially when teachers are made responsible for educating and maintaining the behaviors of all students. According to Roberson (2007) and Sledge and Pazey (2013), the abilities and capabilities of teachers determine the success of any school (p. 25). However, teacher approaches varied based on their relationship with the students (Egeberg et al., 2016). Teachers must be adequately trained and show a depth of knowledge in how students learn (Code of Federal Regulations 300.156; Hawley, 2009; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2007; Polirstok, 2015). To ensure students are served appropriately, educators must be equipped with knowledge to provide students with the necessary skills to become successful.

Certified teachers have certain guidelines, imposed upon them by their school districts, which must be followed to ensure student success. However, all teachers are not prepared and lack confidence in engaging in different instructional practices (Guojonsdottir & Oskarsdottir, 2020; Schipper et al., 2020). Thwala et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative research study on experiences of teachers and found teachers believed their unpleasant teaching experiences were due to a lack of effective teaching methods. Without sufficient training in instruction and classroom management strategies, target behaviors are not communicated or taught effectively, and the focus on learning fades (Back et al., 2016; Polirstok & Greer, 1977).

General educators, without formal training and routine exposure to procedural safeguards, curriculum changes, and instructional strategies, are not properly prepared for teaching in a diverse classroom setting. As conveyed in a seminal study by Murawski and Dieker (2004), it is a disservice to students when they are placed in classrooms with general education teachers who are not appropriately trained and supported (p. 52). In the best interest of students, school districts should ensure teachers are equipped with all pertinent information related to students' needs, levels of learning, and to keep the focus on learning, and abilities (Back et al., 2016; Polirstok, 2015).

Teacher Preparation

Initial learning opportunities for teachers occur when they are undergraduate students at accredited colleges or universities seeking certification or when they are participants of alternative routes to certification after earning degrees in various fields. At each level of earning a degree or certificate, teachers are expected to make evident their depth of knowledge through examinations of course content (Polirstok, 2015). Individuals seeking initial general certification are required to take classes in the following domains: code of ethics, child development and motivation, learning theories, curriculum development, and lesson planning, classroom assessment for instruction/diagnosing learning needs, classroom management/developing a positive learning environment, one course on special populations, communication skills, instructional technology, and certification test preparation courses according to the Texas Administrative Code (Title 19; Part 7; Chapter 228 of the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC)). For individuals who have already acquired a bachelor's degree,

the state has an approved alternative Teacher Preparation & Certification Program (TPCP) that is offered through regional service centers throughout the state of Texas. The TPCP is a performance-based program that provides intensive instruction which integrates theory with practice. Candidates are also required to obtain 30 clock hours of field experience when receiving an alternative certification (esc7.net).

Certification programs prepare teachers to receive degrees in specified areas of study. Unfortunately, teachers believe undergraduate institutions cause them to feel ill-prepared in meeting all demands and responsibilities of a diverse classroom (Fuchs, 2010; Hutzler et al., 2019; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2007; Kosko & Wilkins, 2009). The changing dynamics of student needs bring challenges to teachers (Demirdag, 2015; Everett, 2017; Hutzler et al., 2019). High school general education teachers need additional exposure to and training in classroom management to effectively help students with diverse needs.

Classroom management can be a struggle for first-year teachers. According to a mixed-method study conducted by Kwok (2018), student behavior, academics, and teacher-to-student interactions influence the classroom environment. Given most teacher preparation programs assess teacher preparedness through examination of course content many teachers feel ill-prepared and are ineffective at management when they enter the classroom (Fuchs, 2010; Hutzler et al., 2019; Jenkins & Ornelles, 2007; Kosko & Wilkins, 2009; Polirstok, 2015). Kwok found establishing and enforcing rules, planning engaging activities and fostering positive interactions with students created a more manageable classroom for beginning teachers. Kwok implied in his study that teacher

preparation programs should include a comprehensive understanding of the range of strategies necessary to establish classroom management.

Teachers not prepared to instruct students with behavioral problems find it difficult to develop an appropriate attitude for tailoring instruction with the diverse needs of their students in mind (Back et al., 2016; Polirstok, 2015). Classroom attitudes (teachers' interactions with students) play a crucial role in creating the classroom temperature (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Effective professional development is one way to provide training and to foster the basic knowledge of teachers to help students become successful in the classroom.

Teacher Professional Development

Once teachers graduate from their respective teacher education programs and are hired to work in schools, districts or individual schools become responsible for providing appropriate professional development to ensure that teachers meet and maintain the standards set forth by the district or school. According to Hirsch and Killion (2009), schools must plan and organize professional learning opportunities to improve academic achievement and to meet federal requirements. Teachers are held accountable for student academic success and professional development influences their classroom practices significantly (Guojonsdottir & Oskarsdottir, 2020). However, most types of professional development focused on what teachers knew about their subject matter rather than how students learned (Wei et al., 2009). Educators gain a wealth of support from engaging, collaborative professional development that is geared toward deepening teachers' content knowledge as well as instructional practices (Guojonsdottir & Oskarsdottir, 2020).

There are many genres of professional development that support the needs of teachers who are challenged daily to instruct and accommodate the varying skill levels of students. According to Laarhoven et al. (2007), the increased expectations for general educators have sparked restructuring teacher preparation programs to better prepare them for diverse classroom settings. Meeting the wide range of needs in a diverse population and providing challenging educational experiences can be frustrating for teachers who feel as though they have not been adequately prepared and supported (Demirdag, 2015; Leko & Brownell, 2009; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown; Weiner, 2003). Improving teacher knowledge creates an opportunity for them to change what they do in the classroom, ultimately changing what students do (Polirstok, 2015). No one form of professional development produces changes in teacher practice and student learning.

Opportunities to learn and develop an understanding of job-related activities and responsibilities such as teaching strategies, classroom management, developing lesson plans, and building relationships are much needed by teachers. Weiner (2003) proposed that professional development was mostly separated and unrelated to activities in the classroom. Thus, leading teachers to believe professional development is a special event that only occurs 3 to 4 times a year to update policies they need in an effort for them to collect Continued Professional Education credits (Guskey, 2000). This level of professional development contrasts Bandura's theories of learning from social interaction and observation.

Teacher Management of Student Behavior

A proactive classroom is established through student involvement and engagement, reinforced learning, and encouragement. Back et al. (2016) and Gregory et al. (2016) noted classrooms influence student behavior just as teachers' abilities to meet student needs influence academic success. Both teacher behaviors, as well as student behaviors, have a significant impact in creating a positive learning atmosphere. Teachers set the tone by having clearly established rules, daily routine procedures, effective communication skills, proactive reinforcement, and modeled behavior (Wang and Degol, 2016; Hussain, 2017; Polirstok, 2015; Wong and Wong, 2018). Good, proactive classroom management produces a positive classroom environment where learning occurs.

Teachers, who are less successful in developing positive student relationships, tend to send students to the principal's office with discipline referrals for misbehavior. A case-study research conducted by Payne (2015) and Freeman (2008), found 90% of referrals come from 10 % of our students; it also indicated that 80% of discipline referrals come from 11% of teachers. Teachers who have not been adequately trained and lack continued professional development resort to sending students out of the classroom for a consequence due to minor infractions (Bandura A., 2005). According to Demirdag (2015), inadequate classroom management, of student non-compliant behaviors, resulted in more discipline referrals being written as a response to student disruption. Disciplinary referrals are used universally and are over-relied on as the first option to counteract misbehaviors (Gage et al., 2018; Polirstok, 2015). Hill and Brown (2013) and Thwala et

al. (2020) postulated discipline referrals have no positive effect on behavior, do not change student behaviors, and can lead to exclusion. The School Improvement Network, a video journal of online professional development, revealed that poor classroom management yielded several undesirable results including overly rigid classrooms and chaotic learning environments. Many disruptive behaviors in the classroom can be alleviated before they become serious discipline problems provided teachers establish and maintain classroom control (Back et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2019; Freeman, 2008; Polirstok, 2015). Unfortunately, teacher tolerance for misbehaviors varies from classroom to classroom (Martinez et al., 2016).

