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Examining School to Home Transference of Behavioral Interventions Provided to Elementary Students with Autism

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Andre L. Patterson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Examining School to Home Transference of Behavioral Interventions Provided to

Elementary Students with Autism

by

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Special Education

Walden University

August 2024

Abstract

Parent–teacher collaboration is crucial for optimizing outcomes for students with autism spectrum disorder (SWAs). This qualitative study addressed perceptions among parents of elementary-aged SWAs regarding the lack of transfer of school-based behavioral skills to the home environment. Parental perceptions of the transfer of behavioral interventions, including applied behavior analysis (ABA), from school to home for SWAs aged 6–12 years were explored. Using a basic qualitative methodology, data were gathered using semi structured in-depth interviews of eight participants with elementary aged children with autism: Member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation provided validation. Two major themes emerged: (a) the importance of regular communication between home and school and (b) the challenges of replicating a structured environment at home. Finally, a project in the form of a Professional Development Plan was developed with the aim of reaching educators. The findings have the potential to foster improved collaboration between parents and teachers, dispel misconceptions about SWAs in special education, and empower parents by validating their experiences and perspectives, leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to those who pushed me to pursue it and those who supported me along the way, Dr. Sandra Jones and Anna Patterson.

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Table of Contents

Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale	3
Definition of Terms.....	6
Significance of the Study	6
Research Question	8
Review of Literature	9
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Review of the Broader Problem.....	12
Implications.....	28
Summary	29
Section 2: The Methodology.....	31
Qualitative Research Design and Approach	31
Participants.....	33
Selection of Participants	33
Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants.....	35
Data Collection	37
Data Analysis	38
Data Analysis Methods.....	38
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	40
Data Gathering.....	44
Data Collection	45

Identified Emerging Themes Relevant to the Research Question	46
Discrepant Cases	59
Summary	61
Project Deliverable.....	64
Section 3: The Project.....	64
Introduction.....	64
Rationale	65
Review of the Literature	66
Theoretical and Methodological Foundations	68
Theory and Research Supporting the Project.....	69
Project Description.....	71
Day 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework.....	72
Day 2: Active Engagement and Collaborative Learning	72
Day 3: Implementation and Evaluation	73
Discussion.....	73
Project Evaluation Plan.....	74
Project Implications	75
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	78
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	78
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	80
Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change	82
Reflection on the Importance of the Work	83
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	84

Conclusion	86
References.....	87
Appendix A: The Project	105
Appendix B: Study Participant Recruitment.....	119
Appendix C: Guided Questions	115

Section 1: The Problem

The transfer of behavioral skills of students with Autism (SWA) has become an important subject of research because of the challenges faced by SWA in navigating social interactions and adapting to various environments. In this study, I explored the transfer of behavioral skills for SWA outside of the school environment. By examining the factors influencing skill transfer and exploring effective strategies, I aimed to contribute to the enhancement of support systems for SWA, ultimately fostering their success and inclusion in society. Section 1 includes the local problem of inconsistent transference of behavioral skills from school to home among SWA and recent research providing insights into the challenges encountered when transferring behavioral skills. The latter part of this section is a comprehensive review of both historical and current literature related to skill transfer for SWA.

The Local Problem

The local issue in need of examination in a public county school system in the southeastern United States was that behavioral interventions, such as applied behavior analysis (ABA), did not result in successful behavioral skills transference from school to home for SWA. Behavioral skills transference includes pragmatics, social skills, and replacement behaviors that replace harmful or maladaptive behaviors among SWA (Hillier et al., 2021). This study involved examination of parental perceptions of the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home and other settings.

Lack of communication skills and pragmatics can hinder success in classrooms inclusive of SWAs (Azad et al., 2018). Interventions such as ABA have proven effective

for improving communication and behavioral skills for SWAs (Leaf et al., 2022). ABA practices include shaping, discrete trial teaching, behavioral skills training, group instruction, and incidental teaching (Leaf et al., 2022). However, each behavior analytic principle requires consistent teaching to be effective (Leaf et al., 2022). The use of ABA for SWAs falls under the provisions of the Free and Appropriate Public Education Act as defined by the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (2004). ABA must be provided as an effective intervention if deemed appropriate to a student's education by the student's individualized education program team. Special education must be provided as a service by every public local education agency under the Americans With Disabilities Act (1990).

The neurodevelopmental condition, ASD, is characterized by sensory activities, repetitive actions, restricted high-focused interests, and deficits in social communication (Lord et al., 2020). Although the disorder occurs on a continuum, interventions for attention, language, and social engagement can help SWAs to minimize interfering and self-injurious behaviors (Lord et al., 2020). In the school district where parents were interviewed, 2.3% of students were eligible for ASD interventions in 2022, according to the state department of education (GA DOE, 2022). Examining the parental perceptions of ABA skill school to home transfer was thus crucial to enabling positive outcomes for SWAs. In the school system studied, 16.5% of the 17,000 elementary students were classified as having disabilities in 2022. Comparison with the national average indicated a disproportionate number of students were classified as having disabilities, (GA DOE, 2022).

Rationale

I examined how parents of SWAs in a county school system in the southeastern United States perceived ABA skill transfer from school to home. Researchers have found that parents who were actively involved in collaborative efforts with their children's performance felt more comfortable with the education system (Buren et al., 2022) Snell-Rood et al. (2020) reported that educators had to implement special education services faithfully to ensure that all SWAs had opportunities to succeed. An examination of parental perceptions of ABA school to home transfer of skills was warranted because of a gap in the literature.

According to the 2021–2022 annual parent satisfaction survey of students with disabilities and the school improvement plan of the studied county school system in the southeastern United States, parents of elementary SWAs reported that teacher-implemented ABA initiatives resulted in a lack of transfer of skills to the home environment for 57% of SWAs. According to the findings of a study conducted by the school system, the disparity in ABA transfer from classroom to home had been continuously documented from 2016 through the school year ending in 2019 (GA DOE, 2022). The results of the survey also indicated lack of transferability of ABA skills meant to enhance communication and social skills in all contexts.

An examination from the parental perspective of the transfer of ABA skills from school to home in SWAs has historically been lacking in the literature (Buren et al., 2022). Buren et al. (2022) hypothesized that teachers could implement behavior interventions that transfer from school to home for SWAs more effectively when they

obtained and examined parental perspectives. However, this often was not the case (Buren et al., 2022). Buren et al. further reported that data from parents could be constructive for determining next steps and addressing school solutions relative to transferring SWA-appropriate behavior skills from school to home. This study was conducted within a specific local county in which the problem of lack of transference of behavioral skills is severe enough to warrant further investigation and intervention. The findings underscored the significance of parental involvement in the process of transferring behavioral skills from school to home settings and highlighted the potential for collaboration between educators and parents to develop effective strategies. This localized study not only shed light on the challenges faced within the community, but also provided valuable insights into the potential for improvement and intervention.

Each parent interview conducted during this study provided insight into SWAs' behaviors beyond the school environment. This provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the transfer of behavioral skills. These insights highlighted the potential factors influencing the transfer of behavioral skills. Application of the findings of this study may enhance the transfer of behavioral competencies in the elementary school setting so that SWAs can display improved behavioral, social, and communicative functioning. By bridging the gap between school and home environments, educators and parents can collaborate more effectively to tailor interventions and support strategies that facilitate meaningful progress for SWA in various settings.

Researchers have shown that ABA is a research-based technique that generates positive results (Azad et al., 2018). Since its inception, implementation of ABA has emphasized safety and ethics because of its application to vulnerable populations of children (Nicholson et al., 2021). Characterizing such ethics-first implementation has been the use of teacher-friendly, short, and easy sessions that rely on significant verbal praise to SWAs to reduce interfering and self-injurious behaviors (Nicholson et al., 2021). This has required understanding of the proper supports that can help transfer of social skills outside the classroom. The results of this study may help leaders of local authorities make decisions about the transferability of behavioral competencies taught.

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act's (2004) fundamental principle of parents participating actively in their children's education has served as a foundation for the emphasis on parents as team members in the education process (Florian, 2007). Parents described the local problem of the studied school system as ineffective in promoting the transfer of behavior skills learned at school to home. At the local level, parents reported that their children's training in ABA skills did not meet the threshold for transfer from school to home. Parents did not view their SWAs as making adequate social, communicative, and behavioral progress.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study consisted of parental perceptions of school to home transfer of ABA skills of SWAs at the elementary level. Parental perceptions of school to home transfer of ABA skills corresponded to a localized problem and had received limited attention in existing literature (Buren et al., 2022). The findings

of this study may find use in enhancement of the transfer of behavioral competencies taught in the classroom from school to home.

Definition of Terms

Applied behavior analysis (ABA): ABA consists of operant conditioning procedures intended to reduce interfering social behaviors that cause harm (Leaf et al., 2022).

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD): ASD is a neurodevelopmental disability characterized by atypical social communication, atypical sensory processing, and patterned, repetitive actions (Savage & AFIRM Team, 2017).

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The IDEA (2004) guarantees an individualized education with a variety of provisions and procedural safeguards for students with disabilities (U.S. Congress, 2004).

Students with Autism: SWAs are students with autism eligibilities receiving special education services in the school setting.

Transfer: The ability to demonstrate learned skills in different settings and in a variety of different contexts (Moraes et al., 2022).

Significance of the Study

At the elementary level nationwide, 1 in 44 students met the eligibility requirements for ASD interventions (Sam et al., 2021). The number of SWAs registered in the school setting has been increasing (Sam et al., 2021). Hence, it has become necessary to develop a deeper awareness of potential local obstacles to the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home if SWAs are to participate in family, community,

and future work settings through social engagement. SWA provided with the resources needed to excel socially and at an early age can successfully take part in regional community programs and enter the workforce (Sam et al., 2021).

Roberts and Webster (2020) described the academic and social outcomes of SWAs as inferior to those of their nondisabled peers. ABA research data have consistently indicated that intervention with ABA improves social outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities, including ASD (Leaf et al., 2022). A prominent issue within the studied county school system that impeded successful intervention with ABA was the county's overuse of noncertified staff members (Critchfield & Reed, 2017). The school system consisted of rural and urban high-needs areas and the faculty were made up of primarily noncertified teachers who did not have backgrounds or formal education in special education (Sindelar et al., 2018). Paraprofessionals in ASD classrooms were not required to have certification in ABA practices, despite research demonstrating that ABA improves behaviors necessary for social learning (Leaf et al., 2022).

The aim of the ABA intervention programs is to reinforce functional alternative behaviors to reduce interfering behavior to an acceptable frequency (Savage & AFIRM Team, 2017). To achieve this goal, parents of SWAs must provide frank input on school to home transfer (Azad et al., 2021). According to the state department of education, parents of elementary SWAs in the studied school system reported that ABA interventions implemented by teachers typically had little to no transfer to home.

Unsuccessful skill transfer impacted meaningful social learning students required to participate successfully in inclusive environments (Leaf et al., 2022).

In the studied school system, collaboration and feedback addressed the complex and unique needs of SWAs so that every SWA could receive a free and appropriate public education using the intervention-based program deemed most appropriate for them. However, parental feedback suggested that students were not receiving interventions in a manner that successfully promoted transfer of behavioral skills. This parental perspective of skills transfer drove the research I conducted, and this perspective contributed to the significance of the study. Based on the results of the study, I offered guidance regarding enhancement of SWAs' transfer of behavioral skills from school to home. I also hoped that by conducting the study I would raise awareness of the need for improved communication between elementary teachers and parents, a pivotal component of SWAs' transfer of ABA skills from school to home.

Research Question

I examined how parents of SWAs in a county school system in the southeastern United States perceived the transfer of ABA skills from school to home. Information on the following matters guided the study: perceptions of parents of elementary SWAs regarding the transfer of behavioral skills beyond the school environment; collaboration among educators at the elementary level and parents of SWAs to promote and improve school to home transfer of behavioral skills taught to SWAs; factors contributing to the school to home transfer of behavioral skills taught at school; potential barriers to this

transfer; how behavioral skills manifested outside school; and the effectiveness of ABA for enhancing communication skills for SWAs.

The consideration of these components led to the research question that guided the study: How do parents of elementary-aged children with autism (SWA) view the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home? In reviewing the literature, I found there was a notable lack of research on how these interventions transferred to the home environment. This gap was significant because the success of behavioral strategies often hinges on consistency across different environments, including home and school and even fewer research derived from the perspective and perceptions of parents as equal partners in the learning process for SWA.

Review of Literature

Conceptual Framework

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides the conceptual framework for this study, which examines the perceptions of parents of elementary-aged students with Autism (SWA) regarding the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home. For these students, who require substantial support, the strain of managing their needs can impact their families. Parents often face unique challenges which can be isolating and hinder their social interactions and support networks. The study leverages Maslow's theory to understand how parents navigate these challenges and the impact of their children's needs on their ability to fulfill their own. By applying Maslow's hierarchy, I aimed to uncover the motivational factors that drive parental engagement and support.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs formed the conceptual framework for this study of the perceptions of parents of elementary-aged SWAs regarding the transfer of social skills from school to home. Learning social skills is fundamental to the overall development of SWAs, but the significant support these students require can take a toll on their parents (Leaf et al., 2022). Reactions to, or internalizations of, the unconventional behaviors of SWAs, such as sensory meltdowns and head banging, are therefore significant to the overall experience of facilitating school to home transfer. As revealed by Roberts and Webster (2020), parents of SWAs often report that their children experience worse posteducational outcomes than their nondisabled peers. However, with adequate resources and support, parents can play a pivotal role in fostering their children's social achievement, thereby perhaps promoting growth and educational attainment. Relevant to the context of this study, parents of SWAs also reported deprivation with respect to their social circles and support because of the significant needs of their children, further underscoring the challenges they face.

