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Middle School Teachers' and Administrators' Experiences When Students Transition

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2019

Abstract

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Into Alternative Educational Settings

by

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M.Ed., Boston University, 1986

BS, Slippery Rock University, 1982

AA, Allegheny Community College, 1978

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Organizational Psychology

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Abstract

Student discipline and subsequent placements are a common problem in education. This qualitative phenomenological study addressed a gap in the literature by discovering the experiences of middle school teachers and administrators regarding student discipline, classroom removal, and assignment of students to alternative education. This research describes the development of an interview protocol based on critical incident theory and demonstrates its usage in drawing out thick, rich descriptions which help increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Initial interview data are presented to highlight the utilization of critical incident theory to elicit specific information about how participants experienced various critical interactions that influenced academic decisions about the student removal process, the kinds of situations and safety issues they encountered, and training they received for managing student removal. Qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed an overarching theme of managing disruptive classroom behavior. Participants described classroom management difficulties, their methods of dealing with disruptive students, and their emotional reactions to disruptions. Some teachers shared that at times, they reconsidered their decision to teach due to classroom management problems, and some revealed that their classroom management training had been deficient. Recommendations include further research on the degree and kinds of stress resulting from teachers having to deal with student discipline problems. Implications for positive social change include motivating schools to evaluate their programs of continuing teacher education for dealing with classroom discipline and to provide opportunities for teachers to discuss, with their peers, their behavioral and emotional reactions to difficult student encounters, thereby contributing to teacher well-being and retention.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my loving parents who instilled in me before they left this earth, a deep belief in God, the power of love, and me. Also Superintendent Robin Battershell, who fate has kept my unofficial mentor since May 1986.

Acknowledgments

From the recesses of my heart, I would like to thank my family, friends, and co-workers who always found the strength to cheer me on during this process. I would also like to thank my medical team that wouldn't allow me to give up. Special acknowledgement is due to my Heavenly Father who never allowed me to feel alone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Teachers and administrators are charged with managing school and classroom discipline

issues in a manner that ensures a safe and effective learning environment for all students. In

some cases, this may require removal of disruptive students from the classroom and school

followed by placement in an alternative education site. In recent years, the number of students

nationwide who are placed in alternative educational settings is growing (Scipio, 2013).

Nationwide, in 2007–2008, the United States had 646,500 public school students attending

alternative schools and programs for at-risk students (National Center for Educational Statistics,

2010). In Texas in 2014-2015, schools made 5,371,933 assignments to disciplinary alternative

education programs, with 2,666,290 of that total identified as at-risk students (Texas Education

Agency, 2012).

This increase in alternative placement reflects the philosophy that these settings are able

to adequately educate students disciplined in this way (Indiana Department of Education, 2014).

School officials believe alternative placement sends a clear message that certain behaviors are

not acceptable in the school (Toppo, 2013). However, the results of this type of alternative

placement have been mixed (Oliver, Wehby, & Reschly, 2011), with some research indicating

that school suspensions have negative consequences (American Psychological Association,

2008; Marsh, 2014; Mucha, 2009; Wallace, 2012). Negative consequences include making it

more difficult for the student to keep up with lessons (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011) and

increasing the probability that students will drop out of school (Suh & Suh, 2007).

Teachers and administrators are key figures in the student removal process. Teachers report discipline issues and a designated campus administrator makes the decision to remove or not remove the student. While extensive literature exists on the consequences of alternative placement related to students and the community, the literature is mostly silent regarding accounts of personal experiences and perceptions expressed by educators who participate in the process.

In this study, I addressed this gap in the literature by querying a sample of teachers and administrators in three Texas middle schools to learn their experiences as participants in removing students from the classroom and assigning those students to alternative education programs. These educators were interviewed to interpret (a) their experiences with the student removal and alternative assignment process, (b) their criteria for whether to remove a student and assign the student to alternative education and (c) their assessment of the training they received for managing student misbehavior.

Background

The U.S. Department of Education's current approach to disciplining students relies heavily on punitive measures, including suspensions, as a response to a wide array of behaviors (Lui, 2013). Under the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the federal government required each state to report school safety and drug use data to the public. States were also required to bring all students to the "proficient level" on state tests by the 2013-14 school year, although each state got to decide, individually, just what "proficiency" should look like, and which tests to use. (In early 2015, the deadline had passed, but no states had gotten all 100 % of its students

over the proficiency bar.) Reports must contain information about incidents involving school violence and drug use and include specifics of discipline (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The NCLB Act also included granting educators' broad authority to manage student discipline issues (Camp, 2011). Both individual public schools and school districts became responsible for meeting the standards set by the federal government with the passing of the amended NCLB in 2006 (Federal Education Budget Project, 2014). One effect of the law has been that teachers and administrators are required to call law enforcement for disciplinary matters that they previously resolved directly with parents (Abbott, 2010).

In addition to the requirements of NCLB, in an effort to reduce school violence, the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 mandated that states receiving federal funding must address the expulsion of students possessing guns at school by requiring all school districts to create and maintain a discipline alternative education program. Some states used this directive as an opportunity to focus on other offenses such as drug use, bullying, fighting, and classroom disruptions (Yell & Rozalski, 2000). To address serious student discipline issues, school districts nationally adopted policies known as zero-tolerance that were originally designed to make schools safer through the mandatory removal of violent students. School districts are required to refer students to the district's Discipline Alternative Educational Program (DAEP) for violations involving drugs, weapons, or violent behavior.

Under the Texas Education Code, school districts also have the power to refer students for nonviolent behavioral offenses. These referrals are called *discretionary referrals*. The Texas Education Code states:

(a) A teacher may send a student to the principal's office to maintain effective discipline in the classroom. The principal shall respond by employing appropriate discipline management techniques consistent with the student code of conduct adopted under Section 37.001.

(b) A teacher may remove from class a student:

(1) who has been documented by the teacher to repeatedly interfere with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class or with the ability of the student's classmates to learn; or

(2) whose behavior the teacher determines is so unruly, disruptive, or abusive that it seriously interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class or the ability of the student's classmates to learn (Section 37.002).

As these guidelines make clear, teachers bear the initial burden of removing students from their classroom for disruptive behavior when it is necessary to restore order and to maintain an interruption-free environment. Such removal can take place only after interventions by the teacher and administrator to establish order have failed and written notice of the student's behavior has been given to the student parents. Following these efforts, if the designated school administrator determines that the classroom removal is appropriate, the removal process begins (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011).

Texas guidelines allow for students to be removed from the classroom and assigned to alternative settings in response to (a) the use of profanity, (b) mutual hitting, and (c) failure to turn in assignments or similar behaviors that teachers label disruptive.The Texas Appleseed

Project's (2010) findings indicate that nearly two-thirds of referrals to DAEPs are discretionary for nonviolent offenses.

Abenefit of the student removal and assignment process is that it helps teachers to better control the classroom-teaching environment; however, a number of criticisms exist regarding the process. One criticism is that despite placing increased responsibility on the public schools, the federal government has done little to fund NCLB mandates or to provide support and training to teachers and administrators in dealing with discipline problems. Since the original federal legislation went into law in 2001, the United States has witnessed an increase in school violence (Mucha, 2009). The pressure and responsibility for student safety and success placed on school personnel have required these personnel to spend a significant amount of time on school discipline problems, detouring time and energy away from teaching (Public Agenda, 2004).