Teachers manage challenging behaviors based on their knowledge and experience. In a qualitative study, Sueb et al. (2020), investigated how teachers managed students' misbehaviors in the classroom. Several strategies found to be necessary were preparation and planning, positive interactions, and the implementation of consequences. Sueb et al. (2020) also found that beginning the school year with these strategies is beneficial for setting the tone for student success throughout the school year. Routine use of any strategy is influential on teaching and learning. The researchers concluded knowledge and experience influence teachers' abilities to use various strategies to meet the needs of a diverse classroom.

Results of the study conducted by Sueb et al. (2020) paralleled with Ahmed (2020) explanatory mixed-method study in that establishing rules and expectations at the beginning of school is important. Although, the popular approach of rules and consequences is effective; it is not a one size fit all approach to classroom management

(Ahmed, 2020). Establishing classroom rules is more effective when paired with other disciplinary perspectives. In his explanatory mixed-method study, Ahmed noted pre-service teachers need professional development and guidance for managing disruptive behaviors.

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I addressed the conceptual framework along with a literature review of related concepts and variables involving classroom management and high school general education teachers. I identified contextual influences that constrain effectiveness of teachers' classroom management skills. Some challenges identified involving classroom management were nonpositive influences outside the school, teacher management strategies, traumatic events, learning and social issues, and lack of engagement. I reviewed teacher preparation for classroom management and including classroom management as a part of teacher training. Classroom management and discipline referrals were reviewed. I discussed classroom management strategies and general education teachers' perceptions of misbehavior. Teachers do not realize internal motivators that lead to misbehaviors. Although PBIS is found influential on misbehaviors, there is still a need to determine why some teachers react to misbehaviors with discipline referrals while others use proactive strategies to manage misbehaviors.

Literature supported the idea that student success is contingent upon supportive environments. Most research was focused on student misbehaviors and challenges they bring to the classroom. Some research was focused on teacher knowledge and expertise;

however, there was no research on what resources high school general education teachers rely on to address classroom management issues.

Exploring reasons this topic may provide insights regarding teachers' level of classroom management skills, encourage districts to assess their preservice professional development and training, and encourage institutions of higher education to expand courses to include classroom management skills, which would lead to increased teacher knowledge and student success, therefore impacting social change. This study fills the gap in practice regarding why some teachers choose to rely on discipline referrals when managing student misbehaviors while others manage student misbehaviors without using discipline referrals.

The classroom environment and student success are greatly impacted by teachers' knowledge and how they use what they know in the classroom. I examined social cognitive learning as a phenomenon in terms of managing student behaviors. My study methodology, rationale, and strategies are addressed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that were used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the research design, including the research question, justification, and role of the researcher as well as methodology for this study. I used a basic qualitative design with interviews to gather information on this topic. Participants, the setting, data collection, data analysis strategies, and issues of trustworthiness are explained.

Research Design and Rationale

This study is an exploration of high school general education teachers' management of student misbehaviors. The following question guided interviews for this study:

RQ: What are the strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that are used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors?

Based on responses, I extended conversations by asking for more details and followed up with statements confirming participants' initial responses. Once interviews were conducted and data were gathered, I evaluated what each participant had to say and looked for commonalities to determine why teachers rely on discipline referrals and how they manage students' misbehavior with or without using discipline referrals. This current research was designed to explore how managing student behaviors may be a

valuable tool for promoting student success. In this chapter, I also address the research tradition and rationale for my choice.

Research Tradition

This study was a basic qualitative study designed to develop an understanding of a phenomenon. The qualitative approach involves determining the meaning of a problem via data that are gathered from participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). There are three dimensions of inquiry that form approaches to research: knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry, and methods of data collection (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Claims are made regarding what is known, how it is known, how information is written, and how the researcher goes about studying literature. Methods that are used for data collection and analysis are considered when choosing a research design.

Qualitative studies involve social and/or human science problems that answer how or what questions (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Rationale for the Chosen Tradition

There are three approaches to educational research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research involves addressing social interactions and meanings of experiences regarding a phenomenon. Quantitative research includes experiential and numerical data that are based on cause-and-effect relationships. The mixed methods approach to research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches; it involves systematically gathering numerical and empirical data to answer research questions. The research question, experiences of the researcher, and audience to determine the research design (Creswell, 2003, p. 18-21). I did not choose a quantitative

or mixed methods approach for this study because the data I collected was based on teacher descriptions that were expressed in words.

There are a variety of approaches to collecting data for qualitative research. Types of studies include narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Greenier, 2019). Narrative and phenomenological studies involve the study of individuals; ethnography is the study of broad culture-sharing behavior sof individuals or groups, and case studies and grounded theory involve explorations of processes, actions, and events (Creswell, 1998). I did not choose a narrative, phenomenological, or ethnographic design for this study because I had no interest in individual participants or behaviors of a group of participants. Case study and grounded theory designs were not chosen because my focus was on teacher perceptions of a phenomenon rather than observations of actions of participants.

I chose a qualitative theory for this study because observations and social interactions people have within their environments help them to interpret meaning. I used one-on-one, open-ended, and semi-structured interviews with basic descriptive questions to encourage interactive communications between myself and participants. Data pertained to general education teachers' strategies for managing student behaviors, types of behaviors teachers manage, and relationships with instruction, classroom management, and student success.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers typically work closely with participants and the research site which leads to possibilities of bias.

As the researcher, it was my responsibility to conduct research as close to the natural setting as possible to formulate a general idea about the site and participants. I also identified my biases and monitored them to identify how they may influence collection and interpretation of data. As a current primary campus principal and former assistant principal at a midwestern southern high school with several years of experience observing and supervising teachers, I kept my experiences with classroom environments in perspective by focusing the participants' points of view about their experiences. Within the last 14 years, I have grown and become familiar with teachers' instructional approaches and know these experiences have helped me to become the administrator I am today. For several years, I served as a teacher and assistant principal in the school district under study. Therefore, I have some knowledge of school routines when it comes to instruction, discipline, and staff development. Nonetheless, I looked beyond what I knew or thought I knew about teachers' management of students to keep any biases from influencing this study.

It was my responsibility to contact prospective participants about participating in this study. I verbally contacted the district's superintendent and received permission to contact the building principal, at mid-western southern high school, regarding conducting this research. I contacted the building principal with detailed information about how I would collect data from participates in the study. An e-mail, as well as a written invitation, was sent to each of the core academic teachers inviting them to participate in this study.

Methodology

Research methods include data collection sources (Creswell, 2003) that describe the criterion on which participant selection is based. The instrumentation used for data collection, recruitment procedures, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness established reliability and validity. At the end of this section, ethical concerns are addressed.

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative design. One-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured Zoom interviews conducted of high school, general education teachers in a mid-western southern school district provided the qualitative data. The purpose of a basic qualitative study is to answer straightforward questions to develop a process, meaning, and understanding of a specific real-world situation – an event or activity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, I sought a sample of 10-12 basic core academic (mathematics, science, and social studies, and English) high school, general education teachers from a total of 78 and contacted them to take part in a one-on-one open-ended question interview. Interviews were transcribed. Analysis of the interview data helped to determine the perceptions high school, general education teachers have of discipline referrals and the effect they have on student success. This basic qualitative study yielded results that could be beneficial to teachers' instruction and students' academic success.

Participant Selection

This study took place at a high school located in the mid-western southern part of Texas. The study site had an overall population of approximately 2,130 plus students, from grades 9th through 12th, enrolled in core academic classes. This number included a

diverse population of students who may have been included in a general education classroom. The focus of this study was on the general education teachers who taught a basic general education course subject and managed students' behaviors with or without using office discipline referrals.

There were approximately 78 basic, core academic teachers at this study site. The goal of this basic qualitative study was to collect enough data to develop an understanding of the participants' perceptions (Burkholder et al., 2016). In an experiment on saturation and validity of data conducted by Guest et al. (2006), sample sizes for different types of research were reviewed. At the conclusion of their experiment, Guest et al. found that saturation was derived at 12 participants therefore, a sufficient sample size would include 10 to 12 participants. However, for this study saturation determined a final sample size of 7 was sufficient for answering the research question. The data collection tool for this study consisted of carefully created open-ended interview questions regarding high school general education teachers' perceptions of their ability to manage student behaviors with or without using office discipline referrals.