To understand these dynamics, Maslow's hierarchy of needs was applied to serve as a guiding framework to shed light on the motivational factors that influence parental experiences. Maslow's hierarchy (1943), introduced by Maslow (1943), includes five tiers of human needs, with each tier but the first building on the foundation of the preceding one. The first tier consists of physiological needs, including basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, and sleep. These needs form the bedrock of the hierarchy because they are essential for survival and well-being. Once an individual's physiological needs are met, they ascend to the second tier, which encompasses safety and security

needs. These needs entail desire for stability, protection from harm, and a sense of order in the environment. Within the context of parents of SWAs, meeting physiological and safety needs may involve ensuring the SWAs have access to appropriate health care, safe living conditions, and a supportive learning environment.

The third tier of Maslow's hierarchy consists of social needs, which encompass desire for belongingness, love, and interpersonal relationships. Parents of SWAs often grapple with social isolation and limited support networks because of the demands of caregiving and the unique challenges associated with raising a child with special needs. Participants reported that fulfilling social needs involved seeking out support groups, connecting with other parents facing similar circumstances, and fostering meaningful relationships within their communities. By addressing social needs, participants mitigated feelings of loneliness and found solidarity in their shared experiences with other parents of SWAs.

The fourth tier encompasses esteem needs, corresponding to desire for self-esteem, recognition, and respect from others. Parents of SWAs may struggle with feelings of inadequacy, guilt, or stigma associated with their children's diagnoses, leading to challenges with respect to self-esteem and self-worth. Societal attitudes toward, and perceptions of, individuals with disabilities can further exacerbate these feelings, making it crucial for parents to receive validation of, support for, and acknowledgment of their efforts. By addressing esteem needs, participants could cultivate a sense of confidence and empowerment that enabled them to advocate effectively for their children's needs and rights.

At the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs lies the fifth tier, self-actualization, representing an individual's realization of their full potential and pursuit of personal growth and fulfillment. Parents of SWAs have reported that self-actualization involves finding meaning and purpose in their caregiving role, advocating for systemic change within educational and societal structures, and fostering a sense of hope and optimism for their children's futures. By embracing self-actualization, parents can address the challenges and limitations imposed by their circumstances and strive for strong advocacy.

In summary, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of motivations and experiences shaping parental perceptions and behaviors within the context of raising a SWA. By recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of parents at each tier of the hierarchy, educators and stakeholders can better support and empower parents as they nurture and advocate for their children. Through an approach informed by Maslow's hierarchy, I aimed to shed light on the challenges and opportunities inherent in facilitating the school to home transfer of behavioral skills for SWAs and thus to improve collaboration and support within the community.

Review of the Broader Problem

A systematic search for literature regarding parents' perceptions of school to home transfer of behavioral competencies among SWAs was a critical element of the review process. This search involved systematically identifying studies in various databases, guided by the research question. The online resources used included search

engines, such as Google Scholar, and the Walden University Library, which included electronic databases of original published journal articles. The search terms applied were literature review involved the following search terms: *Autism Spectrum Disorder, ABA procedures, Applied Behavior Analysis, Students with Autism, Elementary Autism, Autism behaviors, transference, maladaptive behaviors, SWD, perception of special education parents, changes in autism behavior, and school to home behavior.*

The literature search occurred mainly via the internet, which has become a gateway to the maze of existing literature, including that regarding the various topics that inform ASD and special education. The methods implemented included electronic search of databases and journals, citation tracking, application of personal knowledge obtained from the academic system, and evaluation of various existing theories, standards, and discoveries.

The review of existing literature yielded the following themes relevant to parental perceptions of transfer of ABA skills among SWAs: (a) lack of teacher knowledge of skills transfer among SWAs (Hillier et al., 2021; Seo et al., 2022; Saigh & Bagadood, 2022); (b) lack of adequate teacher–parent communication (Azad et al., 2018, 2022; Kurth et al., 2020); and (c) absence of home-based parental reinforcement activities and resources (Azad et al., 2021; de Korte et al., 2022; Schuck et al., 2022; Syeda & Bruck, 2022). Collectively, these themes characterized overall parental perceptions of dissatisfaction with ABA skills programs provided by school districts. The literature also indicated that parental perceptions led to erosion of teacher–parent communication over time.

Lack of Teacher Knowledge and Skills Transfer

Researchers investigating the nature of ASD have discovered that those with ASD have trouble with visual communication, expressing their emotions, social interactions, and understanding other people's feelings. SWAs also demonstrate difficulty conversing, delays in language development, lack of speech development, and failure to understand language (Hillier et al., 2021; Saigh & Bagadood, 2022). People with ASD may also have sensory responses that are higher or lower than typical and exhibit limited stereotypical and routine behaviors (Azad et al., 2022). Behavioral interventions, including ABA, are crucial for addressing atypical language, cognition, and social behavior (Lundström et al., 2022). A growing number of children diagnosed with ASD have been joining mainstream classes; ABA has thus been becoming a critical tool because it involves the application of education and learning theories to achieve desired behaviors. Educators have used ABA to help SWAs improve social skills, modify behaviors, and improve life quality for decades (Saigh & Bagadood, 2022).

Axelrod and Santagata (2021) argued that more teachers should adopt behavioral learning mechanisms based on each specific situation, because application of ABA depends on individual needs. A growing number of parents have requested that special and general education teachers adopt ABA as a classroom instruction tool (Axelrod & Santagata, 2021). Teachers have already been applying various ABA strategies, such as reinforcement to increase desired behaviors in students along with punishment, exclusion, extinction, and overcorrection to minimize unwanted behaviors (Axelrod & Santagata, 2021). Teachers have also been using strategies such as repetition and consolidation to

establish new behaviors (Axelrod & Santagata, 2021). With the increasing number of SWAs in classrooms, the importance of teachers' knowledge of ASD and ABA skills has been growing. Teachers working with SWAs require proper knowledge and skills demanded by their task, including in-depth knowledge of ASD, evidence-based interventions, and their application to help SWAs (Saigh & Bagadood, 2022).

Strategies to Promote Effective Education. Specific approaches to ABA for SWAs require teachers to have expertise they can gain through effective training, which allows them to leverage ABA strategies to promote effective education (de Korte et al., 2022). When de Korte et al. (2022) studied pivotal response training among teachers of elementary-aged SWAs they found ABA to be instrumental for promoting student learning and modifying disruptive behaviors. The researchers used a qualitative methodology based on grounded theory principles and interviewed 12 participants following a 14-week training session (de Korte et al., 2022). The researchers found that teaching skills and behavior interventions were crucial classroom strategies for managing SWAs (de Korte et al., 2022). Facilitators of special education who lacked knowledge of ABA and skills transfer experienced difficulties managing SWA behaviors and implementing appropriate behavioral competencies (de Korte et al., 2022). In their study, de Korte et al. (2022) identified improvements in student social communication skills and well-being following the faithful use of ABA strategies. However, the researchers also noted that additional research should focus on the gap regarding parental insight into these perceived improvements (de Korte et al., 2022).

Most schools with special education classrooms have not been applying classroom-based ABA (Azad et al., 2021). One major cause for teachers' lack of knowledge of ABA skills has been failure to incorporate the subject in their preparatory undergraduate and graduate level coursework. Undergraduate programs have included few or no courses specific to behavior interventions for SWAs, and most graduate educational programs have not been training teachers on evidence-based behavioral approaches to SWA (Pennington et al., 2021). Teachers need adequate training in understanding the characteristics and behaviors of SWAs to enable them to adopt unique teaching styles based on students' individual needs (Pennington et al., 2021). Appropriate training equips teachers with a strong educational background and confidence in the use of existing practices to improve programming for SWAs (Pennington et al., 2021).

Building on the foundational research by de Korte et al. (2022), further studies underscore the critical role of comprehensive training for educators working with SWA. Smyth et al. (2019) explored the long-term benefits of integrating ABA techniques within teacher training programs and found significant enhancements in teaching efficacy and student engagement over time. Their research emphasized the importance of continuous professional development and the role of sustained training efforts in achieving lasting educational impacts (Smyth et al., 2019).

In addition, Frolli et al. (2021) conducted a study that examined the inclusion of parents and caregivers in the training process. They discovered that when parents are involved in learning about ABA techniques, there is a more consistent application of these strategies at home, leading to better overall outcomes for SWAs (Frolli et al., 2021).

This finding suggests that educational programs for SWAs should not only target teachers but also extend to families to foster an environment of consistent support across home and school settings.

Additionally, Dean and Chang (2021) highlighted the necessity for tailored educational approaches that adapt behavioral interventions to suit individual student needs. Their research points to the variability in SWA behavior and suggests a flexible framework in special education that allows teachers to modify and adjust behavioral strategies effectively. This approach not only accommodates the diverse needs of SWAs but also enhances the adaptive skills of educators, enabling them to provide personalized support that maximizes educational outcomes (Dean & Chang, 2021).

These studies collectively reinforce the need for comprehensive and inclusive training programs that incorporate both theoretical knowledge and practical applications of behavioral interventions to promote effective practices. They also highlight the importance of involving families in the educational process. This study sought to expand the research focus to include these aspects in order to enhance the effectiveness of interventions for SWAs.

Parental Satisfaction With Specialized Education. Researchers have investigated parental satisfaction with educators' ASD knowledge (Johansson, 2014; Loiacono & Allen, 2008; Starr & Foy, 2012). Starr and Foy (2012) used a survey consisting of open-ended questions to understand parental satisfaction with educator knowledge and overall educational quality. They administered the survey to 144 parents of SWAs (Starr & Foy, 2012). Of those parents who participated, 64 (44%) perceived

teachers as lacking sufficient knowledge of ASD or appropriate interventions with which to help SWAs (including ABA). Participants further indicated that educators' lack of ASD training negatively impacted communication and collaboration between home and school. Overall, 75 (52%) of participants reported dissatisfaction with their children's education.

Other researchers have claimed that parents of SWAs perceive teachers as lacking knowledge about ASD and behavioral interventions (Azad et al., 2021). Survey-based studies only indicate the extent to which a specific number of parents are satisfied. A goal of this study was therefore to bridge the gap between quantitative data and qualitative data with respect to parental perceptions of ABA school to home transfer.

Existing literature and law support parental inclusion in SWAs' educational and behavioral decision-making experiences (Azad et al., 2022). According to Azad et al. (2022), parents have often relied on educators to make decisions for their children because they viewed special education teachers as ASD experts. Furthermore, SWAs have demonstrated the need for both home- and school-based services; therefore, coordination and communication between parents and teachers could improve academic and domestic behavioral outcomes (Hillier et al., 2021).

Cheng et al. (2023) conducted a comprehensive analysis involving over one hundred parents of SWA, using a quantitative approach to researcher deeper into the nuances of parental opinion on student services for SWA with an average age of 5.5 years old. Their findings suggest that while there is a general appreciation for the efforts made by educators, there is a clear demand for more specialized training for behavior

interventions, particularly in behavioral management techniques that increase positive replacement behaviors that can be effectively applied both in school and at home. Parents expressed greater satisfaction when teachers coached parents on behavior interventions that worked in a structured environment (Cheng et al., 2023).

By integrating parents' detailed feedback and experiences, researchers can better grasp the specific areas where educators may need further support or training (Cheng et al., 2023). To address these ongoing challenges, it is recommended that educational policies and teacher training programs incorporate structured feedback mechanisms from parents to ensure that their concerns and suggestions are actively considered. Enhancing communication and collaboration between parents and educators, as suggested by Hillier et al. (2021). Such measures could facilitate a more cohesive educational approach, ensuring that both school-based and home-based needs of SWAs are met effectively, thus fostering an environment conducive to both academic and behavioral success for SWAs.

Parental Frustration With the Process of Accessing Specialized Resources.

Seo et al. (2022) found that parents of SWAs lacked knowledge regarding the location and navigation of community resources to access services for their children. All five of Seo et al.'s participants reported significant challenges finding resources that provided social-skill intervention services for their children. Parents had a variety of experiences and perceptions of the process. Two parents (40%) expressed frustration about locating qualified service providers for their children, and one (20%) described difficulties locating a qualified special education teacher to address the social needs of her child. Only one parent (20%) did not express dissatisfaction with the knowledge level of

teachers in relation to education of SWAs. Three participants (60%) expressed concerns about the time it took to find a teacher with ASD knowledge to manage their SWA. Two participants (40%) perceived that their children's teachers possessed extensive knowledge of ASD and incorporated strategies in a positive behavior intervention plan.

Seo et al. (2022) reported that knowledge of current strategies is vital when working with SWAs; such knowledge enables a teacher to develop effective and modern techniques to help students to learn new social skills. Like Seo et al., Hillier et al. (2021) examined parental perceptions of SWAs entering learning institutions. Of the 29 participants interviewed, 24 (83%) expressed concerns about their children's behaviors, including friendships, communication, self-presentation, and social cues. According to Hillier et al., parents perceived that these skills could not be mitigated without expertise in related services outside the educational environment. Participants further reported that teachers with knowledge of ASD were essential for their children to develop appropriate social and behavioral intervention skills. Participants identified additional services necessary for their SWA to have optimal, productive lives, including social skills groups, counseling, and occupational therapy centers.

Paseka and Schwab (2023) conducted a study of dozens of parents of SWAs via semi-structured phone interviews, which highlighted the ongoing difficulties in accessing specialized educational resources. They found that a staggering 76% of parents experienced barriers due to the complexity of systems and lack of information provided by educational institutions. These barriers not only impeded their ability to secure necessary services but also contributed to significant emotional and logistical stress.