Evidence shows that school suspensions do not reduce the probability of future disruptions (Wallace, 2012) and that suspension has little positive effect on students' behavior (Mucha, 2009). Marsh (2014) found school systems using the harshest and more formal punishment methods, such as strict zero-tolerance policies, had higher rates of misbehavior. In another study, the researchers found that students suspended at the sixth-grade level were more likely to be referred to the school office or suspended in eighth grade, with suspension sometimes being considered a reward by students rather than a punishment (American Psychological Association, 2008).

In Texas, data from the Texas Appleseed Project (2009) indicate that students with a history of placement in a DAEP are five times more likely to drop out of school than their peers

who were never removed from the academic mainstream. Thus, a student with multiple classroom removals and annual school year recidivism to the DAEP is at high risk of never obtaining a high school diploma. The same report reveals a strong link between school suspensions and DAEP placement of students for early school-based discipline problems and later incarcerations in either juvenile or adult institutions for more severe criminal behavior.

In addition, Landon (2014) maintained that students who believe school officials lack a genuine interest in them become alienated from school, and such lack of genuine interest may be higher for disruptive students. While a wide agreement exists that it is necessary to have rules regarding student conduct for schools to provide safe and positive learning environments, it is likely that these rules are effectively enforced only if teachers have the tools and training to keep order and help students succeed academically.

The process of removal from the classroom and subsequent alternative placement, combined with the apparent accumulation of negative consequences, may be causing an unknown negative effect on teachers and administrators. The intent of this study was to hear the experience of these school officials and assess their statements for meaning.

Statement of the Problem

Removal of students from the classroom and assignment to alternative education is a widely used method of dealing with disruptive students. Teachers and school administrators are the front-line people who make decisions about removal and assignment. However, teachers' experiences with the process and their views about their training for dealing with disruptive students need to be assessed and understood. For this study, I addressed the gap in the literature

regarding the experiences of teachers and administrators with respect to their role in the process of student removal and alternative assignment.

Research Questions

The study followed four research questions.

RQ1: How do teachers and school administrators make meaning of their experiences in removing students from the classroom and assigning them to alternative education?

RQ 2: In the context of these classroom discipline experiences, what kinds of situations have teachers and administrators encountered?

RQ 3: During removal situations, what safety issues do teachers and administrators encounter?

RQ 4: What type of training have teachers and administrators received in their education and profession to manage removal issues?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover and describe the experiences of middle school teachers and administrators as they manage disruptive student behavior in their classrooms and decide whether to remove students and assign them to alternative education. The central phenomenon was the meaning educators ascribe to those experiences and how that meaning affects them personally and professionally.

Description of the Study

To fulfill the purpose of the study, I interviewed a purposeful sample of six teachers and two administrators from three Texas middle schools to determine their experiences with student

discipline and the process of student removal and assignment to alternative education. I also investigated the educators' criteria for removal and assignment to alternative education and their views regarding their training for dealing with disruptive students. The teachers and administrators were asked 15 open-ended questions in a semistructured interview. To evaluate the relevance of the interview questions to the purpose of the study beforehand, I asked six middle school teachers and two middle school administrators, who did not otherwise participate in the study, to examine the questions. Their feedback was taken into account in deciding on the final wording of the questions. The15 interview questions follow.

<p align="center">Interview Questions</p>

RQ 1: How do teachers and school administrators make meaning of their experiences in removing students from the classroom and assigning them to alternative education?

1. Tell me what it is like to maintain classroom discipline in today's educational environment.

2. To what extent does maintaining classroom discipline support or diminish your teaching goals and aspirations?

3. What are some variables and issues that must be addressed in maintaining classroom discipline?

RQ 2: In the context of these classroom discipline experiences, what kinds of situations do teachers and administrators encounter?

4. Describe your experiences of being involved in situations where students were removed from the classroom and assigned to an alternative education setting.

5. Describe the process in these student removal situations, as you understand it.

6. What are some variables and issues that must be addressed in maintaining classroom discipline?

7. Describe your experiences, if any of feeling emotionally torn when students were removed from the classroom and assigned to an alternative education setting.

RQ 3: During removal situations, what safety issues do teachers and administrators encounter?

8. During removal situations, what safety issues (physical, political, or career) have you encountered?

9. Describe these safety issues.

10. How did you manage them?

11. How were you affected personally?

RQ 4: What training do teachers and administrators receive in their education and profession to manage student removal?

12. What classroom or school system discipline topics were covered in your academic degree program?

13. What type of training or continuing education in school disciplinary issues have you received since becoming a full-time professional educator?

14. Identify and assess the policies, procedures, and criteria you follow when a student is removed from the classroom and assigned to alternative education.

15. Assess your level of confidence in managing these situations.

Follow-up questions could be asked based on the interviewees' responses to these15 questions.

I audio recorded and transcribed the interviews. Each participant was allowed to examine the student transcription to ensure that what was transcribed accurately reflected the participant's statements. The transcriptions were then analyzed to identify significant statements, themes, responses, and quotes that provided a level of understanding of the participants' experiences. The findings were organized to reflect the collective meaning of the shared experiences.

Definition of Terms

In-school suspension (ISS): An on-campus, in-house program assigned for a discipline infraction. The length of time or the number of times placed is unlimited. In-school suspension is designed to avoid many of the adverse effects of out-of-school suspension (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Out-of-school suspension (OSS): The temporary removal of a student from the campus. An OSS placement cannot exceed 3 days, but no cap on the number of suspensions exists (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Discipline Alternative Educational Program (DAEP): An alternative education setting created for students who are temporarily removed from their regular instructional settings for disciplinary purposes (Texas Education Agency, 2007). According to Hogg Foundation for Mental Health: Services, Research, Policy, and Education (2008, p. 1), "The D.A.E.P. is responsible for educating students who require a disciplinary placement, but have not been expelled and sent to the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program."

Due process: A term from the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, both of which require that the state provide "due process" to an individual prior to taking from that person "life, liberty, or property." The fundamentals of due process are a notice and an opportunity for a hearing (Walsh et al., 2010, pp. 307–310).

The Public Education Information Management System: A system housing all data requested and received by the Texas Education Agency about public education, including student demographic information and disciplinary actions.

Disproportional application: A higher portion or percentage of one group of students being subjected to a penalty compared to another group of students for the same violation (Evenson, Jutsinger, Pelischek, & Schulz, 2009).

Recidivism: Misbehavior resulting in repeated office referrals, classroom removals, or return to ISS, OSS, or DAEP with or without a hearing during a school year following a prior alternative educational placement.

School rules: "Prescriptions legitimized by teachers, about how to behave in school situations, standards by which behavior in school is judged to be appropriate, right and desirable, or inappropriate, wrong and forbidden" (Thornberg, 2008, p. 37).

Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 37: The statute related to student discipline and maintenance of law and order in public schools. According to the Texas Education Agency, 2008 website, the implementations of Chapter 37 statutes are reported to the state through The Public Education Information Management System.

Assumptions

Assumptions of the study were, first, that teachers and administrators who participated in this study would be honest and forthright in their answers. A second assumption was that the questions selected for the interviews would elicit relevant and substantial information from the participants (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010). A third assumption was that the perceptions and concerns of the interviewees about the student removal process would be similar to the perceptions and concerns of many other teachers and administrators. Although the sample was not randomly chosen from the population (see Limitations), it was assumed that their views would be suggestive of the views of other teachers and administrators regarding the issue of student removal and reassignment.