As the sole researcher, I contacted the Superintendent at the previously mentioned mid-western southern high school to request permission to conduct this research study of high school general education teachers in core academic classes. The building principal was also contacted. Burkholder et al. (2016) identified locations for interviews to be convenient, comfortable, private, and auditorily sound for audio recording.

Participants for this research study included a sufficient target sample size of teachers from the total population of 78 high school general education teachers with a

minimum of three years of teaching experience. I solicited participants' participation via e-mail correspondence. A letter explaining my research was sent to all possible participants. It included an explanation and rationale for this study.

Instrumentation

The data collection process included a one-on-one semi-structured Zoom interview with each participant. The main instrument used for data collection was researcher-created. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), a researcher-developed instrument should be reliable and valid. Along with the interview questions specific to eliciting data that answered the research question, I established an interview protocol. Protocols are a set of questions used to prompt participant responses to ensure depth (Burkholder et al., 2016).

The interview session took place at the beginning of the Fall semester. Each interview was intended to last approximately 45-60 minutes. If the participants did not respond with rich in-depth responses (with detail based on experiences), the interviews could have taken longer; due to prompting. Using semi-structured interviews allowed participants to respond based on their experiences and why they do what they do to manage student behaviors in the classroom (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Several educational colleagues reviewed, analyzed, and provided feedback regarding my interview questions. The collegial reviewers included a male and two females with as few as three years teaching experience and as many as 16 years of experience. I provided each of them with a copy of the interview questions and asked for feedback regarding relevance to the research question. The collegial reviewers all shared

that it was important for teachers to know students, get students involved in the lesson, to not embarrass students and to counsel and release. One colleague felt the research question should be worded to address approaches to discipline rather discipline referrals. I understood her reasoning (not everyone uses discipline referrals); however, the research was focused on discipline referrals as an approach which has the potential to result in students being removed from instruction. Another analysis was that some behaviors teachers see may just be bad behavior and do not require a referral. There are levels of behaviors and not all behavior requires a discipline referral; however, some teachers write discipline referrals for behaviors that may be considered minor (i.e., not having supplies and showing lack of engagement). The feedback given by the collegial reviewers was not enough to alter the interview protocol. Therefore, the exploration of strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that high school general education teachers use to manage student misbehaviors remained the focus of this basic qualitative study.

The interview session required an interview protocol of member checking. I shared individual interview transcriptions with participants to help refine data. The interview protocol was aligned with the research question and theoretical framework. The validation from the respondents, member checking, occurred within six weeks and allowed for improved accuracy of data to ensure participants' most genuine thoughts and responses.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The research location for this study was a high school in the mid-western southern region. The number of high school basic general education teachers is 78. Ten to 12 volunteer general education teachers with at least three years of experience were sought from the campus to participate. An invitation with study details was sent to potential participants via e-mail. Once I received a response from interested teachers, I chose those who met the selection criteria. Participants chosen were asked to complete a consent form indicating their willingness to be a part of the study. For those who gave consent to participate in the study, I provided a letter detailing the study including the interview process. I served as the sole researcher who conducted the interviews and collected data. The data were collected during a one-on-one semi-structured interview with each participant and validation of information was established via member checking. The interviews occurred once and lasted 25-60 minutes. During the semi-structured interviews, an audio recording mechanism was used to capture the essence of the participants' responses and to use for transcription later. Once initial interviews were conducted and validation established, participants received an e-mail thanking them for their participation in the study.

Data collection takes place via several strategies depending on how the researcher approaches the research question and the tools chosen for gathering data (Butin, 2010; Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Thomas, 2017). Data can be shown through numbers, words, or both (Thomas, 2017). Numbers are ideal for quantitative studies; words are appropriate for qualitative studies and a mixed-method research design is shown via

numbers and words. For this research study, I focused on high school general education teachers' experiences with student discipline. I chose a qualitative design and used semi-structured interviews as the tool to collect rich in-depth data (Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Before conducting semi-structured interview sessions with each participant, each of them was required to complete and submit a consent form (See Appendix A).

Interviews use informal discussion/conversation that captures talk with individuals or groups (Thomas, 2017). During a qualitative interview, the researcher asks open-ended questions of each participant and records the responses exactly as stated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Merriam & Greenier, 2019) except for spacer words such as "uhm". Interview questions should focus on a particular topic for explanation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To achieve rich in-depth research data, an interview protocol should be created based on the research questions, probes, and follow-up questions (supported by member checking) (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Analysis Plan

During data analysis, I was seeking to understand how high school general education teachers managed student behaviors with or without using office discipline referrals. Making sense of the words of the participants' responses or text is data analysis (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Analysis of the data began when I began collecting data (Burkholder et al., 2016). There were several steps to analyzing data: organizing information, coding the data, and creating themes or patterns derived from the

data. Microsoft Excel was used to organize the data collected. I interpreted the meaning of the data I collected by analyzing statements using a constant comparative method.

Organizing Data

Organization required me to transcribe participant responses and to develop an understanding of what they mean by their responses (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Butin (2010), themes typically emerge within data. Once an understanding was developed, I looked for themes that emerged and aligned with my research question. I clustered the information and began establishing codes to organize the data and to de-identify the participants within an Excel document.

Coding Data

Participant responses that were clustered were coded using colors and categorized based on their comparison to emergent findings (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Codes are important facets within textual data that link ideas of one participant to those of another (Thomas, 2017). I approached the process of coding using three steps listed by Thomas (2017). The first step was to use open coding. Open coding is notating synonymic words. As I transcribed and analyzed data, I identified words used by participants that were similar in meaning. The next step was to use axial coding which means to make sense of the data that is similar and categorize it. Once the meaning of the data was determined, I sorted and added the information to appropriate categories in the Excel spreadsheet. The last step listed by Thomas was selective coding - establishing themes and patterns.

Themes and Patterns

I used participant responses that contained frequently recurring text to generate themes. Themes lead to a plethora of terminology that was used to describe various categories (Creswell, 2003). Creswell stated that categories that follow a consistent pattern could be indicative of reliability. After organizing, coding, and identifying a pattern, I coded data in a manner that provided anonymity to the research site and participants. For any data that did not reflect a common theme or fit into a pattern, it has been labeled discrepant and will be discarded. Participants were acknowledged and thanked for participating in this study.

Trustworthiness

I analyzed strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that high school general education teachers used to manage student behaviors with or without using office discipline referrals. I used member checking to determine the accuracy of my data and uncover the meaning it had for the participants. Member checking is allowing participants to examine and determine if the transcripts of their responses accurately represented their input (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2002). Within several days after conducting the semi-structured interviews, I provided participants an opportunity to review my transcription of their interview data to ensure I had accurately captured the essence of their experiences. Textual data collected from interviews based on teachers' experiences weighed against the literature review to verify validity.

Consistency in the data collected versus the result of the findings determines reliability. Reliability is when research findings repeat themselves (Hatch, 2002, 2023). It

determines whether the data is trustworthy and makes sense regardless of how it is analyzed and how often it is analyzed. Data were analyzed by the organization of the information collected, coded based on patterns that emerged within the data, and categorized by themes. Keeping a researcher's log of this process of data analysis allowed me to identify patterns formed from the data and to determine consistency for dependability. Information recorded in the researcher's log included time and dates of interviews with each coded participant. The log also contained information that tracked my actions (as they pertain to the interview process) as the interviewer and detailed who, what, and when.

Data collected must be trustworthy; as the researcher, I had the responsibility of establishing the truthfulness of research findings for an accurate representation of data sources. Validity and reliability rest on trustworthiness (Seale, 1999). There are four types of research findings to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

As the researcher, I established the credibility of this research. According to Golafshani (2003), the ability and effort of the researcher determines the credibility of qualitative research. Credibility is determining to what degree the experiences and perceptions of participants are represented and how the findings of a study relate to reality (Stahl & King, 2020; Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018).

I collected data via semi-structured interviews with each participant who volunteered to be a part of this study. Member checking was used to double-check the

trustworthiness of participants' responses to the interview questions by allowing each participant to review and confirm my records of their perceptions (Burkholder et al., 2016). Data saturation was established enhancing the credibility of my research study. Data saturation occurs when there is no evidence of new thematical data with additional participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018).