The research findings of Cai et al. (2020) explored the impact of these challenges on the mental health of parents. Fifty mothers completed questionnaires and reported high levels of stress and anxiety. Their findings suggest that the chronic stress associated with securing appropriate educational resources for SWA can lead to increased anxiety and depression among parents. This underscores the necessity for better support systems and more transparent communication from schools to assist parents in this critical process of navigating resources for student needs (Cai et al., 2020).

These studies collectively emphasize the need for educational systems to enhance their outreach and support mechanisms. With this research, I attempted to use parental perceptions to guide further recommendations to determine the most effective collaborative efforts so that the road to success feels less daunting for parents of SWA.

Parent–Educator Collaborations. The theme of educators’ inadequate knowledge of ASD also emerged in the historical study conducted by Tucker and Schwartz (2013), who examined parent–teacher collaboration through the voices of parents of SWAs. Their mixed methods study involved examination of the perceptions of parents of SWAs who attended two Washington school districts. Interviews of participants allowed examination of parental perceptions of factors parents believed would increase satisfaction with school to home transfer of behavioral skills (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). The findings indicated that parents were dissatisfied with the lack of teacher knowledge specific to ASD. Parent participants perceived teachers’ lack of ASD knowledge as negatively impacting the ability of teachers to generate effective behavior plans (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013).

Teachers' levels of education, knowledge, and professional development determine SWAs' outcomes (Seo et al., 2022). Teachers need extensive knowledge of ASD to implement appropriate, efficient strategies to help manage SWAs' disruptive behaviors. Educators with in-depth knowledge of ASD and ABA are more capable of implementing approaches to manage classrooms and improve SWAs' behaviors. Teachers therefore need appropriate training so that they can update their knowledge of ASD and understand current trends in ABA (Azad et al., 2021). School leaders also need to make evidence-based reforms to support teachers' knowledge development and application of ABA in classrooms. Having theoretical knowledge of application of behavioral or social skills interventions is important, but practical training improves efficacy (Hillier et al., 2021).

This study contributes to closing the literature gap by emphasizing the necessity of knowledge and practical training for SWA. As highlighted by Seo et al. (2022) and Azad et al. (2021), there is a need for ongoing professional development and evidence-based reforms to enhance teacher and parent collaboration. Hillier et al. (2021) noted the importance of not only theoretical knowledge but also practical training in behavioral and social skills interventions to enhance student outcomes. By integrating these findings, I sought to improve social systems to support more effective parent–educator collaborations, thereby enhancing the school to home transfer of behavior skills for SWA.

Lack of Communication

The literature review also revealed that communication between parents and teachers of SWAs is critical. Researchers have been clear that parent–teacher

relationships are important for supporting students' academic and behavioral outcomes—particularly in the transfer of skills from school to home (Azad et al., 2018, 2022; Kurth et al., 2020). Furthermore, researchers have argued that collaboration and frequent communication can strengthen parent–teacher relationships (Azad et al., 2022; Kurth et al., 2022; Stephenson et al., 2021). Parents tend to express dissatisfaction with educational services communication is lacking. Researchers have found that parent–teacher communication enables sharing of information regarding ABA routines for SWAs to use at home (Johansson, 2014; Loiacono & Allen, 2008) and that parents equate lack of communication with devaluation of parental input (Stephenson et al., 2021).

Azad (2022) found that parents of SWAs expressed a strong preference for effective two-way communication between school and home. Azad (2022) conducted mixed methods research to investigate the efficiency of parent–teacher communication. Further, the researcher sought to determine whether communication, as a tool, improves home behavior of SWAs. Azad (2022) surveyed and interviewed 49 parent participants, 45 (93%) of whom were mothers. All parent participants had elementary-aged SWAs enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade in a large urban school district. Data indicated that 15 parents (33%) perceived the use of school to home notes as successfully addressing maladaptive behaviors for SWA at home. Thirty participants (66%) felt that more support was needed to address their children's behavior.

Azad (2022) further reported that although school to home notes improved teacher–parent communication, participants reported time as a barrier to engaging with educators in person or via technology. Participants stated that communication beyond

behavior-management notes was necessary to become more informed about ABA routines. Participants also reported that educators did not share ASD resources, which could have improved parent implementation of ABA routines (Azad, 2022). The limitations associated with time and resources resulted in the creation of barriers relative to consistent parent–teacher collaboration (Azad, 2022).

Azad’s (2023) study was important because the results indicated that parental satisfaction improved when parent–teacher communication provided concise information for successful ABA routines that SWAs could use at home. Stephenson et al. (2021) expanded on this notion of home ABA routines. Stephenson et al. affirmed earlier findings of Azad and Mandell (2016) that parents perceived teacher–parent communication as poor in relation to ABA skills and perceived subsequent transfer of ABA for SWAs as limited. Unlike Azad and Mandell, Stephenson et al. examined collaborative efforts of educators and parents to implement ABA routines at home. In interviews, 39 teachers and 39 parents indicated minimization of concerns regarding SWAs when teachers and parents communicated frequently. Stephenson et al. concluded there was a need for more feasible and efficient models of consultation to improve outcomes for SWAs. In fact, parent participants did not perceive a transfer of reduction in maladaptive behaviors until significant collaborative parent–teacher communication occurred (Stephenson et al., 2021).

Ambulkar et al. (2023) later examined the notion that frequent communication supports ABA skill transfer. Through interviews of SWAs’ parents and teachers, Ambulkar et al. examined factors that both encouraged and challenged educator–parent

collaboration in relation to ABA skill transfer. Ambulkar et al.'s findings supported those reported by other researchers (Azad & Mandell, 2016) that parents perceive communication with teachers as essential to the promotion of effective collaboration regarding ABA home implementation. According to Ambulkar et al., when educators updated parents on their children's progress at school, parent participants were motivated to collaborate with teachers and become more knowledgeable about ABA skills. Participants also reported that they perceived themselves as partnering with teachers to achieve the mutual goal of improving the behavior of SWA outside school. The participants in Ambulkar et al.'s study also reported perceived barriers that hindered home implementation of ABA interventions in connection with specialized resources, routines, equipment, and management of caregiver duties in conjunction with other responsibilities.

The literature highlighted a significant gap in communication between parents and teachers of SWA, which is critical to the successful transfer of behavioral skills from school to home environments. Studies by Azad et al. (2018, 2022), Kurth et al. (2020, 2022), and Stephenson et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of robust parent-teacher relationships and frequent communication in supporting students' academic and behavioral outcomes. I found a critical need for educational systems to facilitate better communication and collaboration between parents and educators. Addressing these gaps can significantly enhance the effectiveness of educational and behavioral interventions for SWA in order to improve their academic and social outcomes.

Lack of Home-Based Parental Reinforcement Activities and Resources

An additional theme—lack of home-based parental reinforcement activities and resources—emerged during review of the literature (Azad et al., 2021; de Korte et al., 2022; Schuck et al., 2022; Syeda & Bruck, 2022). Schuck et al. (2022) studied over 50 parents and teachers of SWA to assess the satisfaction of parents with their children’s educational outcomes and the factors predicting stressors in relation to behavioral interventions at home. Schuck et al. asked the following research question: How is parental educational involvement related to school satisfaction for parents of SWA? The researchers concluded that although teachers had training, knowledge, and resources needed to mitigate disruptive behaviors of SWAs, parents reported having no knowledge or resources with which to effectively mitigate disruptive behaviors, and this disconnect lowered parents’ satisfaction levels (Schuck et al., 2022). Schuck et al. reported higher frustration levels among young parents below age 30 years and those whose children were only recently diagnosed with ASD. Schuck et al. reported that inadequate parental resources and lack of parental knowledge concerning ASD and behavior management activities could have contributed to the stress.

One factor that de Korte et al. (2022) found interfered with parental behavior plans and activities for SWA was lack of parental knowledge of community resources. Using questionnaires and semistructured interviews, the researchers investigated the perceptions and experiences of parents raising SWA. Despite variations among the reported parental experiences, 40% of all parents reported receiving minimal support from community agencies; minimal support was reportedly a critical factor that made

implementation of home-base interventions difficult. Survey results indicated parents lacked in-depth knowledge of ASD, parents had inadequate time to focus on children's behaviors, and competing family needs interfered with implementation of ABA skills. Based on their findings, de Korte et al. (2022) recommended parents develop effective home-based activities for SWA with the assistance of community specialists.

Few researchers have investigated parental resources in relation to parental perceptions of resources used to facilitate behavioral interventions for SWA. Kizilkaya and Sari (2021) sought to examine factors related to parental resource knowledge and perceptions thereof. Kizilkaya and Sari interviewed 34 parents of SWAs to gain an understanding of factors that reinforce parental ABA transfer. Specifically, Kizilkaya and Sari examined the efficiency of the Effective Reinforcement Use Parent Education Program (ERUPEP). The purpose of ERUPEP is to provide and increase positive experiences for SWAs and to track parental use of ongoing resources. Through semistructured interviews, Kizilkaya and Sari examined the extent to which ERUPEP was effective for assisting participants' identification of ABA resources and strategies. Interviews of 34 parent participants allowed examination of parental attitudes toward ABA school to home transfer before and after participation in ERUPEP. ERUPEP provides parents with positive parenting classes, family education programs, disability education training, frequent sensory field trips for SWAs, and advisory support at home and school provided by behavior specialists. Kizilkaya and Sari concluded that reinforcement activities that easily transferred from school to home, such as calming and fading prompt techniques, were beneficial for facilitating appropriate behavior when

provided to SWAs in both school and home. The findings of Syeda and Bruck (2022), Azad et al. (2021), and Kurth et al. (2022) affirmed those of Kizilkaya and Sari.

The theme of lack of home-based parental reinforcement activities and resources was a significant focus in the literature, highlighting a gap in the support system for parents of SWA. Schuck et al. (2022) explored this by assessing the satisfaction of over 50 parents and teachers of SWA regarding children's educational outcomes and related stressors. The collective insights from these studies underscore the critical need for more robust support systems and educational resources that are accessible to parents. Enhancing parental knowledge and resource availability can significantly improve the consistency and effectiveness of interventions for SWA, both in school and at home.

Implications

The literature review yielded several points relevant to study of parental perceptions of ABA transfer from school to home. Although most studies reviewed were qualitative in nature, some were quantitative. There is a continuing gap of understanding in relation to implementation of ABA techniques by teachers to facilitate SWA desirable behaviors in school and parental facilitation of ABA techniques at home. Teachers frequently do not undergo the rigorous required training and parents often don't understand the requirements of fidelity to implementation (Ambulkar et al., 2023). Despite teachers and parents sharing a mutual goal of establishing desirable behaviors in SWA, parents participating in recent studies have reported that transfer of ABA skills to home is limited at best. I aimed to bridge this gap by examining parental perceptions

regarding ABA transfer and what parents report as necessary to promote school to home transfer of ABA. I sought concrete strategies and activities that teachers and parents could use collaboratively to increase school to home transfer of ABA so that SWA behave positively at home.

Summary

Researchers have examined the extent to which ASD impacts SWA. The general characteristics of ASD are delayed speech and communication skills along with deficits in social skills, which can impede appropriate formation of friendships and relationships (de Korte et al., 2022). To address SWA, many school programs have been applying the principles of ABA, because ABA emphasizes facilitation of socially essential behaviors. SWAs should develop relevant skills that enable them to navigate a world with many social opportunities and to acquire skills crucial to establishing relationships. Teachers interact with SWAs in classrooms daily; teachers therefore play a pivotal role in the development of behavioral skills of SWAs during their formative years. Understanding parents' knowledge, perceptions, and use of ABA-based methods is thus crucial to development of appropriate behavioral interventions that transfer to the home environment (Azad et al., 2021).

Three themes emerged from the literature review in relation to educators' use of ABA with the goal of transferring implementation to the home environment: (a) lack of teacher knowledge of skill transfer among SWAs (Hillier et al., 2021; Seo et al., 2022; Saigh & Bagadood, 2022), (b) lack of adequate teacher–parent communication (Azad et al., 2018, 2022; Kurth et al., 2020), and (c) lack of home-based parental reinforcement

activities and resources (Azad et al., 2021; de Korte et al., 2022; Schuck et al., 2022; Syeda & Bruck, 2022). Examination of parental perceptions regarding school to home transfer of ABA has remained relevant and necessary to enable SWAs to achieve optimal educational and social outcomes. Knowledgeable educators can make data-based decisions and implement interventions that result in positive outcomes (Schuck et al., 2022; Syeda & Bruck, 2022). Teacher–parent collaboration has been fundamental for helping SWAs overcome challenges at home and at school (Azad et al., 2022). Examining the teacher –parent partnership in relation to ABA may provide insights into improvement of parental guidance and support needed for home implementation of effective strategies.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to examine how parents of elementary SWAs in a county school system in the southeastern United States perceived transfer of ABA skills from school to home. The research question guiding the study was as follows: How do parents of elementary-aged children with autism (SWA) view the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home? Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs constituted the conceptual framework of the study and formed the lens through which I identified the factors that contributed to successful interventions for school to home skill transfer. Using semi-structured, in-depth interviews based upon guided questions (Appendix D), I examined how parents of elementary-aged SWAs viewed the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home. Section 2 includes the qualitative methodology used in the study, the participants, data collection and analysis procedures, and data analysis.

For this study, I employed a grounded theory qualitative research approach. The grounded theory approach is a systematic qualitative research method used to develop theories grounded in data (Birks & Mills, 2022). Developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, grounded theory enables the development of theories or explanations directly from data rather than by testing preexisting theories (Birks & Mills, 2022). This approach involves iterative processes of data collection, coding, and analysis to identify patterns and develop ways of explaining phenomena of interest (Birks & Mills, 2022).