Limitations

The study was limited by the sample being a convenience sample. Because the sample was not randomly chosen from the population of teachers and administrators who deal with student removal and reassignment, a generalization of results was limited.

Generalization of results was also limited by the fact that this was a qualitative study. As a result, it was difficult to draw generalizable conclusions from the findings because the methodology did not give assurance of the transferability of findings across groups or individuals. In terms of reliability, the methodology restricted the ability to reproduce the study to give consistent results (Nesbit & Hadwin, 2006).

Because of the nature of the sample, a risk of researcher bias had to be avoided, especially because the school district chosen for the study employed me as District Coordinator

of Counseling Services and as District Hearing Officer from 2009 to 2012. In terms of validity, qualitative methods typically depend on the researcher's judgment and interpretation that might result in unintended biased information or conclusions, with data richness being dependent on the interviewer (Breakwell, Hammond, & Fife-Schaw, 1995). I undertook steps to prevent bias from entering into the study by adhering strictly to objective interview and analysis guidelines.

Delimitations

A delimitation of the study was that I investigated only teachers' and administrators' experiences and perceptions and did not interview students or the parents of students who had been affected by removal and reassignment to alternative education. A second delimitation was that collected information about teachers and administrators was limited to their gender, age, and years of service. The study did not involve the collection of other information, such as attendance and student achievement, in the schools employing the participants. Such information might have added insights into the views of the participants, but it was not part of this study.

Other delimitations were that the participants were from only three middle schools located in Texas. In particular, the study was delimited to include teachers and administrators from only three schools as opposed to participants being from four or more schools. Furthermore, high school or elementary school teachers and administrators were not interviewed, and participants from schools in other states were not included in the study.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may be useful to schools and school districts in dealing with student removal and assignment to alternative education by helping teachers and administrators better manage the process of student removal and assignment to alternative education. In particular, the results may help school leaders understand the criteria interviewed teachers and administrators used to determine student removal and reassignment to alternative education, their experiences of maintaining control in the classroom, and any concerns the teachers may have had about student assignment to alternative education.

Findings could be further valuable by encouraging reform in the educational system through a change in training, policies, or guidelines for teachers as they work with students. Such changes might help prevent or reduce the number of placements to alternative educational settings. In addition, based on a better understanding of teachers' and administrators' views about the training they have received for managing student misbehavior in the classroom, state policymakers may be better equipped to determine whether to enact legislation for a teacher preparation curriculum that would provide educators with improved classroom-management skills. Finally, the study may also contribute to teacher well-being and retention.

Chapter Summary

Teachers are removing a growing number of U.S. students from classrooms and reassigning students to alternative education settings. Given that this practice may have a harmful effect on the students and on society as a whole (American Psychological Association, 2008), a pressing need exists for researchers to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' and

administrators' experiences and views regarding student removal. Through this study, I sought to gain such an understanding through interviewing middle school teachers and administrators who dealt directly with this issue.

This chapter introduced the research, provided background information, identified the problem, presented the research questions, and explained the purpose of the study. In addition, the chapter included a brief description of the study, along with definitions of key terms and the researcher's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The following chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Literature presented in this review was drawn from EBSCO databases and from the Google and Google Scholar search engines. Keywords and combinations used in the literature search included *alternative education, school discipline, school violence, suspension, expulsion, juvenile delinquency, classroom management, teacher stress, zero tolerance, push-out policies,* and *the school-to-prison pipeline.* I placed emphasis on locating articles and reports published within the past 5 years, but I also reviewed older relevant articles and reports where appropriate.

The review is divided into five major sections after this introduction. The first section provides a general picture of the issue of discipline in schools, including zero tolerance policies and the criminalization of disruptive behaviors. The second section focuses on disciplinary alternative education. The third section concerns the school-to-prison pipeline, inequalities, and due process in applying student disciplinary action to students. The fourth section focuses on proposals for addressing student discipline and removal problems. The fifth and longest section reviews literature dealing with teacher and principal stress, especially as these relate to student misbehavior and discipline issues, and with classroom management strategies.

The Problem of School Safety and Discipline: School Violence,

Discipline, and Zero Tolerance

In the United States, school safety and classroom discipline are crucial issues for K–12 schools, which enroll approximately 50 million students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2015a). Concerning safety, parents,

teachers, and school administrators expect schools to be places for learning, uninterrupted by violent acts. For the most part,these expectations are fulfilled; however, violence does sometimes erupt in schools, hindering learning and having adverse effects on students, the school, and the surrounding community (CDC, 2015a).

School violence, according to the (CDC, (2015b), consists of violent acts performed by youth that occur at (or on the way to or from) school or a school-sponsored event. School violence comprises a wide range of behaviors including bullying, pushing, and shoving, to gang violence and assault. Exposure to school violence can also lead to other detrimental health behaviors and outcomes, including alcohol and drug use, depression, anxiety, fear, other psychological problems, and suicide (CDC, 2015b).

Disruptive behavior in the classroom that interferes with teaching and learning, though usually not as urgent a matter as the perpetration of school violence, is another substantial problem for schools and is the main concern for both teachers and parents (Oliver et al., 2011; Public Agenda, 2004; Skiba, 2014). Not all behaviors that a teacher may view as disruptive are discipline problems. Seeman (2014) defined a discipline problem as "behavior that is actually or potentially disruptive to classroom learning or to the teacher's classroom responsibilities". When a student's classroom behavior is so disruptive that lessons are interrupted, then some form of disciplinary action may be needed to stop the behavior and try to prevent it in the future.

Disciplinary action in some cases may simply amount to telling the student to stop doing whatever the student is doing that is disrupting the class and to see the teacher after class (Seeman, 2014). In other cases, it may involve sending a student to the principal's office for a

time. One common rule in disciplining students is the "three strikes rule." This rule specifies that after three in-class warnings, the student is sent to the school principal's office (Healy, 2014). After three visits to the principal, the student is to be suspended from school for a period; and after three school suspensions, the student is to be expelled from school (Healy, 2014).

For some violent behaviors; however, federal zero-tolerance policies require students to be excluded from the general population of students or expelled from school in order to maintain a safe environment for students to learn (Kennedy-Lewis, 2012). Furthermore, in response to a widespread perception that the rate of juvenile crime was rising and that school violence and discipline problems were getting out of hand, schools themselves started instituting zero-tolerance policies beginning in the early 1990s (Aull, 2012). These school policies designated certain student behaviors as being so unacceptable as to require the student exhibiting them to be taken out of school. At that time, the rate of juvenile crime was not drastically increasing (Aull, 2012). Snyder (2005) reported that the juvenile arrest rate for violent crime index offenses declined by 48% from 1994 to 2003 and was at its lowest rate since at least 1980. Furthermore, between 1980 and 2003, the juvenile arrest rate for property crime, including burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson dropped 46% (Snyder, 2005).

The result of zero tolerance policies is that students may be severely punished for relatively minor behaviors without taking into account circumstances surrounding the behavior (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], 2015). Accompanying the instigation of zero tolerance policies by many school districts, a shift to the criminalization of certain types of student behavior occurred (Aull, 2012). Schools increasingly relied on police officials to deal

with issues of school discipline. Some of these issues were relatively minor school misconduct issues that in the past, teachers and administrators would typically address and resolve, but now law enforcement officers might be called in to deal with the issue (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010). This often resulted in student arrest at school for nonviolent behavior (ACLU, 2015). Such school-based arrests double the likelihood that students will drop out of school. When they include a court appearance, students increase their likelihood of dropping out by almost four times (Kim et al., 2010).