Transferability

External validity is termed transferability in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as a catalyst for expanding the understanding of one research study to other situations. The authors determined without transferability there are limitations to the original study. As the researcher, I collected descriptive saturated data during the semi-structured interviews. I explained my research process in detail so readers could determine the truthfulness of the research findings (Anney, 2014). Data collected must be trustworthy. Dependability is the root of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability was defined as the root of trustworthiness by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Findings of a research must be consistent within the study to ensure there is enough quality information to support understanding (Burkholder et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018). Dependability was established by a coding system that led to identifying themes to aid in synthesizing results (Burkholder et al., 2016; Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018). A researcher log with detailed data collection actions aided in the quest to establish dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is one of several essential criteria for quality which (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) describes things as they are, objective reality. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have determined confirmability to be a verification of unbiased research. The perspectives of participants have been reported without the influence of the researcher's experiences or assumptions (Burkholder et al., 2016). To ensure my biases did not influence this research, I established confirmability via member checking and a researcher log by recording details of my data collection, data analysis, and my rationale for how I coded the information.

Ethical Procedures

According to Babbie (2017) and Burkholder et al. (2016), the purpose of social research is to understand, describe, or explain reasons for a phenomenon. Qualitative data collection occurs via interviews and observations (Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although there are pitfalls to interviewing, Burkholder et al. (2016) listed potential solutions: careful planning, creation of an interview protocol, neutrality, probes, and follow-up questions, and audiotaping the interview to capture the essence of the participants' responses and accurate transcription. I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews via Zoom to collect data from participants on how they managed student behaviors with or without using office discipline referrals. To avoid the pitfall that may lead to ethical issues, I planned carefully, developed a protocol, used probes, and read the data carefully.

This research study takes a glimpse into human behavior; therefore, ethical issues may surface (Babbie, 2017). Ethical issues that may arise pertain to the protection of participants, securing data, and researcher honesty (Creswell, 1998, 2003).

To minimize ethical issues, I needed to obtain approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study. IRB is a researcher's guide to protecting research study participants (Yin, 2016). The IRB reviews proposed social science research studies that include human subjects (Pearson, 2020). Upon review of a research study, the IRB determines the level of protection for human subjects and the alignment with ethical standards and federal regulations outlined by the university (Pearson, 2020). Approval from the IRB is required before a study can be conducted (Maxwell, 2019). Participant anonymity must be protected (Creswell, 1998, 2003). According to Maxwell (2019), the protection of human subjects within a research study is more vital compared to the findings of the research study.

Conducting social research using human subjects requires participants' informed consent and confidentiality (Babbie, 2017). Therefore, consent forms were distributed to participants to help them develop an understanding of the study before agreeing to participate. Also, careful planning was required to protect participants from harmful information being disclosed (Babbie, 2017). The responses recorded of participants were coded to prevent revealing of a person's identity.

In qualitative research, the range of data collection sources is limited (Burkholder et al., 2016). A protocol must be established with interview questions that align with the research question, provoke conversation, have been reviewed for clarity and

answerability and designed to reflect participants honest responses. The ethical issue of

securing data requires protecting the data source. Upholding confidentiality decreases the

chance of respondents being identified (Babbie, 2017). Although I ensured that I

accurately interpreted what the participant was conveying, participants' names and the

information they shared is rid of any identifiable information (Creswell, 1998, 2003).

Careful handling of collected data and limited access to it helps to keep it secure until it

can be destroyed.

Another step toward achieving ethicality was receiving approval from the local

site. Researchers are required to obtain approval and permission to conduct a research

study. Possessing the virtues of integrity (gaining the trust of participants) required me to

be honest and transparent when reporting findings. I was sensitive to my personal beliefs

by acknowledging biases and personal beliefs. While handling data, I ensured responses

were coded effectively enough not to be deduced to identify the participants. I protected

the integrity of participants by masking identifiable information about them and the

research site.

Summary

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the methodology for this study. This chapter

begins with an explanation of the research design and rationale. Next, the research

tradition was presented with a rationale for why I chose a basic qualitative study design.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges,

experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that were used by high school general

education teachers to manage student misbehaviors. To address this topic, I explored

social interactions teachers had with their students within classroom environments via semi-structured interviews with participants and member checking.

Participant selection, instrumentation procedures for recruitment, and data collection were addressed in this chapter. Strategies for data analysis were also included to help make sense of data from interviews. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were addressed. Ethical procedures were addressed as well as my plan for obtaining permission to conduct the study and strategies I used to keep participants and data safe. This chapter concludes with a summary of the main points.

Findings from this basic qualitative study are presented in Chapter 4. My goal was to report rich descriptive data from one-on-one participant interviews. I used member checking to establish credibility and dependability.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that are used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors. Chapter 4 includes a description of the setting, participant demographics, data collection methods, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, a review of findings, and a summary. I used a basic qualitative design with five interview questions that were specifically designed to address the research question.

Setting

This study was based in a high school in the midwestern southern part of Texas. After obtaining permission from the central office of the school district and campus principal, I invited general education teachers with at least 3 years of experience teaching and managing student misbehaviors. I expected at least 10 participants and received responses from seven teachers who gave consent to take part in the study and be interviewed. All interviews were held using Zoom. I conducted interviews in a closed room to avoid being overheard. I asked participants to choose days, times, and places where they felt comfortable being open and honest.

Participant Demographics

Participants were all current high school general education teachers in a specific high school in the mid-western southern part of Texas. Of the seven volunteer participants, two were male and five were female. Two participants were African American, one was Hispanic, and four were Caucasian. Three participants taught English,

two taught social studies, and one each taught math and science. Participants' experience

ranged from 3 to 37 years in the classroom. Only two participants had less than 10 years

of teaching experience, and five had 10 or more years. Participants were given

pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Participant Pseudonyms	Years of Experience	Subject Taught
Participant 1	PA	<10	Math
Participant 2	PB	10-20	Science
Participant 3	PC	20+	English
Participant 4	PD	10-20	Social Studies
Participant 5	PE	<10	English
Participant 6	PF	10-20	Social Studies
Participant 7	PG	10-20	English

Data Collection

Data collection procedures that were outlined in Chapter 3 were followed except

for the number of minimum participants. I wanted at least 10 participants, but seven

accepted invitations to participate and be interviewed. In mid-November, emails were

sent to potential participants at the high school under study. Two participants responded

within 2 days of receiving the initial invitation. Two additional potential participants

responded 4 weeks later. A second invitation was emailed in January, and one more

potential participant responded to the invitation. A third invitation had to be sent before

the last two potential participants showed interest in participating in my proposed qualitative study. Overall, it took almost 12 weeks to identify qualifying participants for this study. Although the targeted minimum number of participants was not obtained, there was evidence of data saturation from the seven interviews. Steps for data collection that were outlined in Chapter 3 were recruitment of potential participants, consent, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and member checking. I selected only participants who taught in grades 9 through 12 and had at least 3 years teaching experience in general education classrooms with or without experiences involving using discipline referrals to manage student misbehaviors.

I communicated with potential participants via email. Those who accepted invitations to participate sent emails showing their willingness to do so. I then asked for consent before scheduling actual interviews. All participants emailed their consent forms with dates and times for interviews to occur. A Zoom link was sent to each participant's email address. Sixty minutes were allotted for each interview. Three interviews took between 25 and 40 minutes, and the remaining four lasted 55 minutes. Interviews were recorded and stored as audio files and transcribed manually using audio and Microsoft Office Word dictation. Handwritten notes were also taken in case there were technical issues. One Zoom interview had an error and was not recorded. The interview was scheduled with PD and a Zoom link with audio recording was issued; however, after the interview and upon transcription of data, I noticed there was not a recording of the interview. Data used to report PD's responses were captured manually. Data were collected between December 2022 and March 2023.

Data Analysis

Data were collected and analyzed to gain insights and understanding of strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that were used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), analysis of data begins when collection of data begins. After conducting seven interviews via Zoom, I listened to recorded audio and manually transcribed data using Microsoft Word. Once I completed transcriptions, I read them and highlighted interview questions and specific responses to questions using assorted colors to begin the process of coding. Highlighted information was placed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to aid with organizing qualitative data and identifying participant responses.