Grounded theory methodology aligned well with the research question guiding this study: How do parents of elementary-aged children with autism (SWA) view the

transfer of behavioral skills from school to home? By adopting a grounded theory approach, I aimed to gain an understanding of school to home transfer of behavioral skills by using a Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs conceptual framework grounded in the experiences and perspectives of parent participants.

In this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews of parents of elementary-aged SWAs in the a county school system in the southeastern United States. These interviews allowed participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home. The data collected were then analyzed from a grounded theory perspective, which included open coding.

Open coding involves initial categorization and labeling of data to identify key concepts and themes (Burns et al., 2022). Throughout the data analysis process, constant comparison was employed to systematically compare this study's data with that reported in existing literature. This data analysis facilitated the identification of similarities, differences, and patterns across participants. This iterative process continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

By employing a grounded theory methodology, I aimed to generate a rich, contextually grounded understanding of how parents perceive the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home for elementary-aged SWA. This approach allowed for the examination and development of patterns and themes firmly rooted in the lived experiences of parents, thus offering valuable insights for educators, practitioners, and policymakers working in the field of special education.

Application of a grounded theory methodology permitted in-depth understanding of parental perspectives by exploring parents' experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Clark, 2004). Analysis of nonnumerical data—interviews—enabled me to identify patterns, themes, and insight that provided a greater understanding of the consistency of transfer of ABA skills from school to home. In this study, I conducted semistructured in-depth interviews of eight parents who had SWAs who received special services in the school setting. Each participant's child received behavioral interventions at school intended for transfer from school to home. In the tradition of qualitative research, the interview protocol and confidentiality were integral to preserving the integrity of the study and safeguarding the participants (Khan & MacEachen, 2022).

Participants

Selection of Participants

The participants for this study consisted of eight parents of elementary-aged SWAs in a county school system in the southeastern United States. With permission from the district director, I distributed virtual newsletters and flyers seeking voluntary participants who met the inclusion criteria. Appropriate selection of participants is a crucial aspect of any research study because participants are the individuals who provide information used to answer research questions and draw conclusions.

Potential participants were made aware they would receive no remuneration for participation. Moreover, given that participation was strictly voluntary, I informed participants that they could stop participating at any time without any consequences. Before they were interviewed, participants were informed about local resources available

for those in distressing situations and told about the nature of the questions. I ensured all participants were informed of the confidentiality agreement included in Appendix C.

The decision to focus on parents of SWAs was based on the understanding that parents are often the primary caregivers of children with special needs; therefore, parents are in a unique position to observe and report on their children's progress and transfer of skills from school to home. Parents of SWAs also have unique insights into their children's behaviors and needs, which would be valuable for understanding the transfer of ABA interventions.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants suitable for the study, because it allowed me to target individuals who met the specific inclusion criteria. In this case, every participant was the parent of an elementary-aged SWA who had received ABA interventions in the studied school system, and every participant was willing to share their experiences and perceptions of skill transfer from school to home. Use of this sampling method helped ensure that the selected participants represented the population studied and provided relevant and valuable information.

For this study, 10–12 participants were initially sought. Several factors guided this target, including the research question, availability of eligible participants, and the saturation point. Thirteen participants initially volunteered to participate in this study; however, for various reasons (i.e., time constraints and personal commitments), five of the initial 13 withdrew. Eight participants consented to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews and provided sufficient data to answer the research question. The

Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved a change in the number of participants from 12 to eight after the participants withdrew.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

Before conducting this study, I obtained permission from the Walden University IRB. IRB approval was obtained on November 16, 2023, with confirmation number 11-16-23-1025570. Participant recruitment materials clearly stated the purpose of the study and participation criteria as well as provided contact information for me. After receipt of IRB approval, the local director of special education was contacted through letters of introduction (Appendix B). After receiving approval from the superintendent of the studied school system and the local director of special education, I used parents' email addresses to include my flyer in an email newsletter sent out to parents of special education students. The email included an outline the study's purpose, research methodology, and data analysis. The email also included instructions for contacting me via email. A basic information letter was emailed to willing participants; the letter described the participation criteria, problem, purpose, and research technique. Requirements for participation in the study were clearly delineated in the letter. Each potentially participating parent was assured in the introduction letter that they would be treated with respect and dignity and that their participation would be subject to the highest form of confidentiality.

Parents of students with autism (SWA) may experience stress and emotional burdens related to their children's treatments and diagnoses (Azad et al., 2021). Because participants in this study could have been emotionally vulnerable because of their

children's diagnoses, it was vital to protect their rights and ensure their participation was confidential. Because participants in this study had a high probability of experiencing unexplored or inexplicable emotions, community resources for addressing participants' concerns in relation to the interview process were identified prior to commencement of participant interviews.

To assure anonymity, each participant was referred to by number instead of by name. Following the ethical requirements of scholarly research (Bazzano et al., 2021), informed consent was obtained from each participant before commencing interviews with the assurance that all personal identifying information would be kept confidential. Participants were also assured that only I would have access to collected data and that I would store data securely and according to qualitative research ethics (Creswell & Clark, 2004).

One potential limitation of using purposive sampling was the possibility of selection bias. This occurs when selection of participants is not random but based on certain characteristics or traits (Campbell et al., 2020). Another important consideration when selecting participants was ensuring that participants were capable of providing informed consent (O'Sullivan et al., 2021). During the process of gaining informed consent in this study, potential participants received information about the study and the opportunity to ask questions about the study before they decided whether to participate. Exhaustive measures were taken to ensure that participants were well informed about the purpose of the study, the methods used, and their rights as participants. Each participant

was informed that they were free to withdrawal from the study at any moment without any penalties or consequences.

Participant interviews ranged in length from 29 to 64 minutes. Participant 3 identified as male, and all other participants identified as female. Participants reported that their children ranged in age from 6 to 11 years. All interviews were recording using Zoom Audio only. All participants reported that their children were male SWAs.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection consisted of the semistructured in-depth interviews of the eight participants. Interviews ranged in length from 29 to 64 minutes. No further interviews were conducted after saturation occurred. Saturation in a study occurs when additional data collection yields no new information or insights (Francis et al., 2010). Semistructured in-depth interviews were conducted using the video conference application Zoom.

To protect anonymity and confidentiality, the audio but not the video of interviews was recorded. Interview questions were design to gather data relevant to parents' experiences and perception of transfer of skills from school to home and to capture context and background information. Before conducting each interview, I established rapport to build trust with the participant. This was accomplished through clear communication, through active listening, and by showing genuine interest in the participant's experiences and perspectives. During the interview process, no participant asked for information to be withheld from data collection and transcription. No

participant chose to leave the interview before reaching the identified saturation point.

All but one of the participants was female. Not relevant to your study

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis process in this qualitative study involved careful and methodical examination of the collected data. The conclusions were developed based on the data source, which consisted of semistructured interviews of parent participants. This data analysis process included a nuanced approach to coding and categorizing responses with the aim of extracting themes and patterns. From comprehensive immersion in the narratives provided by the parent participants, themes emerged that shed light on the dynamics of school to home transfer of behavioral skills. These insights were not only based on individual responses but also synthesized from the diverse range of experiences and perspectives shared by the eight parent participants.

The analysis of data was conducted with the research question, the local problem, and the research methodology in mind. During each interview, follow-up questions were routinely asked to improve salience, clarify vague responses, and encourage the participant to elaborate when necessary. Verbatim transcripts of the audio recordings made during the interviews were produced for analysis. Every interview was transcribed within 24 hours of recording. This rapid turnaround time for the transcription of interviews, along with field notes, enabled me to accurately capture the tone of participants. The acquired data were given further context and depth by the analysis of

patterns, relationships, and themes. The use of Zoom facilitated smooth conduct of the interviews.

Subsequent data analysis was approached with a keen focus on addressing the research question and addressing local challenges. Through the analysis of the transcripts, a detailed portrayal of participant perceptions emerged. To deepen the analysis, field notes were maintained alongside the transcripts. These field notes provided valuable observations and insights gleaned throughout the interviews, complementing the transcripts with greater context. Identification of patterns, relationships, and themes ensued. Two common themes emerged: (a) the significance of regular communication between home and school and (b) the difficulty of replicating the structured environment of school at home.

After the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, emerging themes were color-coded using the software program NVivo (Version X). Mentions of school communication were coded blue, discussions of teachers seeking parental involvement were coded green, and discussions of parental difficulty replicating a structured environment were coded yellow. NVivo permits typed annotations similar to those provided by the comment feature of word processing. Using NVivo to color-code emerging themes provided a systematic way to categorize and analyze the data.

Color-coding of themes not only organized the findings but also provided visual understanding of the prevalence and connections among the perspectives of the participants. This structured approach allowed me to explore parental perceptions regarding school to home transfer of behavioral skills among SWAs. Commonly coded

words and phrases included “school communication,” “contacting our child’s teacher,” “reinforcement at home,” “consistency,” “expectations at home,” and “expectations at school.” The analysis involved discerning recurring patterns within each theme. Patterns of communication effectiveness, diverse teacher approaches to parental involvement, and the challenges associated with replicating a structured environment at home were explored in depth. NVivo (Version X) annotations also served to capture details to ponder and contextual information linked to specific segments of the transcripts. Furthermore, the triangulation of interview transcripts and field notes provided a foundation for the emergence and validation of the themes. This triangulation enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings by corroborating information gathered from the eight unique parental perspectives. The identified themes served as a foundation for developing recommendations and interventions in response to parental perceptions of school to home transfer of behavioral skills for elementary-aged SWAs.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Valid and reliable data are essential in any research study because they ensure that findings accurately reflect the phenomenon under investigation (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Many measures were implemented in this investigation to establish the reliability and validity of the information gathered. Once the themes were identified, I conducted a final analysis to examine themes and their possible implications.

Triangulation, the use of several measures, was employed to guarantee that the data analysis was reliable and valid. To further assure the validity and trustworthiness of the

results, I used several methods during data collection and analysis, including member checking and peer debriefing.

Triangulation

I used the technique of triangulation that included: to collect data on skill transfer from school to home. Triangulation is a valuable technique in research that involves using multiple methods to collect data to increase the reliability and validity of findings (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Analysis of interviews gave me a deeper comprehension of the research topic. Interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The use of multiple methods also aided identification of inconsistencies and biases in the data and data analysis. Triangulation improved the credibility of the study by providing a more robust and nuanced interpretation of the findings. The method allowed for consideration of multiple perspectives and data sources, which helped to confirm and challenge the initial assumptions and hypotheses (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). This approach also served to increase confidence in the results, because multiple types of evidence supported the findings.

To ensure the reliability of the data, I securely stored all data—including audio recordings, transcripts, and notes—to ensure data integrity and traceability. Doing so ensured the data would be available for future reference and verification. Secure storage also permits identification and correction of any inconsistencies or errors and ensures that other researchers can independently verify data, thereby enhancing the reliability of the findings.

Member Checking

Member checking was used to ensure results authentically reflected the experiences and viewpoints of the participants, which validated and verified the findings of the study (Candela, 2019). Via member checking, I asked for feedback and clarification of the transcripts, as this allowed participants to confirm or refute data-based interpretations (Candela, 2019). Participants had an opportunity to clarify their comments via email, phone, or face-to-face contact. Member checking generally strengthens the credibility of research findings by providing opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences and provide additional insights that a researcher may have missed (Candela, 2019). Member checking also demonstrates respect for participants and their contributions to research (Candela, 2019). For this study, member checking was offered to each of the eight participants. Each had the opportunity to clarify information or capture incomplete thoughts identified in interview transcripts. Of the eight participants, two offered corrections, and one offered elaboration via email. Member checking did not significantly alter the established codes or themes. However, member checking was warranted to ensure the reliability and validity of the data.

Peer Debriefing

Another measure for ensuring reliability is peer debriefing (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Peer debriefing involves seeking feedback from peers regarding the research process. Peers in this context means those in the same or a similar field of expertise (Newman et al., 2019). The goal of peer debriefing is to improve the quality and rigor of research by obtaining the perspectives of knowledgeable peers (Newman et al., 2019).

Peer debriefing was also used to ensure that my biases and assumptions did not affect interpretation of the data. I requested assistance from one student peer seeking an education doctorate, one Walden University graduate, and one special education program specialist for the purpose of peer debriefing. Each voluntary peer debriefer was given seven pages of transcript for review, the equivalent of roughly 25 min of an interview. Each of the three debriefers was given data from a different interview. None of the peer debriefers were coached, and none of my themes were provided to them beforehand. Instead, I requested each peer to explain how they interpreted the participants' meaning and what information they considered to be most valuable on a cold read.

The first of the three peer debriefers noted Participant 6's frustration, emphasizing the importance of immediate communication between parents and teachers to address concerns promptly. This observation aligned with the research findings highlighting lack of communication between parents and teachers. The second debriefer expressed skepticism regarding parental expectations, attributing challenges to teachers' overwhelming workloads. This perspective underscored the complexity of balancing parental concerns with practical constraints in the educational setting. The third debriefer, a disability specialist, questioned Participant 3's confidence in replicating the school environment at home, suggesting potential overconfidence in Participant 3's parental abilities. Despite the differing viewpoints provided, peer debriefing yielded valuable insights into parental experiences and perceptions, enriching the study findings.

Peer debriefing was a crucial component of the research process, offering valuable insights and critical feedback to enhance the rigor and credibility of the study.

Through the engagement of knowledgeable peers, researchers can identify potential biases, gaps in methodology, and alternative interpretations of data. This collaborative approach promotes reflexivity and ensures the validity and reliability of research findings. Peer debriefing also facilitates exploration of diverse perspectives, enriching analysis and interpretation of data. By soliciting feedback from peers with a variety of backgrounds and expertise, researchers can gain deeper insights into the complexities of their research topics and refine their interpretations accordingly. Overall, peer debriefing enhances the transparency and integrity of the research process, contributing to the robustness of study outcomes.