The National Center for Education Statistics, (2010), provided the most current detailed statistical information on the nature of crime in schools. This report contains 23 indicators of crime at school from a number of sources, including the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the School Crime Supplement to the NCVS, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the School Survey on Crime and Safety, and the School and Staffing Survey. The report presented data on crime and safety at school from the perspectives of students, teachers, and principals. The highlights of the report were:

- In 2013, students ages 12–18 experienced about 1,420,900 nonfatal victimizations at school, including 454,900 theft victimizations and 966,000 violent victimizations.

- Two percent of students reported a theft, 1% reported violent victimization, and less than 0.5% reported serious violent victimization (rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault).

- In 2013, students ages 12–18 experienced higher rates of nonfatal victimizations at school than away from school.

- In 2013, about 22% of students ages 12-18 reported being bullied at school and 7% reported being cyber-bullied during the school year.

- Fifteen homicides of school-age youth (ages 5–18) occurred at school during the 2010–11 school year (most recent data).

- Nearly all students ages 12–18 observed at least one security measure at their school in 2013.

- In 2013, 3% of students' ages 12–18 reported that they were afraid of being attacked or harmed at school or on the way to and from school (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

Skiba (2014) pointed out that an inconsistency of implementation of school disciplinary measures exists. Suspension and expulsion rates vary among schools and school districts, with rates depending as much on characteristics of the school as on student behavior. A suspension is used to deal with a wide variety of behaviors, including insubordination, that does not threaten a school's safety or security. Skiba, (2014) also noted that no data indicate that suspending or expelling students for behavior improves the school environment and leads to less disruption. Lower ratings by teachers and parents of school governance and climate correlate with higher suspension rates (American Psychological Association, 2008).

It has been argued that some school officials may engage in so-called push-out policies because of the pressure they feel from the passage of the NCLB law, which mandates that standardized test scores be used to determine the performance of schools and school districts. The alleged result is that for the sake of raising test scores, schools and districts initiate policies

designed to push academically underperforming students out of the school (Cregor & Hewitt, 2011; Kim et al., 2010). In addition, states that mandate senior exit exams to measure school performance may have created an incentive for school officials to eliminate underperforming students before the exam is administered (Kim et al., 2010). Research suggests that schools with higher rates of suspension and expulsion achieve lower scores on statewide tests (Skiba, 2014).

Teachers and administrators may find themselves having to unwillingly engage in the process of student push-out and feel forced to make classroom decisions based on political recommendations that are in direct conflict with their personal and professional belief system. This can lead to cognitive and professional dissonance for teachers who are idealistic, highly motivated, and dedicated to reach and teach every student. This internal disagreement can lead to psychological trauma and moral injury (Levinson, 2010). The core of psychological trauma and moral injury is an act or knowledge of transgressions, which shatters moral and ethical expectations that are rooted in religious beliefs, cultural norms, organizational policies, and societal-based rules about fairness, (Maguen & Litz, 2015). These perceived acts of transgression may result in highly aversive and haunting states of inner conflict and turmoil such as; shame, guilt, anxiety, anger, and further moral breakdown (Maguen & Litz, 2015). Teachers under such circumstances may suffer from moral injury, and the trauma of participating in a disciplinary process the outcome of which is contradictory to their mission. They often try to avoid moral injury by engaging in loyal subversion, using their voice to protest system injustice, or exciting the school setting altogether (Levinson, 2015).

Disciplinary Alternative Education Settings

Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 had a significant influence on alternative education in the United States. It required school districts to establish alternative school facilities for disabled students who (a) disobeyed zero-tolerance policies, such as violating drug or weapon laws, or (b) when no placement options remained in the traditional educational setting (Owens & Konkol, 2004). Following the IDEA reauthorization, there was an increase in alternative school referrals of students who were designated as emotionally or behaviorally disabled (Irvin, L.K., et. al., 2004). When a student labeled emotionally or behaviorally disabled was disciplined under zero-tolerance policies, a more restrictive placement occurred (Cox, 1999). With students being placed in alternative schools for reasons of discipline, including students diagnosed as emotionally or behaviorally disabled, alternative schools were increasingly regarded as places to discard unwanted students (Gregg, 1998; Owens & Konkol, 2004).

In recent years, an increasing number of school districts nationwide have established Discipline Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) to continue the education of students who have been expelled or suspended from their home school (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). Lehr et al. (2009) found that as of 2002, 34 states had legislation regarding placement in alternative schools because of a student being expelled or suspended from the student's home-school. In some of these states, the legislation required that a student be placed in an alternative school or program upon expulsion or suspension. In other states, alternative school enrollment could be chosen by the student and parents (Lehr et al., 2009). In addition, some states required

attendance in an alternative education program if a student was suspended or expelled because of assault, committing a felony, or bringing a firearm or other weapon to school. In some states, alternative schools served a temporary placement function in order to assist with the re-entry process when a student returned after having been out of school because of suspension or expulsion (Lehr et al., 2009).

In Texas, the legislature passed the Safe Schools Act in 1994, requiring school districts to establish DAEPs (Garba, 2011). The specified purpose of the programs is to provide an educational environment removed from the main school body for students who commit specific violations listed in the school's code of conduct. Violations that require removal of students from their home school and placement in a DAEP program include those involving drugs, weapons, or violent behavior. However, the Texas Education Code also furnishes school districts with the discretionary power to refer students to DAEPs for nonviolent behavioral offenses, such as profanity and disruptive behavior. As many as two-thirds of referrals to DAEP programs are for nonviolent behavior at the discretion of Texas schools (Texas Appleseed Project, 2010).

Findings from several research studies suggest that DAEPs do not result in long-term gains for students; on the contrary, these programs may increase negative outcomes. Researchers also suggest that focusing on providing genuine educational alternatives to students, rather than focusing on punishment as a corrective, results in more positive outcomes for student behavior and achievement (Gregg, 1998).

Quinn and Poirier (2007) analyzed the effectiveness of alternative educational programs for at-risk students and identified seven components that predict the effectiveness of such programs. These components include:

1. The presence of program philosophies emphasizing the need for changing the educational approach, rather than the student, in order to address at-risk students' differences in learning.

2. Program administrators and staff who embrace the philosophy that all students can learn and who communicate and support high expectations for behavioral, emotional, social, and academic student growth.

3. Program and school administrators who (a) lead by supporting their programs' vision and missions; (b) support their staff effectively; (c) listen to their teachers, as well as to students and their parents; and (d) care about their students.

4. The existence of low adult-student ratios in the classroom

5. Teachers who receive specialized training in areas such as classroom management, behavior management, alternative learning styles, and communicating with families.

6. Staff-student interactions are non-authoritarian in nature, and relationships between students and staff and among staff members are positive and exhibit trust and care

7. Respect is shown to students' families, while family participation in and opinions about their children's education are valued. (Quinn & Poirier, 2007).