Once I read data and found language commonalities, I used a constant comparative method to determine patterns for coding data. Through this process, I found recurring ideas and patterns of student misbehaviors and teacher behavior management approaches as well as their significance. Data were coded according to level of discipline offense and intervention, and four themes emerged: student misbehaviors, teacher interventions, challenging behaviors, and the influence of discipline referrals (see Table 2).

I also transcribed participant responses as accurately as I could, including self-talk, pauses, and active listening cues. Doing so helped me to authenticate participant responses and develop an understanding of what they meant. Data that did not reflect common themes or patterns were labeled as discrepant and later discarded. All identifying information was removed to protect participants.

Table 2

Data Analysis Codes and Themes

	Codes	Themes
Research Question	Types of Student Misbehavior	Cell phone use, drug use, disrespectful, fighting, cussing, destruction of property
Research Question	Teacher Interventions Including Office Referrals	Talk to students, assign tutoring, consult a counselor, contact Assistant Principal, give verbal warning
Research Question	Teacher Experiences Managing Student Misbehaviors Including Discipline Referrals	Reminders, treasure box, office referrals, calls home, proximity, seek administrator help
Research Question	The Ramifications of Discipline Referrals	Ineffective, time consuming, does not change behavior, interrupts instruction

Results

I found that teachers are likely to encounter a wide range of misbehaviors which create challenges to the classroom environment. I also found that teachers may use a variety of strategies including discipline referrals to manage the misbehaviors they experience. In this section the RQ is addressed using the themes that emerged as a result of the study.

Theme 1: Types of Student Misbehaviors

During the interviews, seven participants were asked to describe the types of student misbehavior they have experienced in their classrooms. Teachers shared their

experiences and analysis of data led to a wide range of student misbehaviors. Within the range of misbehaviors, saturation was evident as all teachers had experienced and named multiple similar disrespectful behaviors; there was no new thematical data (see Table 3). This range of misbehaviors varied between minor and major behavior issues. Participant PB noted "they kind of fall on what I call a scale of something that is kind of like not that big of a deal to a bigger deal." The magnitude and influences of behaviors listed were described by PD; "it depends on the student the whole semester, depends on the day and depends on the mood."

Table 3

Types of Student Misbehavior

Participant	Observed Behaviors	Most Prevalent Behaviors
PA	talking, no supplies, off task, disengaged, head down, ignoring, cell phone use throwing	Cell phone use
PB	cursing, excessive tardiness, cell phone use, marijuana, destruction of property	Excessive tardiness, cursing
PC	students off task, acting out frustrations when they try and aren't successful; continue poor behaviors in class that they practice at home; talk back, question what administrators say	absenteeism
PD	well mannered, ambitious, angry, depression, stressed, don't care, no fear of consequences, don't want to listen, don't have supplies, don't want to take notes	Don't care, rebellious
PE	disrespect, talking back, refuse to follow direction/instruction, fighting	Disrespect, disregard for authority, talking back

	in class, phone issues, cheating/plagiarizing, cussing	
PF	disrespectful speech, entitlement, cussing, cell phone out, not doing what's asked, students arguing, fighting	Unwillingness to stop talking
PG	fighting, being cussed out, threatened, blatant disrespect, ignoring, sleeping, wearing hoodies	Talking not settling down

According to participants, these misbehaviors can last from seconds to minutes and last an entire class period. PF stated, "a lot of the behaviors are repetitive, and that general non-compliance could last for an entire class period." PG shared "it may just be a day; you know the feelings may be there until they can work through it."

Misbehaviors that last an entire class period posed challenges for the classroom environment including distractions/disruptions, loss of instructional time, and influencing other students to act in a similar manner. Participants reported they often stopped instruction to address student misbehavior. Six of the seven participants shared that the challenges they faced in their classrooms were due to student misbehavior. PG gave the following example "someone else has their phone out and you are telling this one you need to put your phone up and he responds, 'I'm not the only one.' The other students see that person getting away with it, they can be a little confrontational about it." According to PF, having to address misbehaviors "detracts from the time and attention I can give to all the other students, and it "really negatively effects" the entire environment of the classroom. PA stated, "it takes away from the lesson itself cause you're constantly having

to stop and redirect." PC believes misbehaviors "interfere with daily instructional time." PB felt like misbehaviors that happen more regularly really affect learning and teaching and redirecting students' attention is a challenge. PD replied to the question with "it influences others and it depends on the root of what is going on" (see Table 4).

Table 4

Challenges of Student Misbehavior

Participants	Challenges of Student Misbehavior
PA, PC, PF	takes away from the lesson, have to stop constantly
PB, PE, PF	distraction; the biggest challenge is redirecting attention
PC, PB, PD, PE, PF	it causes other students to begin misbehaving, I have to stop instruction to talk to the student who is misbehaving, takes instructional time and energy

Although several behaviors have been experienced by all participants, the misbehavior thought to be most prevalent differed between them. Data showed cell phone use, cussing, absenteeism, disrespect (i.e., disregard for authority and talking back), unwillingness to work, and talking were behaviors thought to be most prevalent. When asked to describe how student misbehavior brings challenges to the classroom environment, PF shared, "minor things happen daily, and major things happen rarely." While 50% of the participants felt interrupting the lesson was a challenge, the other half felt influencing others was a bigger challenge. Student misbehaviors, which interrupt the

lesson, could very well be the ones which influence others indicating little change in the coding of behavior challenges and lends to saturation of data.

I found that there are a multitude of things that could cause inappropriate student behaviors. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, stimuli cause behavior. Four out of seven general education teachers believed outside factors are catalysts for student misbehaviors. PB stated she feels like the way students behave is an expectation issue to knowing what exactly behaving appropriately looks like … "it's an impulsive reaction to something and part of that may be where they are cognitively because of outside factors in their life." PC shared "I just think they haven't been taught or shown what is expected of them;" "I believe that some of those students are mimicking how they live at home." Sometimes student "issues are coming from places teachers aren't able to see and some situations are bad," according to PD. When there is something going on in the home that is wrong or hard for students, they lash out; "my first thoughts always go to parenting" (Participant PF).

According to data analysis 28.5% of participants believed students misbehave because they want or need attention to mask their inability to do the work. One participant responded that they thought, when students misbehave, they need to be removed from the classroom. Overall, there are several variables which influence students' misbehavior. Some students may use behavior as a cover for their lack of understanding or dislike for a particular subject, while others may seek attention or mimic behaviors they observed at home. It is important for teachers to be mindful of potential issues students may be dealing with outside of school and to approach misbehaviors

consistently while holding students accountable for their actions. However, in some cases, removal from the classroom may be necessary.

Theme 2: Teacher Interventions with and Without Office Referrals

I found that although student removal is a form of behavior management, six out of the seven participants interviewed were not in favor of students missing instruction. An English teacher with less than five years of experience was more apt to send students to the office. Each participant shared that they employ a variety of approaches. However, the effectiveness of the approaches varies depending on the student, the behavior, and the situation. When asked to explain the approaches taken to manage student misbehaviors in the classroom, all the interviewees included a form of talking to students. Three of the seven participants: PA, PC, and PF shared they offer frequent gentle reminders of expectations. Two different participants responded they give verbal warnings and another one said he shows his vulnerability. Overall, students are given multiple chances to correct their misbehavior. It is clear that approaches taken by the participants were focused on building relationships with students, setting clear expectations and boundaries, and using reminders and warnings before taking more formal disciplinary action. Several common strategies were shared during interviews including speaking directly to students about their behavior, using guilt or accountability to encourage positive behavior, offering support and resources (such as snacks or water bottles), contacting parents or guardians, and involving other school personnel, when necessary, including the principal.

Although differences were evident in strategies used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors, the participants agreed that fostering positive relationships, focusing on finding solutions, and understanding the underlying reasons for misbehavior is more important. All participants emphasized the importance of remaining calm and controlled in disciplinary situations to avoid power struggles. One teacher felt like students want to see what you are going to do, and two of them replied they would report students to the principal and send them to the office. Teachers building a sense of respect and trust with students was seen as key to preventing discipline problems, as well as being organized and consistent in classroom management practices.