Data Gathering

After Walden University's IRB granted approval for the study, I sought permission from the studied school system's director to recruit a sample of eight to 12 voluntary adult participants with elementary-aged children with autism (SWA). Data were collected using semistructured in-depth interviews based on open-ended questions provided to the eight participants. All interviews were audio recorded via Zoom, with a unique URL provided to each of the participants. In addition to being emailed to participants, the consent form was read aloud during the beginning of each interview, and the participants' verbal consent was sought prior to the start of the interviews. Participants were informed that they could discontinue the interviews at any time and for any reason by stating that they no longer wanted to continue. During the data gathering process, none of the eight participants asked to stop their interview.

The participants' SWA were all male. The ratio of boys to girls receiving ASD diagnoses is 4:1 (Rubin, 2022). The rate of diagnosis explains why parents of a child with ASD are overwhelmingly likely to report the gender of their child as male. Two participants reported their children had also been diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, one parent reported their child also had a diagnosis of Down syndrome, and one parent reported their child also had a diagnosis of intellectual disability. Therefore, half of the participants reported having at least one child whose only diagnosis was ASD. However, perceptions did not significantly differ between parents whose children had only a diagnosis of ASD and those whose children had multiple diagnoses. Of the eight participants, only one reported having more than one child with ASD.

Data Collection

Parents of elementary-aged SWAs who received ABA classes at school participated in 45–60 min semistructured interviews. The online video conferencing system Zoom was used to conduct these interviews; video was excluded, and only audio was used for analysis. Each participant was assigned a number based on the order in which the interviews were conducted: The first participant interviewed was documented as P1, the second participant as P2, the third participant as P3 and so forth. The audio recordings were assigned numbers and split into two parts to reduce electronic file size so that they could be sent via email when necessary. The first interview was conducted on December 8, 2023, and the final interview occurred on December 30, 2023; all interviews

were thus conducted across a period of 3 weeks. Codes and themes were later determined using analysis based on review of the research question.

Identified Emerging Themes Relevant to the Research Question

Thematic analysis of the data uncovered significant patterns, connections, and themes that addressed the research question and provided insight into how parents perceive the transfer from school to home of skills learned through ABA and other behavioral interventions. Furthermore, comprehensive analysis of the data through thematic exploration revealed overarching themes and connections. These findings not only directly corresponded to the primary research question but also offered information about parental perspectives regarding the transfer of acquired skills from the structured educational setting of school to the home environment.

Theme 1: Significance of Communication

Six of the eight participants expressed notable concern regarding the perceived inadequacy of parent–teacher communication. According to their perspectives, this deficiency negatively influenced their children’s progress in the promotion of school to home transfer of skills used to extinguish maladaptive behaviors. This observation aligned with the research findings of Azad et al. (2022), who explicitly identified communication as a critical factor in the context of students continuing at home what they have learned in school.

P4 echoed the sentiments described by Azad et al. (2022). P4 conveyed a sense that teacher–parent communication was lacking. Although P4 acknowledged routine communication from the teacher, the participant expressed frustration because the

communication did not adhere to their preferred format. P4 felt such communication was too brief, lacked details, and was not frequent enough for the participant to continue interventions at home to successfully transfer behavioral skills. This dissatisfaction underscored the importance of communication frequency and of its alignment with the expectations and preferences of parents.

The literature supports the notion that the quality of this communication can have a substantial impact on its effectiveness. For instance, Stephenson et al., (2021) found that clear, detailed, and frequent communication between parents and teachers facilitates a better understanding of educational strategies and their implementation, which is crucial for SWA. Similarly, a study by Smith et al. (2015) emphasized that the format and detail in communication are essential, as parents need comprehensive updates to apply educational interventions accurately at home.

Research by Losh et al. (2022) supported the idea that personalized communication that aligns with parents' preferences significantly enhances their engagement and satisfaction. This is consistent with the experiences shared by participants in this study, such as P4, who indicated that while routine communication was present, it lacked the depth and frequency needed to effectively support the continuation of interventions at home.

It became apparent that both parents and teachers were unclear about the information about ABA transfer teachers needed to communicate. P1 and P7 had similar concerns related to lack of specific communication that would otherwise support their children's transfer of skills from school to home. From the parents' perspective, this

disconnect led them to conclude that the teachers involved lacked necessary knowledge and skills concerning the effective teaching of ABA interventions. This perception of parents highlights the pivotal role that clear and aligned communication plays in fostering a collaborative effort in special education.

P4 had the following to say:

I gave the teacher a communication form that I wanted them to complete. It would show me their success rate of discrete trial trainings. The teacher would not complete the form I gave. The teacher continued to tell me that their communication form was enough. I disagreed. The teacher's idea of communication is one or two dojo messages throughout the week and a color chart sent home on Friday that tells me about my child's week. This is the kind of stuff that, um, tells me very little. No detail, no depth for the students that need it most. The teacher's response was that she had eight high-needs kids to work with and she can't fill out forms every day for all of them when she has to teach.

Similar communication concerns from P7 reflected skepticism about the depth of knowledge possessed by the teacher, whom the participant described as either hesitant or unable to address inquiries regarding the participant's child's daily activities and ongoing progress. The participant questioned the effectiveness of the teacher's communication skills, especially when the participant sought detailed information about the child's daily experiences and regular advancements. In addition, a key point of contrast emerged when comparing the teacher's ability to articulate and explain behavioral interventions to that of the child's private applied behavior analyst.

P7 reported:

I question the knowledge of teachers who dodge my questions and don't know how to answer when I ask her for details about what my child has done throughout the day and what kind of progress are they regularly making. Yeah, I know that progress will be slow. It won't come overnight. And I'm not upset about that. But our private ABA therapist can explain pivotal response to us and how it's shaping behaviors while the teacher who our child works with much more seems overwhelmed, maybe only minimally trained in behavior analysis.

P4 displayed discontent with the special education teacher's communication, which resulted in P4 feeling that the teacher lacked the knowledge necessary to provide her with the information she needed to ensure her child's success. Her frustration stemmed from the teacher's perceived reluctance to engage in detailed communication that would provide thorough updates regarding her child's progress. Saigh and Bagadood (2022) explored how lack of detailed communication from teachers not only make parents feel like teachers lack knowledge but also often correlates with poor student outcomes. Participant 3 also sought a more comprehensive understanding of her child's experiences and learning outcomes, particularly with regard to discrete trial training as an ABA intervention, which the teacher appeared unwilling to accommodate, from the parents' perspective. P3 stated, "I'm not hearing from our teacher as often as I would like. By the time we receive the communication folder on Friday, a totally separate behavior may have emerged than what manifested on Monday or Tuesday." This lack of detailed communication, in P3's view, hindered her ability to support her child

effectively at home, which highlighted a significant gap between the teacher's approach and the participant's expectations. P7 likewise perceived lack of communication as a result of school staff receiving minimal training in behavior analysis, comparing them with a trained ABA therapist.

P4's dissatisfaction was further compounded by the teacher's explanation that she was dealing with multiple high-needs SWAs and could not commit to daily communication with all of their parents. P4's concern about the teacher's capabilities and experience, especially with respect to effective management of and communication with parents of high-needs students, led her to escalate the matter to the district director.

Participants frequently shed light on the critical importance of effective communication between special education teachers and parents. The gap between teachers' communication strategies and parents' expectations demonstrated the need for clearer, more detailed communication methods that cater to the diverse needs of SWAs receiving ABA to reduce interfering behaviors.

The emergence of regular communication between home and school emerged as major theme for six of the eight participants in the study, which affirms research findings indicating that communication plays a critical role for SWAs in enhancing the well-being that derives from fostering collaborations that permit tailored strategies and enable achievement in the learning environment and at home (Hillier et al., 2021). Participants frequently stated that educators talking freely and frequently with them about ABA interventions promoted smooth transfer of abilities. Participants perceived teachers who kept in frequent contact as being more involved than other teachers, being more

knowledgeable than other teachers about special education services, and having significant training and credentials. Of the eight participants, three preferred the school system's written messaging app, although they would have preferred more detail and more frequency messages from teachers. Three participants preferred email communication, and two reported a desire for phone calls from teachers.

Six participants corroborated the theme of the significance of communication, demonstrating the close connection between communication and positive parental perceptions of skill transfer. The participants frequently reported that their children learned more from teachers who routinely communicated the progress of SWAs to parents, and participants consistently highlighted the positive impact on elimination of maladaptive behaviors at home and school of educators engaging in regular discussions regarding student progress with ABA interventions.

The perception among participants was that teachers who maintained frequent contact demonstrated deep involvement and great understanding of special education services and taught behavior intervention strategies effectively. This theme received validation from multiple participants' responses that indicated that a link between effective communication and favorable parental views is critical for transfer of ABA skills from school to home. Participants who reported positive teacher communication also reported that their children exhibited good learning outcomes and improved behaviors at home. Participants reported that when teachers proactively communicated the progress of special education interventions there was more likelihood that they, as parents, would attempt ABA strategies at home.

I determined that the findings in relation to this theme provided insights into how parents of elementary-aged SWAs viewed the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home in the context of communication. Data thus adequately served to answer the research question guiding this study. The participants consistently emphasized the importance of clear, detailed, and frequent communication from teachers regarding their children's progress in relation to the success of ABA skill transfer from school to home. Participants verbalized concerns that teachers' communication was lacking with respect to details and frequency of ABA interventions used at school. This lack of communication hindered the ability of participants to support their children effectively at home and promote the transfer of ABA skills learned at school.

The participants also reported that enabling collaborative efforts between parents and teachers to facilitate ABA school to home transfer depended on increasing consistency of parent-teacher communication. They emphasized the need for teachers to communicate openly and frequently with parents about ABA interventions and their children's progress to facilitate transfer of ABA skills from school to home. Participants expressed a preference for communication methods that provide detailed ABA intervention updates and communication methods that allow for ongoing dialogue between parents and teachers, such as written messaging apps, email, and phone calls.

As described by Chaidi and Drigas (2020), clear and frequent communication between educators and parents is pivotal in ensuring the continuity of care and behavioral management from the classroom to the home environment. They found that without this,

parents feel ill-equipped to support their children's behavioral needs effectively (Chaidi & Drigas, 2020).

Further supporting this, a study by Leadbitter et al., (2020) highlighted that detailed communication regarding ABA interventions significantly boosts parents' confidence and ability to replicate these interventions at home. Leadbitter and colleagues noted that parents often report dissatisfaction and stress when communication lacks sufficient detail about the ABA techniques being used in school, mirroring the concerns expressed by participants in this study. Collaborative efforts as a means to improve ABA skill transfer, as reported by the participants, are echoed in the work of Levinson et al. (2020). They positioned that effective collaboration is highly dependent on consistent and methodical communication strategies, such as using digital tools like messaging apps and emails, which allow for ongoing dialogue and timely updates on students' progress. This form of communication ensures that parents are kept in the loop and can seamlessly integrate educational strategies within home settings.

The need for communication methods that provide detailed updates and facilitate continuous dialogue was also highlighted by Leadbitter et al. (2020). They suggested that schools adopt integrated communication platforms that are accessible to both teachers and parents, thereby enhancing the transparency and frequency of updates related to student progress.

In summary, this study's findings with respect to Theme 1 underscore the significance of communication in the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home for elementary-aged SWA. Effective communication between parents and teachers plays

a pivotal role in promoting positive outcomes for students and fostering collaborative efforts between home and school environments. As such, addressing communication barriers and implementing strategies to improve communication practices in special education settings remain essential steps to support the successful transfer of skills from school to home and to promote the overall well-being of SWAs.

Theme 2: Difficulty of Replicating a Structured Environment

The second theme I discovered related to the challenge of replicating a structured environment to promote skill transfer, emphasizing the contextual difference between home and school environments. Of the eight parent participants, five described difficulty replicating a structured environment within their homes, leading to inconsistencies in the behaviors of their SWAs. Multiple participants highlighted factors such as differing routines, differing environmental stimuli, and absence of specialized resources in home settings as barriers to success. P1 stated, “He [the student] has different routines at home than at school, and I think it’s harder to reinforce outside of that special classroom setting.” The absence of a controlled, structured setting like that of the school had posed hurdles that hindered the transfer of learned behaviors from school to home.

This perspective underscores the dynamics involved in the transfer of learned and acquired positive replacement behaviors from school to home. Inherent differences in routines, environmental cues, and level of structure between these settings posed challenges for participants who attempted to maintain a consistent approach in reinforcement of positive behaviors. Addressing these challenges required comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors that influence skill transfer. P4 acknowledged that

the home setting tended to be more laid back and recognized that rules were not as rigorously enforced at home and that this reflected factors that influenced behavioral expectations at home:

My child knows the difference between school and home. By virtue of being at home, they're more laid back. There're not the same rules. And it's not that I don't apply rules, but it's not like being in a classroom. I don't think a home can ever provide the same structured environment of the school. This isn't anyone's fault, but it's going to create inconsistencies no matter how you slice it.

The diverging expectations, routines, and rules created an environment in which the SWA perceived a contrast between school and home life, which led to difficulties with generalizing behaviors across these settings. Schuck et al. (2022) examined incorporation of strategies that explicitly account for differences in home and school environments to improve alignment with expectations. P6 also discussed this need to bridge the gap to smooth the transfer of skills:

I do everything I can to work with the teacher, but I can't do what they're doing. So it's important for us as parents to have different expectations. We can't expect to see school and home provide the same reinforcements and get the exact same results even when progress is being made.