The School-to-Prison Pipeline and Inequalities in Student Discipline

A considerable amount of criticism exists regarding schools' responses to disruptive student behavior by the methods of suspension, assignment to alternative education facilities, or expulsion. A good deal of that criticism concerns the so-called school-to-prison pipeline, which critics claim is enabled by the current disciplinary system. The ACLU (2015) characterized the school-to-prison pipeline as amounting to policies and practices that tend to result in schoolchildren being pushed out of their classrooms into a juvenile or criminal justice environment. Once they are suspended from school, it is often the case that students are later expelled or sent to juvenile incarceration facilities. Pane and Rocco (2014) criticized the school-to-prison pipeline as punishing a student by removing the student from the classroom, whereupon the student's academic skills and interests deteriorate. The result is often the student entering the judicial system, with an increased likelihood of ending up in an adult prison.

A number of factors increase the flow of students into the school-to-prison pipelines. These factors include deficient education because of inadequate resources in schools, which leads to classroom overcrowding, not enough qualified teachers, and inadequate funding for education services (ACLU, 2015). This deficient education is coupled with the absence of or lack of counselors and other extra services related to a high-value education (ACLU, 2015). Other factors that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline include (a) zero-tolerance policies that result in strict and sometimes harsh punishment of students for minor behaviors without taking into account the circumstances; (b) an increased dependence for school discipline on police officials rather than teachers and administrators, which often results in arrests of students

at school for nonviolent behavior; (c) disciplinary alternative education placements, where students receive inferior education so that if they return to their regular school they are unprepared for the schoolwork they are expected to complete; and (d) denial of procedural protections in court, which result in the student's entry into the juvenile justice system from which it is improbable that they will return to regular schools (ACLU, 2015).

The criminalization of student misbehavior appears to be the main factor implicated as a cause of more students entering the school-to-prison pipeline. This criminalization of misbehavior has followed from the change in schools to disciplinary zero-tolerance policies. The flow of students into the school-to-prison pipeline has increased, in part, as school personnel call on law enforcement to address conduct issues heretofore thought of as minor (Aull, 2012; Kim et al., 2010). The result is that a misbehaving student is now susceptible to being arrested for disruptive but nonviolent behavior (ACLU, 2015).

Nance (2015) indicated an increased likelihood of referrals to law enforcement when there is law enforcement presence on campus. These include relatively minor infractions that would be better dealt with by more pedagogically appropriate methods. The researcher still found this trend to be present after controlling for state statutes requiring schools to refer particular kinds of incidents to law enforcement authorities, the levels of disorder and criminal activity at the school, crime in the nearby neighborhood, and several additional variables.

Kasprisin (2013) furnishes an example of how a student might become involved in the criminal justice system by performing acts considered by the teacher as "failure to comply" that might be considered a relatively minor misbehavior. Kasprisin stated:

A young student of color in an urban school in an impoverished neighborhood is

confronted by a police resource officer in the hallway. Suddenly the young student finds

himself in handcuffs and arrested for speaking back and for defiant and disrespectful

behavior. Infractions that would have been treated as a school disciplinary incident have

now become a criminal act. This often results when the concepts of school discipline and

criminal acts are not clearly defined in a school policy, and the role of school

administrators and police are not clearly distinguished. (para. 5)

Such arrests have been shown to increase a student's probability of dropping out of

school, lowering future employment prospects for such students, and increasing the probability

that the student with be involved with the criminal justice system in the future (Kim et al., 2010).

For all these reasons, the criminalization of student misbehavior in the classroom may increase

the likelihood of misbehaving students entering into the school-to-prison pipeline.

Poverty is another factor that increases the likelihood of a student entering the school-to-

prison pipeline. Poverty makes it more likely that a young person will experience challenges

such as abuse, neglect, nutritional deficiencies, homelessness, inadequate healthcare,

developmental delays and psychological problems (Fedders & Langberg, 2013). Living in

poverty also adversely affects students' home lives in ways related to the quality of their

education. Children from underprivileged homes may have deficient access to educational

resources such as books and educational materials that are more readily available to other

children. Financially underprivileged students are also more likely to attend schools with

degraded physical surroundings, fewer resources, and teachers who are less qualified and subject

to a higher turnover. Less educational involvement of parents and reduced support by peer

groups for educational achievement also tends to exist. All of these variables increase the

probability that students will enter the school-to-prison pipeline (Fedders & Langberg, 2013).

Yet another factor that appears to contribute to students entering the school-to-prison

pipeline is push-out policies. As previously explained in this review, push-out policies are a

school's or district's unwritten policy of making it easier to push underperforming students out

of the classroom or school because it is felt that the students are likely to lower overall scores on

the standardized tests mandated by the NCLB law (Cregor & Hewitt, 2011; Kim et al., 2010).

Dodson (2012) characterized the rationale of schools' push-out policies as trying to avoid the

possibility of the state assuming control of a school or district by suspending or expelling

individuals belonging to underperforming groups that fail to achieve legislated standards of

academic proficiency. Such groups may include students with disabilities, English language

learners, economically disadvantaged students, or ethnic and racial minorities (Dodson, 2012).

To the extent that schools and districts push out underachieving students by making it easier for

such students, compared to achieving students, to be suspended, expelled, or sent to alternative

education facilities for misbehavior, then such policies are likely to increase the flow of students

into the school-to-prison pipeline.

The student's racial heritage appears to be another factor relevant to the school-to-prison

pipeline. A number of researchers have suggested that schools' disciplinary rules are often

enacted unfairly, with African American students being more likely to be suspended or expelled

for what is judged to be misbehavior than their White classmates who perform the same type of

behavior. The rate of suspension of African American students compared to other students is two to three times higher, and African American students are also expelled and sent to school offices at a higher rate than students of other races or ethnicities (Skiba, 2012). In the 21st century, suspension and expulsion rates for disciplinary issues are approximately double the rate of the 1970s, and racial disparities related to discipline are increasing (Cregor & Hewitt, 2011).

Rudd (2014) noted that several common beliefs about the causes of the disproportionality in disciplinary actions toward African American compared to other students have been shown to be false. First, although many believe that the difference in racial proportions can be attributed to the influence of poverty as opposed to race (Rudd, 2014), racial disproportionality does not occur only in poor urban districts but also in wealthier suburban districts (Skiba, 2012). Second, the widespread belief that African American students are suspended or expelled at higher rates because they act out more is not supported by research (Rudd, 2014). Furthermore, African American students are disciplined more severely than others for transgressions that are less serious and more subjective (Axley, 2014; Skiba, Shure & Williams, 2011). In a study on differences between African American and White students concerning offenses that resulted in referrals to the school office, Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) found that White students were referred in response to more objective infractions like smoking, while African American students were referred more for subjective infractions like loitering or disrespect. Skiba (2012) maintained that the results of other researchers have also indicated that differences in discipline measures between African American and White students occur more frequently in subjective categories such as disrespect and defiance.

According to Skiba (2012), researchers have suggested that certain minority student segments experience suspension, expulsion, and assignment to alternative education because of their actually committing objectively defined infractions at a higher or more serious rate than non-minority students. Rudd (2014) maintained that a cause of the inequities is negative assumptions held by educational personnel toward minority students. Aull (2012) noted that school disciplinary actions affecting minority students at a disproportionate rate result from a number of factors, including underfunded schools, harsh policies governing student discipline, and the high-stakes standardized testing that is part of school environments. Some research findings suggest that another factor may be favoritism or deep-seated prejudices reflected in teachers' attitudes and actions (Pane & Rocco, 2014). Kasprisin (2013) pointed out that the disciplinary inequities that affect some minority students are adversely opposed to certain basic U.S. democratic principles and found much of the current school disciplinary system to be at fault for violating these rights.