The data collected from the qualitative interviews suggested that the approach of one-on-one conversations and verbal warnings were highly impactful. Teachers, being fair, firm, and consistent are also viewed as impactful; while contacting parents or the principal does not seem to have a significant impact on classroom behavior. Unfortunately, students often are not responsive and continue to misbehave.

When asked 'what do you do when a student is not responsive and continues to behave inappropriately,' two participants responded they do more talking to students (sometimes in the hallway), PB, who builds relationships with students so that "they feel human and important," reported that she does not have the problem of misbehaviors continuing. PF said that "I plan ahead of time to minimize the opportunities for behaviors to happen" and that "it is rare that I'll have a student that that approach does not have any effect on", the social studies teacher felt like students "want to see what you are going to do", and two participants replied they would report the students to the principal resulting

in a discipline referral. However, all participants believed the most effective strategy they have used to manage student misbehaviors is talking to them, building relationships with students.

The data collected suggested that there are several reasons why most students do not respond to redirection initially. Some may push boundaries to see how far they can go before facing consequences, while others struggle in adjusting to different authoritative situations from classroom to classroom. Teachers explained that home life and cultural expectations also affect how students respond to redirection. According to some participants, the prevalence of technology and social media contribute to students' sense of entitlement and belief that they have a second chance to comply with expectations. Additionally, some students may simply have a more stubborn personality that leads them to resist being told what to do.

Theme 3: Challenging Behaviors

PG shared that she gives students verbal warning two or three times "but like I said it depends on the severity of what is going on." PG said:

> I had two students the other day, they got into a little back and forth argument and I told them, I said look, if you're not gonna stop you have to leave my room and one stopped. The other one continued and I'm like okay you have to go to the office and so then I sent him out.

PE stated that "most of the time I give a verbal warning and most of the time that works and if it's a reoccurring issue, maybe it's one of those students who has the same problem, I'll try to talk to them off to the side or outside of the classroom a few times."

"Sometimes, that looks like a phone call to parents once they leave the classroom and then if it just gets really bad, I'll just send them to the principal's office."

PF approached managing misbehaviors by using proximity and gentle reminders. This participant stated that "one of the first things that I learned to do that I always try to do is not argue with a student." "I try to control my own emotions."

If there is an escalating situation, I always try to remove the student from the classroom to the hallway so they can "chill out for a minute, calm down" so that I can talk to them and figure out what is going on. If it is extreme, I will call an administrator.

PD stated "my main approach is to get to know the students and show my vulnerability.

"I try to talk to students and build a relationship with them; I try to get to know them."

I remind students what I expect; I talk to the students about their behavior; I send anonymous notes (to keep students from intercepting them) home. I try to do everything I can before I send a student out of the classroom.

PB's approach was a little different. She said she speaks directly to the students and that there are things that she provides for them.

As much as I ask them to give to me… "I don't feel like that's gonna work if I hadn't given them anything already" so that they respected me. I buy water to give to them; I have stickers; and deodorant. I "set up that kind of mutual respect"

where they understand when they come in that my classroom is a place where they are comfortable.

"I do try to remind them frequently" but I'm not going to waste a lot of time (PA).

Theme 4: Ramifications of Discipline Referrals

When a student is not responsive and continues to behave inappropriately, teachers may escalate their interventions by using discipline referrals. The data collected from the qualitative research interview question – what are your experiences with using discipline referrals and their influence on instruction, highlights several points regarding the use of discipline referrals. Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the use of discipline referrals, saying that they do not yield positive outcomes, and the behaviors of students often do not change. They argued that discipline referrals take time away from instruction and erode their capacity to control the classroom. They noted the students may need to be removed from the classroom immediately, the lack of the consequences stemming from administrative issues affects instruction, leading to more misbehavior in the classroom. The teacher also emphasizes that trust and respect tend to be lost when they write a discipline referral.

According to PG, "it takes time away from instruction." PD felt referrals do not do much. PC shared "I don't see a correlation between writing a disciplinary referral and that making an impact on learning. I think doing things in between have a greater impact on learning." Additional data suggested that discipline referrals have a negative impact on student learning and behavior. While some students may improve their behavior in the immediate aftermath of the referral they may regress to their misbehaviors within a few

days or a week. For many students receiving a referral negatively influences student learning because they are usually removed from the classroom for a period of time. Students may miss instruction and fall behind in their coursework, leading to anxiety and pressure to catch up.

"For me they haven't been effective"; "I don't get positive outcomes out of writing discipline referrals"; and "if I write a discipline referral and they get some type of discipline I don't see the change, I don't see a behavior change"; "when they come back, it's just a repeat of behaviors" (PB). PE said that she does not find discipline referrals to be very effective either. She had this to say about some students "they don't care if they have a discipline referral." PA actually said "I feel like for some that's actually what they want; they want you to put in the referral because a) it gets them out of the class and then b) it's like, oh, okay, just write me up because I wanna go back to ACE" (alternative campus for education).

Moreover, discipline referrals can cause students to become disengaged and disassociated from the classroom when they return. They may put their heads down and refuse to do any work, or they may become actively defiant and disrupt the learning of their classmates. Responses to interview questions suggested students may feel angry and upset about receiving a referral, seeing it as punishment and viewing the teacher as the "bad guy" rather than reflecting on their behavior.

Some teachers in the study tended to give fewer referrals, believing that they could manage minor disruptions without removing the students from the classroom. They also expressed concern that referrals could make students feel like the teacher was not on

their team or did not want to help them learn. However, contrary to others, some teachers believed that referrals could cause students to attend to their behavior and provide an opportunity for them to reflect on what they did wrong. PF felt like writing a discipline referral is her last resort. She stated that she handles everything in her classroom and that if she has to write a discipline referral, it means she cannot manage the extreme or unsafe behavior.

In terms of the effectiveness of referrals as a disciplinary measure, participants expressed they feel frustrated that referrals (often the last resort) do not always result in more severe consequences. Most often the primary response is refocus-counseling. Teachers see this approach as insufficient and do not deter students from repeating problematic behavior. This can cause teachers to become disempowered in their own classrooms, as they lack the broader support from administration needed to manage student behavior effectively. This lack of consequences can lead to more misbehavior and lost instructional time, which can negatively affect the learning experience of all students.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I interviewed seven high school general education teachers and analyzed strategies they used to manage student behaviors with or without using office discipline referrals. I used member checking to determine the accuracy of my data and uncover the meaning it had for participants. Member checking allows participants to examine and determine if the transcripts of their responses accurately represent their input (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Within several days after conducting the interviews, I provided participants an opportunity to review my transcription of their interview data, via e-mail,

to ensure I had accurately captured the essence of their experiences. Textual data collected from interviews based on teachers' experiences weighed against the literature review has verified validity.

Consistency in the data collected versus the result of the findings determined reliability. Reliability is when research findings repeat themselves (Hatch, 2002, 2023). It determines whether the data is trustworthy and makes sense regardless of how it is analyzed and how often it is analyzed. Data were analyzed by the organization of the information collected, coded based on patterns that emerged within the data, and categorized by themes. Keeping a research log of this process of data analysis allowed me to identify patterns formed from the data collected and to determine consistency for dependability. Information recorded in the researcher's log included time and dates of interviews with each coded participant. The log also had information that tracked my actions (as they pertain to the interview process) as the interviewer and detailed who, what, and when.

Data collected is trustworthy. I established the truthfulness of research findings to be an accurate representation of data sources. Validity and reliability rest on trustworthiness (Seale, 1999). I addressed four types of research findings to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

As the researcher, I set up the credibility of my research. According to Golafshani (2003), the ability and effort of the researcher determines the credibility of qualitative research. Credibility decides to what degree the experiences and perceptions of

participants are represented and how the findings of a study relate to reality (Stahl and King, 2020; Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018).

Personal experiences did not result in the researcher attaching personal biases to the data (Burkholder et al., 2016). I collected data via semi-structured interviews with each participant who volunteered to be a part of my study. Member checking was used to double-check the trustworthiness of participants' responses to the interview questions by allowing each participant to review and confirm my records of their experiences (Burkholder et al., 2016). Data saturation was established to enhance the credibility of my research study. Data saturation occurs when there is no evidence of new thematical data with additional participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018).