Participants noted the structure of the school environment, with its accompanying specialized resources and strict routines, was challenging (if not impossible) to recreate within the home setting. The contrast between a structured classroom and a more relaxed atmosphere at home presented a hurdle to multiple participants. P4 highlighted this

distinction, acknowledging that despite efforts to enforce rules, differences persisted.

This acknowledgment reflects the understanding that replicating a structured environment within the home was an unrealistic expectation.

P1 expressed similar sentiments and cited the need for realistic expectations:

“This doesn’t mean that we need to work on ABA all evening, but perhaps resources should be provided that better allow us as parents to have similar expectations as what’s provided at school.” Despite teachers’ collaborative efforts with teachers, expectations needed tempering regarding replication of the exact routines and rituals of a special education classroom within the home setting. Multiple participants noted the specialized resources and the routines and rituals of the school setting were challenging to replicate.

The challenges associated with replicating a structured environment within the home setting, as described by the participants, are analyzable through the lens of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, with particular focus on the need for safety, belongingness, and esteem. The school environment, with its routines, rituals, and specialized resources, plays a crucial role in fulfilling the need for belongingness and esteem for both students and their parents. The self-actualization level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs also emphasized the importance of an individual accepting and understanding their limitations.

I addressed the research question in light of the theme of the difficulty of replicating a structured environment and the findings provided me with insights into how parents of elementary-aged SWAs perceived the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home within the context of environmental differences.

The participants' accounts underscored the challenges they faced maintaining consistency between the structured school environment and the more relaxed atmosphere of the home. Participants identified their inability to replicate the specialized resources used in ABA interventions and the routines and strict rules of the classroom in the home setting. The inability to replicate ABA interventions posed a significant barrier to transfer of ABA skills from school to home. Participants' perspectives indicated that differences in routines and expectations between school and home made it difficult for children to generalize learned behaviors at home.

In response to these challenges, participants emphasized the importance of realistic home expectations and the need for parental resources that facilitate alignment between school and home environments. The participants recognized that although they could make efforts to promote consistency, complete replication of a school's structured environment at home was not feasible. Several participants reported a need for support mechanisms that enable parents to establish expectations and reinforcers for positive behaviors similar to the expectations and reinforcers employed at school if parents are to effectively achieve ABA skill transfer from school to home.

Furthermore, the results of the data analysis emphasize the importance of addressing environmental differences and adapting intervention strategies to suit the home environment. Participants identified the need for strategies that explicitly account for contextual differences to bridge the gap between school and home settings. This finding highlights the importance of tailoring school interventions to meet the unique needs of SWAs within their specific home environments.

The theme of the difficulty of replicating a structured environment to facilitate skill transfer between school and home settings is a significant challenge that has also been noted in existing literature. Research shows that the contextual differences between these two environments can greatly impact the efficacy of behavioral interventions for SWA. Notably, Goldman et al. (2019) emphasized that the variance in daily routines, environmental stimuli, and available resources between school and home settings poses significant barriers to maintaining consistent behavioral interventions.

This is further supported by studies such as those by Leifler et al. (2021), who observed that the lack of a structured environment similar to that found in schools contributes to difficulties in behavioral management at home. These researchers posited that schools are typically equipped with specialized resources and personnel trained in behavior management techniques, which are often absent in home settings. This discrepancy makes it challenging for parents to replicate the structured and controlled atmosphere necessary for effective behavioral interventions.

Additional research by Clark and Adams (2020) highlighted the role of environmental consistency in reinforcing positive behavior changes. They found that when students with SWA experience significant differences in their daily environments, it can lead to confusion and inconsistency in behavior, which undermines the progress made in more structured settings like schools.

These studies collectively suggest that addressing the environmental and structural differences between school and home is crucial for the successful transfer of behavioral skills. They advocate for the development of support mechanisms and

resources that can aid parents in creating a more structured home environment that mirrors the school setting to some extent. Additionally, they recommend that interventions designed for school use be adapted to better fit the home environment, which recognizes the unique challenges and limitations that parents face in replicating school-like structures at home.

Overall, the theme of the difficulty of replicating a structured environment illuminates the complexities involved in promoting transfer of skills from school to home for SWAs. By acknowledging these challenges and advocating for realistic expectations and supportive resources, parents can better navigate the transfer process and support their children's development effectively across different settings.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases received careful consideration throughout the analysis. I closely examined instances in which participant experiences diverged from the prevailing themes. These situations were treated as chances to obtain deeper comprehension of parents' perceptions of transfer of behavioral skills. Consideration of discrepant cases added depth to the emerging themes by modifying the themes rather than refuting them (Ruslin et al., 2022). One discrepant case appeared during data collection. Participant 3's narrative diverged from one of the common themes derived from the narratives of the remaining participants. The appearance of discrepant narratives permits the comparison, modification, and refinement of emerging themes (Ruslin et al., 2022). In this instance, Participant 3's narrative shed light on the themes emerging throughout the research.

Participant 3 was a father of two SWAs. Having children with similar diagnoses in similar special education programs allowed him to refine his understanding of ASD and interventions for extinguishing maladjusted behaviors. Participant 3 did not report difficulty replicating a structured environment. Participant 3 reported the use at home of strict regimented schedules, controlled routines, and calm-down areas to reduce sensory overload that rivaled those in the school setting. Participant 3 reported outfitting his children's playroom in a manner consistent with a special education classroom.

Participant 3 emphasized the importance of visual schedules and social stories, and he tailored them to suit his children's individual needs. His commitment to replicating a structured setting at home demonstrated dedication to providing a consistent and supportive space for his children. Participant 3 did not report difficulty replicating a structured environment, but his attitude emphasized the importance of such an environment. Other participants reported difficulty replicating a structured environment. Although Participant 3, the only father interviewed, diverged from the shared perspective of the other participants that it was difficult to replicate a structured environment, he overlapped with other participants with respect to the first theme relating to the significance of teacher-parent communication.

Analysis of this discrepant case provided valuable insight into the complexities of parental perceptions regarding the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home. Overall, the analysis of the discrepant case enriched understanding of parental experiences and reinforced the importance of tailoring interventions to meet the diverse needs of SWAs.

Summary

The results of this study fit within the larger body of knowledge regarding transfer from school to home of ABA skills for SWAs. The effectiveness of ABA, parental perceptions, and difficulties with transfer of behavioral skills have all received the attention of other researchers (Artoni et al., 2017). The findings of this study add to existing information and provide insights by affirming existing themes discussed within the literature review and expanding on the difficulties parents perceive with replicating ABA school intervention routines in the home and the need for improved communication between teachers and parents. For instance, the study's focus on communication between family and school is consistent with the findings of earlier studies highlighting the need for cooperation and information exchange to support effective skills transfer (Camargo et al., 2014).

The conceptual framework of the study, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, acted as a prism through which the results were evaluated and placed in perspective. The framework offered a foundation for understanding of the elements leading to effective ABA interventions and transfer of skills from school to home. To illustrate how the various levels of needs intersect with the major themes, the findings were plotted onto Maslow's hierarchy. For instance, although parents and teachers have reported that they collaborate and communicate to foster a supportive environment for development of children's behavioral skills at school and at home, the participants in this study described the need for safety and belonging in connection with the theme of replicating a structured learning environment for the benefit of an SWA.

The following two themes emerged holistically from the data analysis: (a) the significance of regular communication between home and school and (b) the difficulty of replicating the structured learning environment of school at home. These specific themes were viewed through the lens of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes the importance of safety, belonging, and self-esteem, fulfilled by the structured school environment. However, despite participants indicating these needs were met at home, participants also reported a breakdown in transfer of ABA skills from school to home. This breakdown may in part be due to unrealistic expectations of educators that parents can implement tailored ABA interventions at home just as well as teachers can at school. Bridging this gap between home and school settings is very complex and requires more understanding on the part of teachers. Participants highlighted various challenges faced when supporting the transfer of behavioral skills for SWAs that other researchers have not discussed. The research results ultimately emphasize the importance of collaboration between parents and educators to optimize the learning environment for SWA.

Drawing on the groundwork performed by other researchers, I attempted to gain greater comprehension of the complexities of school to home skill transfer for SWA. I found congruence with antecedent research endeavors emphasizing the pivotal role of collaboration and communication between families of SWAs and educational institutions (Kizilkaya & Sari, 2021). Further, the results of this study affirm and underscore the need to foster effective communication channels between home and school (Camargo et al., 2014). The adoption of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the framework underpinning this study facilitated understanding of the dynamics of parental perceptions of school to home

transfer of behavioral skills. This theoretical framework acted as a lens through which the results of data analysis were examined and contextualized within the broader spectrum of human needs in connection with the needs of SWAs in relation to maladaptive behaviors (Guldberg et al., 2017). Superimposition of Maslow's hierarchy onto the emerging themes caused an intersection to emerge, revealing how the pursuit of safety and belonging echoed the need to create an enriching environment conducive to the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home. Maslow's level of self-actualization was not realized by parents of SWA as evidenced by participant data. Self-actualization was not achieved by participants due to a lack of teacher-parent communication and the inability to replicate the structured learning environment.

The two themes that emerged relate centrally to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. First, the significance of sustained and regular communication between parents and schools was a prominent theme, affirming the essential role of such communication in facilitation of skill transfer so that the most basic needs of students are regularly communicated to parents. Second, the challenge faced by parents with respect to replicating the structured learning environment of the school setting at home related to meeting their children's need for consistency, thereby creating comfort and stability, which aligns with Maslow's hierarchy (Socha & Beck, 2015). These themes provide a holistic perspective when viewed through the lens of Maslow's hierarchy and offer deeper insights into transfer of behavioral skills from school to home.

Project Deliverable

The findings of the study were transformed into a deliverable project in the form of a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation tailored specifically to special education staff and other relevant stakeholders. The aim of the associated professional development plan (PDP) is to disseminate the key findings and insights of the research, providing actionable strategies and practical recommendations for the enhancement of school to home transfer of behavioral interventions for SWAs. The PDP serves as an interactive platform for engagement of participants in discussions regarding the challenges faced by SWAs and their families when navigating the transition from school to home settings. Through examples, quotes from participants, and description of evidence-based practices, the presentation offers insights into the significance of regular communication between home and school and the difficulty of replicating a structured school environment at home.

Section 3: The Project**Introduction**

The project consists of a comprehensive professional development and training program tailored to special education staff and relevant stakeholders based on the research findings of this study. The aim of this training initiative is to address the identified challenges to the transfer of behavioral interventions from school to home for elementary SWAs. Through group discussions, case studies, and practical exercises, participants can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of communication between home and school, strategies for replicating a structured learning environment at

home, and fostering collaboration between parents and teachers. The project includes a detailed timeline for three days of training, with each session dedicated to specific topics and activities. To ensure effective delivery and assessment of the training program, the program provides trainer notes; module formats; and materials such as Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and implementation and evaluation plans.

Rationale

The decision to focus on a Professional Developmental Plan (PDP) derived from a consideration of both the research findings and the identified needs of special education staff and stakeholders. After consideration of the data analysis in Section 2, it became clear that parents have been facing significant hurdles with respect to replicating a structured environment at home and fostering effective communication between home and school. Special education staff members, parents, and stakeholders therefore need targeted support and training to address these issues effectively while collaborating. Professional development offers a structured and systematic approach to disseminating knowledge, skills, and strategies with which to enhance practice and improve outcomes for students (Popova et al, 2022).

The content of the project was tailored to comprehensively address the challenges identified in the data analysis. For instance, the training program includes examination of strategies for facilitation of communication and collaboration between parents and teachers, which emphasizes the importance of establishing regular communication channels and sharing information about behavioral interventions and progress on a daily basis. The project also offers practical guidance on how to recreate a structured

environment at home, including adaptation of ABA interventions and establishment of supportive routines and environments conducive to skill transfer. By aligning the content of the project with the most common challenges and needs revealed in the data analysis, the PDP can empower special education staff members and stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to effectively support the school to home transfer of behavioral interventions for SWAs.

Review of the Literature

In the existing education system, particularly within special education, the implementation of informed PDPs has become critical. Many researchers have examined the necessity of these plans, especially those tailored to educators working with SWAs, highlighting the benefits of specialized training, collaborative learning environments, and the integration of modern technological tools.

To ensure a comprehensive foundation for my PDP, I conducted an extensive review of the literature using several academic databases, including ERIC, Google Scholar, and the Walden University Library. My search strategy involved a variety of keywords, including “professional development for special education teachers,” “effective training programs for autism interventions,” and “ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) training for educators” along with general searches for “education professional development research.”

The rigorous search approach employed helped me pinpoint the most relevant and recent publications; I focused specifically on peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2023 to ensure the relevance and currency of data. I aimed for saturation in my

search, making a concerted effort to capture all important recent studies to support the development of an informed and effective PDP. This detailed search process was necessary to assemble a robust database of literature on PDPs.

Professional development specifically designed for special education teachers significantly boosts efficacy and positively impacts student outcomes (Johnson, 2019). Johnson (2019) discussed the overarching benefits of such tailored PDPs, and Bergmark (2023) and Johnson and Jones (2021) emphasized the transformative potential of continuous, theory-based professional learning on effective classroom management.

Focusing on specialized training, Anderson and Carr (2021) demonstrated that training in ABA equips teachers to apply consistent behavioral interventions across the classroom setting. Finkelstein et al. (2019) affirmed that educators who undergo specific training for work with SWAs feel more prepared and effective, which Coenders and Verhoef (2019) suggested leads to heightened professional confidence and improved student interaction. The collaborative aspect of PDPs has received substantial research support (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) argued that development frameworks promoting peer interaction enhance educational practices. Harmon (2020) found that group-based PDPs improve both student engagement and learning outcomes, a claim further supported by Admiraal et al. (2021), who advocated for the benefits of collaborative practices observed over multiple studies.