Addressing School Discipline and Student Removal Problems

Researchers have made suggestions to change current disciplinary practices that affect minority students disproportionately and feed the school-to-prison pipeline by making it more likely that discipline increases the likelihood that students will enter the criminal justice system. Curtis (2014) emphasized devising alternatives to punitive measures applied to students. These include (a) changing school responses to students' behavior by focusing on developing positive and supportive climates in schools, (b) diverting students from the juvenile justice system through use of case managers, peer courts, and youth courts, (c) community-based alternatives to

juvenile detention, such as functional family therapy, and (d) a judicial focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment (Curtis, 2014).

In response to the factor of poverty, Fedders and Langberg (2013) urged schools to help in fighting the effects of poverty on the educational well-being of poor children, including school-based antipoverty efforts, such as community schools that combine academics with a spectrum of integrated services that focus on youth development. These efforts would include mentoring, family support, early childhood development, and other services. Fedders and Langberg (2013) also suggested and supported developing school-based legal services offered to families of children living in poverty. A school-based legal services program could advise such families regarding issues such as housing, custody and child support, public benefits, and consumer protection and could provide training by helping low-income families to better understand their rights.

A suggestion for dealing with juvenile court referrals from incidents at school is for states to use arbitration to screen out such referrals. Disciplinary review boards could help prevent zero-tolerance policies from violating a student's rights under the Constitution. This new process would help reduce racial inequalities and secure due process for the students involved and would help reduce the flow of students entering the school-to-prison pipeline (Aull, 2012).

In regards to school safety, Nance (2015) stated that instead of stationing police at schools, which ultimately feeds the school-to-prison pipeline, it would be more effective for school safety to improve the quality of educational programs. This is because well-planned lessons that employ a variety of instructional approaches that meet different student needs and

learning styles help students to understand behavioral expectations and how educational material can be valuable. This kind of learning environment reduces behavioral problems and fosters personal responsibility and a sense of purpose among students.

Given the problems of current disciplinary policies in schools, the suggestions in this section should be seriously considered. What may limit the enactment of some of the suggestions is underfunding of schools, especially in some areas. However, a change in mindset about how disciplinary problems are best dealt with could have a significant effect on mitigating some of these problems.

<div align="center">**Student Misbehavior, Educator Stress, and Classroom Management**</div>

Teacher and Administrator Stress and Student Misbehavior

Teachers often experience considerable stress in their roles as educators.The National Education Association (NEA, 2013) reports that the 2012 Metlife Survey of the American Teacher showed that about half of teachers experienced great stress several days a week, while only one-third of teachers experienced that degree of stress in 1985. At the same time, teacher job satisfaction has been declining. While teacher job satisfaction was at 62 percent in 2008, it had fallen to only 39 percent by the time of the 2012 survey (NEA, 2013).

Increasing stress contributes to the phenomenon of teachers who leave the profession early (Ingersoll, 2012). A study by the National Center for Education Statistics showed a five-year attrition rate for teachers entering the profession of about 17 percent (Brown, 2015). However, Ingersoll (2012) estimated the actual rate at which teachers leave teaching after five or

fewer years of their entry into the profession to be as great as 40 to 50 percent. A study by Fisher (2011) of 400 secondary school teachers found that stress, job satisfaction, and stress-preventing coping skills were predictors of teacher burnout, with burnout being understood as including a sense of being emotionally exhausted, having a lowered sense of personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. Fisher (2011) also found that though newer teachers in the occupation for five years or less had stress levels not significantly different from those of more experienced teachers, the new teachers had a higher degree of burnout. Fisher suggested that experiencing stress and burnout may be a factor leading newer teachers to leave the profession during their first five years.

Stress may arise from a number of circumstances that teachers must typically deal with. Ingersoll (2012) emphasized the sink-or-swim attitude that often greets teachers when they are first employed by a school or school district as a primary reason many teachers exit early from their profession. Other conditions found stressful by teachers include the need to adhere to federal and state mandates, a lack of administrative support, insufficient pay, lack of respect from others, deficiencies in their influence, and challenges related to student discipline (Provini, 2014).

Results from a number of studies strongly demonstrate that management and student discipline are primary concerns for K–12 teachers in the United States and that having to deal with those issues is a contributor to teacher stress. Sharma (2015), who investigated the most worrisome issues among preservice teachers indicated that these concerns begin with preservice teachers. Sharma first developed a questionnaire based on focus groups held with a group of

preservice teachers and then administered the questionnaire to 145 B.Ed. preservice teachers with practice teaching assignments. Results showed that class management, because of discipline problems, was the most worrisome issue for 79% (115) of the respondents (Sharma, 2015).

Abebe and HaileMariam (2011) found that not only preservice teachers but also established teachers are strongly concerned about discipline. Abebe and HaileMariam investigated which classroom situations are most stressful for both preservice and cooperating teachers. Participants were current preservice teachers ($n = 42$) and their respective K–12 certified cooperating teachers ($n = 40$) in two metropolitan cities and surrounding county schools, covering rural, urban, and suburban communities (Abebe & HaileMariam, 2011). The researchers used a questionnaire, *Rating Pre-service Teacher Events for Stress*, to assess teacher stress and potential remedies (Abebe & HaileMariam, 2011). The instrument was field tested and implemented in the year 2000 and assessed teachers' stress on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*low stress*) to 5 (*high stress*) as well as teachers' perceptions of remedies to situations (Abebe & HaileMariam, 2011). Stressors were described on the instrument by a brief scenario or sentence. The discipline stressor was defined as "Student refuses to do what he/she is told to do (is sarcastic, loud, moves about without permission, or is abusive to other students)" (p. 67). Cooperating teachers rated the discipline scenario as most stressful. Preservice teachers rated the discipline scenario as the most stressful along with the time management scenario (Abebe & HaileMariam, 2011).

In another study, Stair, Warner, and Moore (2012) investigated the concern levels of teaching students and first-year teachers in agricultural education at a state university. The researchers administered a three-part instrument consisting of a teacher concerns statement, a Likert-type scale of concerns, and demographic questions to three groups: (a) early career teacher education students ($n = 40$), (b) advanced teacher education students ($n = 15$), and (c) teachers who had completed their first year of teaching and were just beginning their second year ($n = 22$; Stair et al., 2012). Participants planned to teach at the high school (83%), middle school (11%), or community college level or higher (6%). Results showed that the highest concern for the early and advanced teacher education students were managing student discipline, while for teachers who had completed their first year of teaching, concern about managing discipline was exceeded only by concern about balancing personal and professional responsibilities (Stair et al., 2012).