Transferability

External validity is termed transferability in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as a catalyst for expanding the understanding of one research study to other situations. Without transferability there are limitations to an original study. As the researcher, I collected descriptive data during the semi-structured interviews. I explained my research process in detail so readers could decide the truthfulness of the research findings (Anney, 2014). Data collected has been decided trustworthy and dependable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability is defined as the root of trustworthiness by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Findings were consistent within the study and ensured quality information to support understanding by peer reviewers (Burkholder et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018). Dependability in this study was set up by a

coding system that led to identifying themes to aid in synthesizing results (Burkholder et

al., 2016; Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018). A researcher log with detailed data

collection actions supported the quest to establish dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is listed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as one of several essential

criteria for quality. The authors define confirmability as a description of things as they

are, objective reality. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have determined confirmability to be a

verification of unbiased research. The perspectives of participants have been reported

without the influence of my experiences or assumptions (Burkholder et al., 2016). To

ensure my biases did not influence this qualitative research, I established confirmability

via member checking and a researcher log by recording details of my data collection, data

analysis, and my rationale for how I coded the information.

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Summary

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In Chapter 4, I described the setting and participant demographics, outlined data

collection steps, explained the data analysis process, and reported results of the study.

Data analysis included four major themes: types of student misbehaviors, teacher

interventions, challenging behaviors, and the ramification of discipline referrals. Results

showed participants believed there were multiple causes for student misbehaviors,

personal approaches to managing student behaviors were favored over discipline

referrals, and while discipline referrals can be a necessary part of managing student

behavior, they must be used in conjunction with other approaches that more directly

address root causes of problematic behaviors. Additionally, more nuanced approaches to managing student behavior may be necessary, and greater support from administration is needed to ensure all students have access. In Chapter 5, I interpret findings, report limitations, offer recommendations based on data, and discuss implications for positive social change and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that were used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors. I conducted one-on-one semi-structured open-ended interviews with seven participants. Analysis of data from interviews led to four themes: types of student misbehaviors, teacher interventions with and without discipline referrals, challenging disruptive behaviors in the classroom environment, and ramifications of discipline referrals. In this chapter, I interpret findings supported by the conceptual framework and literature review. I also report limitations, offer recommendations for future research based on data, discuss implications for positive social change, and provide a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, I used the conceptual framework and literature review to support the findings of this study. The four major themes reflect my interpretation of participant responses aligned with supporting evidence.

Theme 1: Types of Student Misbehaviors

According to participants, students exhibited a variety of negative behaviors. Those negative behaviors included talking, being off-task, having their heads down, throwing items, destruction of property, acting out frustration, anger, fighting, marijuana use before class, and sleeping. Participants named the most prevalent misbehaviors as profanity, improper cell phone use, disrespectful speech, absenteeism, and excessive

tardiness (see Table 3). According to participants, these behaviors could last from a few minutes to a whole day depending on the student and situation.

Reasons why students misbehave in the classroom include outside factors in their lives, academic challenges, and student cognition (Bandura, 1971, 1986b; Vinney, 2021). Information gathered from interviews indicated school and home expectations did not match. Participants alluded to the idea that teachers need to look at different cultural perspectives. Many students took care of themselves most of the time at home and responded to situations with what they thought was right or how they acted away from school. Participants claimed students had not been taught how to behave in school or what was expected of them. They said some parents were too strict, causing students to lash out while at school, or they were not strict enough and allowed students to get away with disrespectful behavior at home. Behavior problems that students displayed stemmed from several sources, including home (Gordon & Fefer, 2019; Zembylas, 2020). Participants commented respectful communication skills have not been developed, and personal boundaries have not been set. For example, PF commented students behaved as though they did not know the difference between private and public spaces. Students repeatedly used profanity in class, and when corrected, they did not seem to understand that that was not appropriate speech at school.

Students had multiple authoritative figures with conflicting rules and social expectations at home and school to satisfy throughout the school day. Participants exercised different management strategies and levels of tolerance. How teachers respond to student behaviors influences behavioral outcomes (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Gage et al.,

2018). PE shared that her approach to managing student behaviors could have been the reason misbehaviors existed in her classroom. One reason students misbehaved was to see what their teachers would do. Participants believed students behaved with a sense of entitlement. They turned assignments in late, pushed boundaries, and allowed their attitudes to determine their efforts. Students who did not respond to initial redirection showed a lack of interest in complying with rules and continued to misbehave. Blazar and Kraft (2017) claimed juggling expectations of different people and not knowing how to respond appropriately in various situations influenced student misbehavior.

Theme 2: Teacher Interventions with and Without Office Referrals

Participants used verbal and nonverbal strategies to influence student achievement. Verbal strategies included frequent reminders, verbal warnings, directives, and conversations. All participants shared those types of direct interactions with students settled most classroom misbehaviors. Nonverbal strategies included a tap on the desk, proximity checks, ignoring, providing tangible items, notes for parents, and discipline referrals. The most effective strategies were communication, structure, modeling expectations, and praise; however, student trips to the principal's office were warranted when these interactions did not produce behavior changes.

One approach shared by multiple participants was to establish mutual respect so students felt welcomed and comfortable in the classroom. Socialization generated in the classroom acts as a stimulus that influences behavior (Bandura & Walters, 1977; Brackett et al., 2019). As participants shared their interactions with students in the classroom, they reflected on how they controlled their emotions to avoid arguments with students. When

situations escalated, participants took time to calm down before talking to students to prevent verbal altercations. Another strategy used by teachers was parent, student, and teacher conferences. Some teachers have called parents to conference with them and students to correct behaviors. Depending on teachers' knowledge, experience, and situations, some consequences to student behaviors are more effectual than others.

Several participants said they paused before reacting to students who were misbehaving as it may be a cry for attention. Teachers' ability to self-reflect and consciously change what they did in the classroom led to more effective communication, relationships, and practice. By communicating directly with students after class and anonymously with their parents outside the instructional arena, participants were able to avoid disrupting the learning environment. Hussain (2017) found that strategies, challenges, and experiences of teachers are principal factors in classroom management which enhance student learning.

Another strategy used by teachers to manage student behaviors was to interact with them positively. Brackett et al. (2019) found emotions and interactions matter for learning and decision-making. Positive interactions used by high school general education teachers included ignoring, building positive relationships, and managing student behaviors. Participants found ignoring was a positive strategy for managing some behaviors. Ignoring prevented wasting time but did not correct misbehaviors. Other participants found establishing rules, boundaries, and procedures up front, as well as being firm and consistent were more positive management strategies.

Theme 3: Challenging Behaviors

When asked to describe how student misbehavior was challenging, participants

shared misbehaviors were distracting and negatively affected the classroom environment.

Misbehavior distracted students and teachers; they interrupted the lesson; caused a loss of

instructional time; and influenced other students (see Table 4). PF shared that

misbehavior interfered with opportunities to interact with other students. According to

PA, a 30-minute lesson could take 15 to 20 minutes longer because he constantly had to

stop to redirect student behavior.

Student behaviors influenced the classroom environment and created

instructional, academic, and social challenges. According to participants, students who

did not respond to initial redirection expended instructional time when teachers had to

stop instruction to address misbehavior. One participant shared that she could easily

spend 30 minutes outside in the hallway attending to student behavior. Any reciprocated

social situation between students and teachers is reflective of the social cognitive theory

(Bandura, 2005). Time away from teaching meant time away from student learning.

Academic challenges occurred when misbehavior resulted in students being written up

and sent to the principal's office with a discipline referral. Upon returning to the

classroom, students displayed more obstinate and stubborn behavior including refusing to

complete assignments. For students who misbehaved and chose not to work, their grades

dropped.

Responses given by participants in this study suggested they believed their

strategies were effective but only for a short while. PA described misbehavior as

'cyclical.' For example, one student, who generally participated in lessons, would put his head down for one or two days and not do any work; then he would later decide to participate again after the teacher consistently encouraged him to do so. Frequently reminding students of expectations, consistency, and routine are essential to managing student behavior (Hussain, 2017; Polirstok, 2015). PC shared students complied with classroom rules for a couple of days after she talked to them about their behavior and did not write a discipline referral. The idea of teaching students how to behave by responding proactively, having high expectations, and helping students develop a growth mindset is important to include in behavior management practices (Hussain, 2017; Polirstok, 2015).