Technology plays a pivotal role in modern PDPs (Spilker et al., 2020). Spilker et al., (2020) and Cooc (2019) noted the importance of adaptability in the use of online tools for teacher training. Smith and Gillespie (2023) and Carson et al. (2020) explored the

effective use of digital platforms in professional development to enhance accessibility and engagement.

The sustainability of PDPs is crucial (Gupta & Lee, 2020). Gupta and Lee (2020) and Gomez et al. (2019) discussed the importance of embedding professional development into daily routines in education and providing ongoing support to ensure improvements for educators. Didion et al. (2020) echoed this sentiment, highlighting the need for inclusive practices in continuous professional learning in the realm of education.

Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

The theoretical backing of effective PDPs includes insights from adult learning theories, which Knowles et al. (2020) described as crucial for engaging learners through experiential and self-directed learning. Perry et al. (2023) discussed the role of self-regulation in professional development, and McGarr (2021) and Andersson and Keller (2021) championed action research and simulation-based training as methods for practical application in teaching.

Obee et al. (2023) reviewed effective professional development strategies in special education that teach enhancement of the transfer of skills. Bragg et al. (2021) outlined various models of professional development that further enhance skills and practices for teachers.

Ramírez-Montoya et al. (2021) and Noonan (2019) provided a broader perspective on trends and challenges in teacher professional development in the United States, pointing out the necessity for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of PDPs to meet prevailing educational demands. The reviewed literature supports the use of structured,

theory-informed PDPs that integrate specialized training, collaborative learning, and the use of technology (Noonan, 2019). These elements are essential for development of strong educators who are not only equipped to handle the specific needs of SWAs but also adaptable to evolving educational landscapes. As I developed the PDP, it was crucial that development remained focused on foundational insights to maximize the PDP's effectiveness at improving how SWAs transfer skills from school to home.

Theory and Research Supporting the Project

The PDP crafted for this study aligns with the identified challenges to the transfer of behavioral interventions from school to home for SWAs. This alignment is important for addressing the observed breakdown at home of behavior management implemented successfully at school. The design of this PDP was grounded in empirical research to ensure its efficacy. The PDP design was informed by the key issues uncovered in my research regarding the gap in the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home. Teachers and parents have reported that although behavior management strategies are effectively implemented in school, they are often less effective or applicable at home (Azad et al., 2021). To address this issue, the PDP includes targeted training in behavioral interventions supported the research of Anderson and Carr (2021) and Finkelstein et al. (2021), who highlighted the effectiveness of specialized training for educators. The PDP also incorporates modules on improvement of communication skills, which are essential for ensuring consistent implementation of behavioral strategies across settings; these modules address one of the critical gaps I identified in the study.

The PDP involves the use of a collaborative learning approach to foster a community of practice among educators and parents, which receives support from the findings of Admiraal et al. (2021) who emphasized the benefits of collaborative educational practices and the attainment of increasingly positive outcomes when teachers and parents work together. This aspect of the PDP was designed to enhance cooperative engagement and support among all stakeholders to improve overall educational outcomes for SWAs.

The theoretical underpinnings of the PDP include adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2020), which suggests adults learn best when engaged in relevant and practical tasks, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), which stresses the importance of fulfilling physiological and safety needs before addressing psychological ones. These theories support the PDP's focus on interactive and practical training sessions and establish the importance of creating supportive learning environments that can cater to a wide range of needs.

The PDP is thus a well-rounded educational strategy that links theoretical knowledge with practical applications to address the needs of SWAs and their parents. By combining empirical support with clear understanding of relevant educational theories, the PDP has the potential to significantly improve the transfer of effective teaching and behavioral strategies from school to home, thereby benefiting SWAs and providing them with consistent and supportive experiences in both environments.

Project Description

Several resources are crucial for effective implementation of my PDP aimed at enhancement of educational outcomes for SWAs. These include comprehensive training materials tailored specifically to the skilled behavioral instructors who specialize in ASD education and behavioral strategies and appropriate facilities that can accommodate hands-on training sessions. Access to technological tools to facilitate ongoing virtual learning and support is also essential. With regard to existing supports, the initiative received backing from a department of the school system that prioritized professional development for educators. I have also received significant support from the community, including educational consultants who offered additional expertise and resources. Involvement of students' families also plays a critical role in the PDP, because parental cooperation is pivotal for reinforcing learning outside the classroom.

However, barriers such as limited financial and human resources can restrict the scope of training programs (Andersson & Keller, 2021). Time constraints also constitute a significant challenge, because balancing comprehensive professional development with existing educational responsibilities can be difficult. Educators may also resist if they are hesitant to adopt new methods and integrate them into their teaching practices (Admiraal et al., 2021). To overcome these barriers, I will explore various funding opportunities, including grants and partnerships with educational foundations, to secure additional financial support. To address time constraints, the training sessions will be scheduled during off-peak hours and planned professional development days to minimize disruption. To address resistance to change, I will conduct sessions to showcase the

benefits of specialized interventions, with the aim of encouraging a more receptive attitude among faculty and staff members.

The PDP was designed to be intensive and comprehensive, spread across a concentrated 3-day period, with each day dedicated to a different phase of training and development.

Day 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

The focus of the first day is on introductory workshops in which participating educators are familiarized with ABA and other behavioral intervention strategies. These sessions provide a foundational understanding of the key concepts and methodologies used throughout the program. The aim is to ensure that all participants have a solid theoretical base before moving on to more practical applications.

Day 2: Active Engagement and Collaborative Learning

On the second day, the program pivots toward active engagement through collaborative learning exercises and in-depth group discussions. Participants engage in structured activities that require them to work together to solve problems and develop strategies based on the theoretical knowledge acquired on the first day. These activities encourage peer-to-peer learning and facilitate the exchange of ideas among teachers. This collaborative approach not only reinforces the learning from Day 1 but also enhances participants' communication and teamwork skills. Facilitators on hand guide the discussions, provide insights, and help educators effectively integrate theory with practice in real-world scenarios.

Day 3: Implementation and Evaluation

The final day is dedicated to implementing the strategies in simulated classroom settings, which the training leaders monitor closely. This implementation phase is accompanied by continuous assessment and on-the-spot feedback, vital for immediate improvement. The day concludes with a comprehensive evaluation session that involves gathering feedback from all stakeholders. This feedback is crucial for identifying any areas in need of improvement in both the educators' techniques and the overall training program.

Discussion

The condensed and intensive 3-day format ensures that educators are not only exposed to essential educational strategies but also equipped to practically implement them. The structure of the program maximizes learning and retention within a short time, making efficient use of the time available and providing immediate, actionable results.

Clear definition of roles and responsibilities ensures the PDP is actionable. Participating educators should actively participate in all training sessions and integrate new knowledge into their teaching. Special education team leaders oversee the implementation process, offering support to teachers as necessary and facilitating the integration of new teaching methods. School administrators must ensure provision of adequate logistical and financial resources. Parents should collaborate closely with teachers to support implementation of new strategies at home, ensuring consistent and supportive learning environments for students. The structured approach, combined with commitment from all parties involved, should significantly enhance the teaching and

management capabilities of educators working with SWAs, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for these students.

Project Evaluation Plan

An outcome-based evaluation will be used to systematically assess the PDP's effectiveness. This approach will focus on the end results of the program, specifically the measurable changes in teacher behaviors and student outcomes following implementation. Evaluation will involve setting specific, measurable goals at the outset and using those goals as benchmarks to evaluate the PDP's success.

The choice of outcome-based evaluation derived from its ability to provide clear, objective data on the effectiveness of the program. Focusing on outcomes will allow direct assessment of whether the key goals of the PDP—such as improved application of behavioral strategies and enhancement of collaborative practices—are met. This type of evaluation will allow measurement of the program's impact on both teacher practices and student behaviors, offering a straightforward assessment of whether the PDP is producing the intended effects.

The primary goals of the PDP are to enhance educational outcomes for SWAs by equipping teachers with effective behavioral intervention skills and to foster better collaboration between educators and parents. Specifically, the aim of the project is to increase educators' proficiency in the use of ABA (and related strategies) and improve consistency of application of behavioral interventions across different settings, including at home. Other goals include development of a supportive network of practice among teachers to encourage continuous professional development and sharing of best practices.

The overarching evaluation goal is to determine whether the PDP effectively enhances the ability of teachers to apply learned behavioral strategies consistently and competently across various environments, and whether it supports positive changes in student behavior as observed at school and at home.

Educators constitute one group of the PDP's stakeholders. Teachers participating in the PDP will directly use the training in their daily interactions with students. Teachers' experience and outcomes are thus critical for assessing the effectiveness of the PDP. Special education leaders will be responsible for guiding the PDP implementation and will aid interpretation of evaluation results to refine and improve the program. School administrators will provide necessary support for the PDP and will use evaluation outcomes to make informed decisions about ongoing and future professional development initiatives. Parents will also play a crucial role because they must reinforce learned behaviors at home. Their feedback on changes in their children's behavior after the training will thus be invaluable. The success of the PDP ultimately will be reflected in the behavioral and learning advancements of the students, which will serve as the fundamental metric for evaluation of that success. This outcome-based evaluation framework is designed to ensure that the PDP not only meets its set objectives but also contributes to meaningful and sustainable improvements in both teaching practices and student outcomes within the special education context.

Project Implications

The PDP for teachers working with SWAs holds substantial promise for fostering social change, significantly impacting both the local educational environment and the

broader community. This PDP was designed to enhance the educational outcomes of SWAs by improving the ability of teachers to effectively implement specialized behavioral interventions that transfer from school to home. The aim of this focused training is not only to reduce educational disparities but also to enhance teaching and classroom inclusivity.

The PDP's potential for social change extends beyond educational equality. The PDP empowers teachers by providing them with the skills and confidence needed to handle diverse classroom needs, which can potentially reduce professional burnout and improve job satisfaction (Finkelstein et al, 2021). For SWAs, the PDP promises a more supportive and effective learning environment, which is crucial for their personal development and self-esteem (Finkelstein et al, 2021). By involving parents and the community in the educational process, the PDP raises awareness about ASD and promotes inclusivity, helping to integrate SWAs more fully into the community. This project also holds significance for local stakeholders. Teachers will benefit from enhanced professional skills and support, school administrators will see improvements in school performance, and parents will witness direct benefits to their children's education. Such comprehensive community engagement can help alleviate many challenges associated with managing the educational needs of SWAs.

In a broader context, this PDP, if successful, could serve as a model for similar initiatives elsewhere, potentially influencing wider educational reforms. By demonstrating the effective integration of specialized training into mainstream educational practices, the PDP could contribute to global discussion of best practices for

special education. Overall, the project supports broader societal goals of accessibility and inclusivity in education, underscoring its importance as a possibly transformative PDP with multiple social implications.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The PDP I created for educators who teach SWAs has several significant strengths rooted in academic research and practical methodologies. Notably, the plan's focus on specialized training receives support from empirical evidence described by researchers such as Anderson and Carr (2021) and Finkelstein et al. (2021). These researchers validated the effectiveness of ABA training for enhancing teacher capabilities, which in turn positively impacts student outcomes. The incorporation of such training in professional development ensures that the professional development delivered is not only relevant but also capable of yielding measurable and obtainable goals in educational practices for SWAs (Anderson & Carr, 2021).

The PDP's application of collaborative learning models, as recommended by Anderson and Carr (2021), introduces an environment of shared knowledge and mutual support among educators. This approach facilitates a dynamic exchange of ideas and strategies, which is essential for fostering a culture of learning and adaptability among teachers who work with SWAs. The benefits of this collaborative atmosphere extend beyond individual teacher growth and improve the quality of education provided to SWAs. The 3-day length of the PDP is also a benefit because the PDP condenses the training to its most salient goals in an intensive but manageable time frame. This compact format enables educators to immerse themselves in learning and skill acquisition without experiencing the overwhelming factors associated with prolonged sessions (Finkelstein et al., 2021). The short burst of focused, in-depth training facilitates retention rate of the

material and ensures teachers can immediately apply new strategies and techniques in their classrooms (Anderson & Carr, 2021).

However, the PDP also has certain limitations that need careful consideration. One of the most pressing challenges is the integration of extensive professional development into educators' already demanding schedules. As highlighted by Finkelstein et al. (2021), finding time for in-depth training sessions within the constraints of the school calendar can be daunting. This constraint necessitates a PDP that is both time-efficient and flexible, allowing teachers to engage in meaningful professional development without diverting them from their primary instructional responsibilities.

Another notable limitation concerns the scalability of the PDP. Although the strategies involved derive from sound research, the ever-evolving nature of educational standards and technology demands ongoing revisions of training content (Noonan, 2019). As Finkelstein et al. (2021) suggested, maintaining the relevance of professional development programs requires continuous evaluation and realignment with recent research. I must ensure that I remain responsive to these changes for the sustained success and relevance of the PDP for improving educational outcomes for SWAs.

In summary, although the PDP stands on a solid foundation of research-supported strategies that enhance both teacher performance and student learning, development and implementation of an effective PDP requires overcoming significant logistical and adaptive challenges, such as working around faculty schedules and remaining informed about current research. Addressing these issues through scheduling and a commitment to

continual program evaluation and adjustment will help to sustain the effectiveness of the PDP and ensure it continues to meet the evolving needs of educators and their students.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Based on the results of the study, the transfer of behavioral skills from school to home for SWAs can benefit from multiple approaches. Although the PDP I created provides a structured framework for educators, alternative definitions of the problem and a variety of solutions could further support the effectiveness of transfer of behavior skills across different settings.