A number of other researchers have found discipline and classroom control issues to be the main concerns to preservice teachers, practicing teachers, or both (Abebe & Kitterman, 2006; Akinsola, 2014; Jones & Jones, 2007; Macías & Sánchez, 2015; Pereira & Gates, 2013; Rieg, Paquette, & Chen, 2007; Smith & Smith, 2006). Geving (2007) investigated student behaviors that are associated with teacher stress among 186 student teachers of fifth through twelfth grades and 77 supervising teachers. Geving (2007) found 10 types of student behaviors that predicted student-teacher stress. These included student hostilities displayed to the teacher, lack of attention in the classroom, being noisy, the absence of classroom effort, lack of preparation for class, being hyperactive, breaking rules set down by the school, damaging the school's property,

displaying hostility to other students, and not caring about learning. For supervising teachers, the student behavior of coming to class unprepared was the only significant predictor of teacher stress. Geving (2007) also found that for student teachers, ineffective teacher behaviors such as interrupting students and exhibiting behaviors in the classroom that the teacher would prefer the students, not exhibit were correlated with student behaviors that resulted in teacher stress. For supervising teachers, ineffective teacher behaviors were correlated only with the stressful student behavior of being unprepared for class.

Another study dealing with student behavior and teacher stress focused on perceptions by 69 preschool teachers of children's behavioral problems (Friedman-Krauss, Raver, Neuspiel, & Kinsel, 2014). The researchers found that the teachers' perceptions of children's behavior problems were positively associated with an increased workload, which may result in higher degrees of teacher occupational stress. Friedman-Krauss et al. (2014) also found that a teacher's executive function capabilities may reduce stress though enabling the teacher to use instructional and behavior management strategies while interacting with students. To help reduce teachers' stress, promote teacher health, and make classroom practices more effective, the researchers recommended providing teachers with training on how to foster their executive function abilities to manage challenging behaviors of children.

A qualitative study by Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer (2011) investigated the sources and results of urban teacher stress by holding semi-structured interviews with 14 teachers in three high schools in high-poverty areas of a large Midwestern U.S. city. The researchers found that managing student behavior problems were one of the main factors cited by

the teachers as increasing stress. Teachers also commented on an absence of clear student

discipline policies that resulted in a lack of appropriate consequences for aggressive and unsafe

student behavior and promoted a chaotic classroom learning environment. Among their

comments, the teachers indicated that they felt ineffectual and overwhelmed in managing student

noncompliant behavior, aggressive behavior, both verbal and physical, and student

inattentiveness. Some of the teachers noted that the time they had to spend dealing with

disruptive behavior interfered with their instruction and with students' concentration. Teachers in

the Shernoff et al. (2011) study indicated that teaching-related stress adversely affected them in

several ways, including their physical and emotional health. Regarding physical health, the

teachers reported frequent illnesses, sleep difficulties, unhealthy eating, and exhaustion. In

regard to emotional health, the teachers reported several ways that stress affected them

adversely, including feeling anxious, irritable, and depressed.

Teacher burnout in relation to stress and student misbehavior was the focus of a study by

McCormick and Barnett (2011). These researchers surveyed 416 high school teachers in 38

schools in Australia to learn the relation of teachers' attributions of the sources of their stress to

the three components of teacher burnout consisting of emotional exhaustion, decreased self-

evaluation of personal accomplishment, and depersonalization conceived as treating students in a

more depersonalized way. McCormick and Barnett (2011) found that stress attributed by

teachers to student misbehavior predicted all three components of teacher burnout. The

researchers suggested that the more teachers perceive students who misbehave as a source of

stress, the more likely they may be to view them impersonally and the less likely to view them in

terms of the students' individual humanity. The researchers also noted that treating students impersonally as a result of stress attributed to student misbehavior may result in ineffective teaching, lowered self-evaluations, and emotional exhaustion. McCormick and Barnett (2011) recommended that programs for assisting teachers who may be at risk for burnout should focus on imparting strategies for improving the teachers' management of student behavior.

In a study focused on understanding aspects of teachers' psychological well-being, Hinds, Jones, Gau, Forrester, and Biglan (2015) examined the relationship of teacher stress, including stress caused by student misbehavior, to experiential avoidance. The researchers defined experiential avoidance as the practice of avoiding internal experiences such as feelings and thoughts. A total of 80 special education and 449 general education elementary and middle school teachers were surveyed to determine sources of stress, the degree of experiential avoidance, depression, and the three dimensions of burnout consisting of emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. Hinds et al. (2015) found that 26.8% of the teachers were mildly depressed, 8.9% were moderately depressed, and 2.8% were moderately severely or severely depressed. Over two-thirds (70.8%) of the teachers reported a high degree of emotional exhaustion, and another 26.8% reported a moderate degree of emotional exhaustion. While 28.2% of the teachers reported a high level of depersonalization, 94.4% reported a high level of personal accomplishment. The researchers found that experiential avoidance mediated the relationship between stress related to student misbehavior and the measures of teacher psychological well-being. They also found that special education teachers reported more stress related to challenging student behavior than general education teachers. The researchers

recommended that to reduce experiential avoidance and promote their psychological well-being, teachers should learn strategies of acceptance and mindfulness to enable them to notice and accept their feelings and thoughts about difficult experiences such as issues of student misbehavior.

A study by Abidin and Robinson (2002) investigated the factors that influence teachers' referral of students for psychoeducational assessment due to challenging behaviors. The study examined the referral behavior of 30 kindergartens through fifth-grade general education teachers. The results showed that the best predictors of the teachers' referral behavior were the teachers' judgments about the existence of student behavioral problems and the student's academic competence. Student demographic characteristics and teacher stress did not predict the teachers' referral behavior. Abidin and Robinson (2002) noted that the study provides evidence that what influences teacher referral behavior is the teacher's professional judgment and not socioeconomic or racial bias or teacher stress.

Teachers may find themselves having to unwillingly engage in the process of student push out and feel forced to make classroom decisions based on political recommendations that are in direct conflict with their personal and professional belief system. This can lead to cognitive and professional dissonance for teachers who are idealistic, highly motivated, and dedicated to reach and teach every student. This can lead to psychological trauma and moral injury. The core of psychological trauma and moral injury is an act or knowledge of disobedience, which shatters moral and ethical expectations that are rooted in religious beliefs, cultural norms, organizational policies, and societal-based rules about fairness, (Maguen & Litz,

2015). These perceived acts of disobedience may result in aversive and haunting states of inner conflict and turmoil such as; shame, guilt, anxiety, anger, and further moral breakdown (Maguen & Litz, 2015).

School administrators, too, often experience considerable stress in their jobs. School principals have the overall tasks of overseeing a school and being a bridge between the school and the community in which the school exists (Juneja, 2004). In performing these tasks, principals accept many responsibilities, including managing school buildings and resources; dealing successfully with parents and other members of the community; and implementing programs and requirements that may originate from a range of diverse sources, including the school district, the board of education, state government, and the federal government (Sabina, 2014). At the same time, principals must develop the instructional abilities of the school's teachers, ensure that what is taught in numerous subjects is adequate for preparing graduating students to enter college or the workforce and oversee the discipline of students (Sabina, 2014).

Principals, like teachers, have a substantial attrition rate. A study of principals in Massachusetts (Gajda & Militello, 2008) found that almost two-thirds (63%) of the school principals surveyed expected to leave their occupation during the following five years, mostly due to retirement. While attrition resulting from stress is not great among principals, many do experience considerable stress and desire improved working conditions (Sabina, 2014).Furthermore, some turnover due to stressful job requirements does occur among principals (Johnson, 2005).

One major source of stress for principals is student discipline (Boyland, 2011).A study of 12 former principals found a number of issues that resulted in their leaving the profession. The principals cited student discipline as a factor that influenced their decision to leave, along with communication barriers with teachers, the volume of required management tasks, the emotional demands of the job, and pressures of working with the school board(Johnson, 2005).