Theme 4: Ramifications of Discipline Referrals

Student behavior, instruction, and student learning were all influenced by the issuance of discipline referrals. Four teachers found discipline referrals influential; however, the remaining participants found them ineffective or had a limited impact on student behavior. Based on participant responses, the level of influence a referral had depended on when the teacher wrote it and what was going on. As reflected data, discipline referrals had pervasive negative effects on student learning and behavior (Cetinkaya & Kocyigit, 2020).

Participants found discipline referrals very seldom changed students' behavior; they did, however, increase behaviors. In some instances, behaviors became worse and a loss of trust and respect of students toward teachers occurred. Some students, who received discipline referrals returned to class within minutes. Others were assigned in-school suspension, and returned to class after three days. As a result, using discipline

referrals and removing students from the learning environment did not correlate with making an impact on learning (Billingsley et al., 2018; Kwok, 2018). According to PB, writing discipline referrals eroded the capacity to control the classroom and caused lost instructional time when teachers stopped their lessons to do so. PE, PA, PC, and PD shared they did not stop instruction to write a discipline referral; instead, they waited until after class.

Studies have shown that the management of student behavior in high school has become punitive; students are sent out of the classroom with discipline referrals (Gonzalez et al., 2019; Menikdiwela, 2020; Paramita et al., 2020). According to PE, discipline referrals gave students what they wanted – to get out of class and did not address the underlying problem; therefore, it did not influence student behavior (Gonzalez et al., 2019). Participants shared that discipline referrals negatively influenced student behavior as they led to an interruption of learning and caused students to miss class and assignments. Discipline referrals also interrupted instruction and brought attention to unwanted behavior. Participants shared that some students did not feel receiving a discipline referral was a real consequence and did not care if they received one.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative research study was designed to gain an understanding of high school general education teachers' approaches to managing student misbehavior. Limitations to this study included researcher bias, teacher honesty, data collection method, and target sample size. As the primary researcher in this study and my

familiarity with managing student behaviors, the research could have been influenced. However, during the recorded semi-structured interviews, I offered no suggestions of managing student behaviors.

Teacher honesty is also a limitation of this current study. Participants could have shown bias in their responses to mask their actual approaches to behavior management. However, participant honesty is likely as each shared in detail their processes for managing student behavior, conferencing with students and other staff, and writing or choosing not to write discipline referrals.

Data collection may have limited the results of my study. Identifying strategies, approaches, and experiences of high school general education teachers is valuable in knowing what takes place in the classroom from a teachers' perspective. What is even more important is knowing what supports teachers have had to increase their scholarship and influence their efficacy in managing student behavior. There were no data collected pertaining to teacher training or professional development opportunities. By not including an interview question related to professional development or training on managing behaviors minimized data collection supporting approaches the participants took to manage student behaviors in the classroom.

Another limitation to this study is the sample size. The targeted research sample was 10; however, only seven high school general education teachers volunteered to participate. Although the target participant number was not met, saturation was evident within the data collected from PF and PG.

Recommendations for Further Research

Additional research is needed to better understand the strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals used by high school general education teachers. A gap in the research remains between teachers' reliance on disciplinary referrals when managing student misbehavior and teachers whose discipline measures do not include discipline referrals within the classroom (Kwok, 2018). Some areas for future research could be: additional research that identifies what participants do to manage student behaviors with and without discipline referrals, the strategies or approaches to managing student misbehavior that high school teachers have learned from professional development and training, and teachers' perceptions of the difference between managing student behaviors before receiving professional development, after receiving professional development and applying learned strategies. The recommendations for further research into the training and or professional development participants have had on managing student misbehavior were noted by other researchers. Teachers need adequate training to gain knowledge and skills to provide quality education that meets the needs of diverse students (Capangpangan et al., 2023; Ogba et al., 2020; Yeo et al., 2016). Paramita et al. (2020) asserted teacher participation in professional learning increases the likelihood that teachers would be more proactive than reactive. Teacher training on how to reduce or prevent challenging behavior benefits instruction and student achievement (Flower et al., 2017). The findings from this study support the need for additional research into the training teachers have had to manage student misbehaviors.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The findings from this basic qualitative study have implications of positive social change for student learning and success. One implication of the findings from this study was that it is important for teachers to understand student behavior to better serve them. Another implication of the findings from this study is the idea that positive teacher-student relationships are important. Participants in this study shared that building relationships with students create mutual respect. Although discipline referrals have been used to manage and minimize student misbehaviors, they are only used as a last resort when all other strategies have failed. Teachers, students, and administrators can benefit from the findings of this study. As teachers shared their strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to managing student misbehaviors, they elaborated on positive approaches and expressed concern using discipline referrals. Stakeholders can focus on equipping teachers with proactive vs. reactive classroom management practices including PBIS. Helping stakeholders understand how high school general education teachers' strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to managing student misbehavior influence student learning and ultimately their academic success could influence positive social change.

Conclusion

Classroom management strategies are an integral part of students not being sent out of the classroom to the assistant principal's office. Research has demonstrated that there are alternative pathways to classroom discipline other than office discipline referrals (Kwok, 2018). There is a gap in the research between teachers' reliance on

discipline referrals when managing student misbehaviors and teachers whose discipline measures do not include discipline referrals within the classroom. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals to manage student misbehaviors used by high school general education teachers.

Although there has been research on the correlation of classroom management and student success (Gage et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2018), teacher perceptions and awareness of their classroom management skills (Kwok, 2018; Ozen & Yildirim, 2020; Paramita et al., 2020; Zembylas, 2020), and the causes of student misbehaviors (Gordon & Fefer, 2019; Nadernejad et al., 2020; Paramita et al., 2020), there are few studies which only identify what teachers actually do in the classroom to manage student misbehaviors. This study extends research on classroom management practices that support student success by keeping them in the classroom. Approaches used by high school general education teachers to manage student misbehaviors without the use of discipline referrals and challenges teachers experienced in the classroom with managing student misbehaviors were identified within the findings.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to share your experiences with managing students' misbehaviors. With your permission, during the interview, I will take notes and use an audio recording mechanism to capture the essence of your responses. If you object to having your responses audio recorded, communicate this with me now and I will only take written notes. The interview should not take more than 60 minutes of your time. This qualitative study seeks to explore strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that high school general education teachers use to manage student misbehaviors. I will ask open-ended questions which will allow you to add any information you deem important to the topic of conversation. When the transcription of the recording is complete, I will send you a copy via e-mail to make any necessary corrections and to give approval to move forward. All names in this research study will be kept confidential. All data will be stored on a flash drive for several years before being destroyed and only accessed via my personal computer.

Research Question - What are the strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to discipline referrals that high school general education teachers use to manage student misbehaviors?

Proposed Questions

1. Describe the types of student misbehavior you have experienced in your classroom.

   Probes:

      a. What does that kind of behavior look like?

b. How long do these types of behavior last?

c. How often does the behavior occur?

2. Describe how student misbehavior brings challenges to the classroom environment.

Probes:

a. What are your thoughts concerning students who behave inappropriately?

b. Describe behavioral challenges that are most prevalent in your classroom.

c. When does the misbehavior occur?

3. Explain the approaches you take to manage student behavior in your classroom.

Probes:

a. Share, with me, the process you use to administer _____.

b. How impactful is this approach on student behavior?

c. Why do you believe _____ were or were not impactful?

4. What do you do when a student is not responsive and continues to behave inappropriately?

Probes:

a. Which approaches and strategies have you found to be the most effective?

b. How much instruction time is lost when managing student behavior?

c. Why do you think some students do not respond to redirection initially?

5. Describe your experiences with using discipline referrals and their influence on instruction.

Probes:

a. What is the process for issuing a discipline referral?

b. What influence did receiving a discipline referral have on student behavior?

c. How do discipline referrals impact student learning?

Do you have any final thoughts or is there anything else you would like to share

regarding your strategies, challenges, experiences, and approaches to managing student

misbehaviors?

I would like to thank you for your time and cooperation.