One alternative definition of the problem focuses not just on the parental perspective but also on the broader community consisting of parents, caregivers, and educators (Buren et al., 2022). Recognizing that a child's learning environment extends beyond the classroom allows redefinition of the problem in terms of a need for comprehensive community education. Solutions could include community workshops that educate not only teachers but also family members and other caregivers about effective behavioral strategies for SWAs. These workshops could be conducted in collaboration with local community centers and health services to reach a broad audience.

Another approach I considered treats inconsistency in behavioral management as a result not of a shortfall in teacher training but of lack of resources and support for continuous learning and strategies for addressing individual needs (Leaf et al., 2022). Alternative solutions might then focus on the creation of ongoing support groups or fora in which educators can regularly discuss challenges and share best practices.

As a researcher, I could have expanded the participant base of the study to gain more comprehensive insight into the transfer of school-learned behaviors to home settings. One effective method would have been to reach out to after-school programs. These programs often work closely with the same group targeted in the study and can provide additional perspectives on day-to-day challenges and successes in behavior management outside the conventional classroom setting (Nicholson et al., 2021).

I could also have sought parent participants from multiple districts to significantly broaden the scope of the study and increase the size of the sample. By distributing surveys or conducting interviews across different educational and demographic contexts, I could have accessed a wider range of data to enhance the validity of the findings. To do this effectively, I could have partnered with local educational boards or parent-teacher associations to facilitate communication and encourage participation.

These alternative approaches and expanded methods of engagement would have not only potentially enriched the data collected but also offered a more holistic view of the challenges and solutions associated with transferring effective behavioral interventions from school to home. These alternative approaches will be kept in mind moving forward because they may offer broader insights and can aid development of more comprehensive strategies that involve all stakeholders in the education of SWAs. By embracing these diverse perspectives and expanding the participant base in future studies, I can develop more targeted interventions that address the individual needs of SWAs and lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Throughout the research and development of the PDP for educators teaching SWAs, I gained significant insight into the nature of educational interventions and their impacts. This process not only enhanced my understanding of the perspectives of parents who care for SWAs but also deepened my appreciation for the complexities involved in translating theory into practice.

One of the key lessons I learned from this project was the importance of meticulous planning and execution in research. Developing the PDP required a thorough understanding of both existing literature and the specific needs of the target audience. I learned to critically evaluate research findings and adapt recommendations to suit local contexts. This experience sharpened my skills in literature review, data analysis, and synthesis, all of which are crucial for any education researcher. Development of the PDP taught me the practical aspects of translating research insights into actionable strategies. I learned the importance of designing training sessions that are not only informative but also engaging and applicable to daily teaching practices. The process of creating interactive and impactful learning experiences for teachers highlighted the need for creativity and adaptability. This phase also taught me about the logistical considerations of implementing professional development programs, from scheduling and resource allocation to participant engagement and feedback collection.

Reflecting on my journey as a scholar and practitioner during this study, I recognize substantial growth in my ability to conduct meaningful research that directly

informs practice. I have become more adept at asking pertinent questions, identifying appropriate methodologies, and applying research findings to solve real-world problems.

While developing the project, I learned the critical importance of stakeholder engagement and communication. Engaging with educators, parents, and administrative staff members throughout the process of project development taught me the value of feedback and collaborative problem solving. This experience emphasized for me the need to remain flexible and responsive to feedback and allow for ongoing adjustments to better meet the needs of all stakeholders. Overall, the research and development of the PDP were profoundly educational and transformative, pushing me to integrate my scholarly pursuits with practical implementation skills. This project has not only contributed to my professional development but has also left me with invaluable lessons that I will carry forward into future research and educational initiatives.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

Reflection on the importance of this research and the development of the PDP highlights the critical need to integrate education theories with practical applications, especially in special education for SWAs. This work is vital not only for its direct impact on educators and students but also for its potential to influence broader educational practices. I had the opportunity to illuminate significant gaps in how educational interventions for SWAs are transferred from school to home. Understanding and addressing these gaps is essential for creating effective strategies that support consistent learning across environments. This insight was crucial for development of a training program that effectively equips educators to comprehensively support their students.

Developing the PDP offered practical insights into the tailoring of a program to meet specific student and classroom needs. This process revealed how responsive and relevant professional development can help educators to apply unfamiliar strategies.

This project advanced my expertise as a scholar and practitioner by challenging me to blend education, theoretical frameworks, and parental perceptions to tackle complex educational challenges. I have also learned the value of applying collaborative and communicative approaches with stakeholders, which was critical for refining the PDP with stakeholders in mind. Overall, I deepened my understanding of the transformative potential of professional development in special education. The study reinforced for me the significance of specialized training for educators, and it highlighted how inclusive and supportive educational environments contribute to student success. The insights gained will continue to shape my approach to educational research and program development to bridge theory and practice in education.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The development and implementation of the PDP for educators teaching SWAs have substantial implications for social change, at both the family and organizational levels. At the family level, the PDP has the potential to enhance the home lives of SWAs by improving the consistency and effectiveness of behavioral interventions across settings. As educators become more adept at implementing these strategies, parents and caregivers may experience less stress and more confidence in their ability to support their children's learning and behavioral needs at home. This could lead to more supportive and understanding family environments.

At the organizational level, the PDP encourages schools and educational institutions to adopt a more structured and evidence-based approach to professional development. This could lead to broader institutional changes, such as improved training protocols, better support systems for teachers, and a more inclusive educational environment sensitive to the needs of all students, especially those with special needs. These improvements could contribute to the organizational culture by promoting a more collaborative, informed, and proactive approach to education.

From a methodological perspective, future research could benefit from expansion of the base of parent participants to include a more diverse range of educational settings and geographic locations. This would enhance the generalizability of the findings. This study underscores the theoretical importance of integrating behavioral and educational theories in the development of professional development programs. Future research could involve exploration of additional theoretical frameworks that might further explain the dynamics of learning transfer between school and home.

With respect to practice, I recommend that education leaders and policymakers consider integrating similar PDPs into their training schedules regularly. This would improve the skills of educators and ensure that new teaching staff receive preparation to handle the challenges of teaching SWAs. Future researchers should aim to identify barriers to the effective implementation of transfer of behavioral skills. Researching the direct impact of educational practices on the academic and social outcomes of SWAs would also provide insight into the effectiveness of such PDPs that focus on best practices for SWAs.

This study has valuable implications for the enhancement of educational practices at both the micro (family) and macro (organizational) levels. The continued exploration and development of PDPs based on this foundation could lead to significant positive social change and improve the transfer of behavioral skills and educational outcomes for SWAs.

Conclusion

This study of parents' perspectives of the transfer of behavioral skills underscores the critical importance of specialized training to bridge the gap between educational theory and practical application. By equipping teachers with effective strategies with which to manage and transfer learned behaviors from school to home, I seek to enhance educational outcomes of SWAs by supporting faculty and families wishing to maintain these strategies across settings.

The positive impact of this research extends beyond individual classrooms to broader education policies and practices; I advocate for a more inclusive and effective approach to working with SWAs to better promote skill transfer. Research that influences development of educational interventions can enhance the quality of life of SWAs and their family members, which is why I sought the perspectives of parents in the study. The refinement of educational practices for SWAs through research and professional development is a necessary and transformative endeavor that promises to elevate the educational experience for all students and ensure that learning is a continuous, collaborative, and inclusive process.

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Appendix A: The Project

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching Students with Autism Who Have Behavioral
Challenges

Andre Lamar Patterson

Day 1: Understanding Autism and Behavioral Management

- **Welcome and Workshop Objectives**
 - Introduction to workshop facilitators and participants
 - Detailed explanation of workshop goals
 - Review of the full agenda with specific session timings

Exploring Autism Spectrum Disorder

- In-depth explanation of Autism, including the spectrum nature of the disorder
- Discussion on the neurological and developmental aspects of Autism
- Interactive poll: Common myths and truths about Students with Autism (SWA)

Behavioral Characteristics of Students with Autism

- Detailed exploration of common behavioral characteristics associated with ASD
- Video examples demonstrating different behaviors
- Discussion on how these behaviors may present challenges in educational settings

Foundations of Behavior Management

- . Behavioral management: Objectives
 - . *key theories*
- . The significance of behavior management in supporting SWA effectively

Principles and Techniques of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

- . Detailed breakdown of ABA principles
- . How ABA techniques are adapted for different age groups and settings
- . Case study analysis of ABA success stories

Interactive Role Play: Managing Triggers

- . Time for participants to engage in role-playing exercises to practice managing identified triggers
- . Group discussion will follow each role-play to evaluate strategies and outcomes

Introduction to Behavioral Interventions

- . Overview of various behavioral interventions used in ASD
- . Pros and cons of popular interventions with real-life application examples

Open Forum Q&A

- A session dedicated to addressing participant queries and clarifications on day's content

End-of-Day Reflection and Feedback

- . Reflective session for participants to share key learnings
- . Solicit feedback on the day's sessions for continuous improvement

DAY 2**EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR
BEHAVIORAL SKILL TRANSFER**

Teaching Students with Autism Who Have Behavioral
Challenges

Andre Lamar Patterson

Day 1 Recap and Introduction to Day 2

- . Brief recap of Day 1 themes
- . Overview of Day 2 focus: Enhancing skill transfer from school to home

Building Communication Bridges

- Techniques for developing effective communication channels between school and home
- Role-playing exercise: Effective parent-teacher meetings

Crafting Effective Behavior Plans

- Step-by-step guide to developing behavior plans that parents can follow at home
- Workshop: Participants draft behavior plans based on given student profiles

Customizing ABA Techniques for Home Use

- . Detailed guidelines for adapting school-based ABA techniques for home application
- . Interactive session: Small groups modify an ABA plan for home use

Workshop: Designing Tailored Behavior Plans

- . Participants use their insights to create tailored behavior plans for case studies
- . Collaborative session with feedback from peers and facilitators

Comprehensive Review and Problem Solving

- . Review plans developed by participants, discuss potential challenges and solutions
- . Troubleshooting common issues in plans

Day 2 Wrap-Up and Q&A

- . Recap of the day's key points
- . Open floor for additional questions and interactive discussion

DAY 3**SUSTAINING CHANGE AND SUPPORT
SYSTEMS**

Teaching Students with Autism Who Have Behavioral
Challenges

Andre Lamar Patterson

Day 2 Review and Day 3 Goals

- . Quick overview of Day 2 outcomes
- . Introduction to Day 3: Long-term support and reinforcement

Advanced Reinforcement Techniques

- . In-depth look at reinforcement techniques tailored for long-term success
- . Interactive demo: Implementing reinforcement in varied scenarios

Strategies for Handling Setbacks

- . Discussion on common setbacks in behavior management and strategic responses
- . Group activity: Case studies where teams devise strategic responses to hypothetical setbacks

Role Play: Real-Life Scenarios

- Role play based on real-life scenarios to practice handling setbacks and applying reinforcement techniques

Building and Utilizing Support Networks

- . Importance of creating supportive networks for parents and educators
- . Discussion on building effective community support systems

Long-Term Planning and Goal Setting

- Workshop on setting achievable long-term goals for students with ASD
- Participants create a 6-month follow-up plan for continuing professional development

Creating Personal Action Plans

- Guided session to help participants draft actionable plans for implementing workshop learnings

Workshop Evaluation and Closure

- Comprehensive evaluation of the workshop
- Distribution of certificates and closing remarks

Feedback and Next Steps

- Collect participant feedback for future workshops

Parent Volunteers Needed!



This is a new study about the perspective of parents of students with Autism that could help improve Special Education services in school. For this study you are invited to describe your experiences with behavior interventions provided by your student's school.

About the study:

- **Take part in a 45-60 minute research interview to discuss your child's development and progress in and out of the classroom.**
- **To protect your privacy, your identity will be kept confidential in the study**
- **All interview will be conducted via teleconference such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom**

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years old or older
- Be a parent of an elementary aged student with Autism
- Your child spends at least a portion of the day in a Special Education classroom in the local school district

This interview is part of a doctoral study for Andre Patterson, student at Walden University.

Please contact Andre Patterson at ... for more information.

Appendix C: Guided Questions

1. How old was your child when they began school?
2. How did you find out your child had autism? Were they given a diagnosis?
3. Is your child in an inclusion or self contained setting at school?
4. Is your child in any private therapy?
5. What behavioral concerns or differences does your child demonstrate at home?
6. What behavioral concerns or differences does your child demonstrate at school?
7. Does the teacher report frequent behavioral concerns?
8. What are the most common challenging behaviors you observe in your child with Autism?
9. How do these challenging behaviors impact your daily life and the lives of other family members?
10. What strategies or interventions have you found effective in managing and reducing challenging behaviors?
11. What are the biggest obstacles you face in addressing and managing your child's challenging behaviors?
12. How do you seek support or information about managing challenging behaviors in your child with autism?
13. What behavioral interventions does your child's school provide?
14. How does the Special Education staff provide you notes on your child's progress?
15. How long has your child been receiving behavior based support in the school system?
16. In what ways, if any, have their behaviors changed since receiving school based behavioral interventions?
17. How do you feel about the availability of behavior support for your child?
18. What are your experiences with school support in addressing challenging behaviors?
19. Do the behaviors reported at school line up with the behaviors displayed at home?
20. How does the presence of challenging behaviors affect your child's participation in social activities and interactions?
21. What are your thoughts on the impact of challenging behaviors on your child's educational experiences and opportunities?
22. What types of support or resources from the school would you find beneficial in addressing and managing challenging behaviors?
23. How do you think interfering behaviors will affect your child's well-being?
24. What are your concerns or hopes for the future in terms of addressing and improving challenging behaviors in your child?
25. How do you perceive the effectiveness of behavior support in school to help behavioral problems in settings outside of school?