A phenomenological study on work-related stress experienced by elementary school principals (Krzemienski, 2012) included 10 principals of five high-performance and five low-performance schools in Florida. The researcher found that a source of great stress for the principals was student misbehavior. Connected to this was stress caused by a lack of support from parents. One principal of a high-performance school complained that to get parents to assume responsibility or have their child take responsibility for the student actions was difficult. Rather than work with the principal on common issues, parents would oppose the school principal. Principals in the study acknowledged that the stress they experienced adversely affected school climate, and they reported that they made efforts to combat the stress.

A study of 431 principals of elementary and secondary schools from 29 school districts nationwide investigated main factors that predicted their satisfaction with their school's performance (Friedman, Friedman, & Markow, 2008). The principals' overall satisfaction with their school was measured by whether they were proud of their school, whether they would recommend the school to potential employees and to their friends and neighbors, and whether they would want their own child to attend the school. Friedman et al. (2008) found three satisfaction indices that predicted the principals' school performance satisfaction: negative

student behavior, degree of involvement in making decisions, and school facilities and equipment. Negative student behavior was the strongest predictor.

A mixed-methods study by Sabina (2014) surveyed 69 public school principals in Western Pennsylvania to determine tasks that contributed to the principals' stress. Twenty-four of these principals were also interviewed for the qualitative portion of the study. Based on survey results, overseeing student discipline was the most time-consuming weekly task reported by the principals. The principals also ranked overseeing student discipline as their most stressful task. In their interviews the principals considered overseeing student discipline as their second most time-consuming task. The interview responses also indicated that the main causes of principals' stress were student discipline, including bullying, and interactions with parents. As mentioned with teachers, the observation of someone in power planning or committing moral harm against another person is stressful. Also to be recruited by an administrator high in authority and influence for a harmful act toward a student or to be coerced into silence by open or implied threats can be fear, anger, and anxiety producing. These are emotions within the definition of Moral Injury (Willis, 2014).

Classroom Management

Classroom management provides the framework for successful classroom practices; thus, teacher proficiency in classroom management is important for providing environments to inspire proper student behaviors (Oliver et al., 2011). To deal with classroom management and student discipline, teachers may employ different strategies that are more or less authoritarian. Wolfgang and Glickman (1986) described three general classroom management models. One model, the

relationship-listening model, focuses on creating a supportive classroom environment to help students solve problems. The rules and consequences model stresses teacher control, setting rules, and rewarding or punishing students who do or do not follow the rules. The confronting-contracting model focuses on teachers having constant interaction with the students as teacher and student attempt to develop solutions to behavior problems together (Macías & Sánchez, 2015).

Evidence shows that after their teaching experience, preservice teachers often become less idealistic and more authoritarian in their teaching approach (Flores, 2006; Huffman, Holifield, & Holifield, 2003). Kaya, Lundeen, and Wolfgang (2010) provided further evidence of this change by investigating classroom discipline orientations of preservice elementary teachers before and after their student teaching experience. In the study, preservice teachers ($n = 220$) from three southeastern U.S. universities completed an instrument identifying which of Wolfgang and Glickman's (1986)classroom manage- ment models they preferred: (a) relationship–listening, (b) confronting–contracting, or (c) rules and consequences. The instrument used was the Beliefs about Discipline Inventory, developed by Glickman and Tamashiro (as cited in Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). Results showed that preservice teachers, both before and after their student teaching experience, preferred the rules and consequences model most and the relationship-listening model least. However, the student teaching experience significantly increased beginning teachers' preferences for the more assertive discipline model of rules and consequences and decreased their preferences toward the humanistic discipline model or relationship-listening. Preferences for the confronting-contracting model showed no

significant changes. These results suggest that the student teaching experience may serve to alter student teachers' classroom management strategies.

Polat, Kaya, and Akdag (2013) found that experience teaching has an effect on preservice teachers' preferred classroom management strategies. Using the Beliefs about Discipline Inventory, these researchers investigated 731 second-, third-, and fourth-year preservice teachers in seven different programs in a college of education in Turkey.Although the findings indicated that the preferred classroom management model among the preservice teachers was confronting-contracting, results also showed that preservice teachers who had completed the student teaching course scored significantly higher than other preservice teachers on the rules and consequences strategy. Polat et al. (2013) concluded that after completing their student teaching experience, the preservice teachers had become "more controlling and authoritarian" (p. 888).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the databases and search engines that were explored, the keywords used, and available research materials related to this study. To ensure the most current and relevant materials were used, I placed an emphasis on locating articles and reports published within the past five years, but older relevant articles and reports were also reviewed where appropriate.

This chapter was divided into five major sections. The first section focused on the issue of discipline in schools and responses to the issue in the form of zero-tolerance policies and the criminalization of disruptive behaviors. The second section dealt with disciplinary alternative education. The third section focused on the school-to-prison pipeline, inequalities, and due

process in student disciplinary action. The fourth section highlighted approaches and ideologies that researchers have proposed to address problems concerning school discipline and student removal. The fifth section consisted of a review of the literature dealing with teacher and principal stress in relation to student disruptive behavior, and with teachers' classroom management strategies.

It is notable that though there are a number of studies concerning teacher and principal stress in relation to the issue of student classroom misbehavior, there apparently have been no previous studies investigating the experience of teachers or administrators in relation to student removal from the classroom and assignment to alternative education due to the student's misbehavior. This study aimed to help fill this gap by investigating middle school teachers' and administrators' experiences in regard to student removal and assignment to alternative education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In the United States, the number of students referred from classrooms for placement in alternative educational settings has become an increasingly significant issue (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011). Researchers have indicated that exclusion from direct instruction could negatively influence students' academic progression and self-esteem and that it increases the likelihood of these students remaining or becoming at-risk for dropping out of school and eventually facing incarceration (Texas Appleseed Project, 2010). Furthermore, the experience of making academic and possible life-altering decisions may be stressful, complex, and taxing on those dedicated to educating every student. With these concerns in mind, a need exists to have teachers and administrators describe their experiences of student discipline and working through the removal process.

Despite this need, after conducting a thorough literature review, I found no research related to the experiences of middle school teachers and administrators when students are moved from classrooms into alternative educational settings. This study was designed to ascertain and understand the experiences of middle school teachers and administrators concerning the issues of student discipline and moving students from the classroom into alternative educational settings. This chapter describes the research design and methodology for the study.

Presumptions and Foundations

In this study used a qualitative research method to query participants about their experiences of administering discipline in the classroom and the meaning they gave that

discipline. This study was appropriate because discovering the meanings as well as the context in which people understand themselves and their world is a key aspect of qualitative research. The application of the qualitative method to this research allowed me to discover unique meanings directly from the participants.

Past researchers have found the method of qualitative research to be of substance and valid when investigating the experiences of people to identify the core essence of their human experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 11). Miles and Huberman (1984) noted several advantages of qualitative data, including their ability to provide rich descriptions of local processes and to provide useful explanations that may motivate new theoretical understandings. Miles and Huberman (1984) also maintained that qualitative findings often carry more authority than quantitative results.

Patton (2002) listed 12 characteristics that lend to the effectiveness of the qualitative research method.

1. Naturalistic inquiry—studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally; nonmanipulative and noncontrolling; openness to whatever emerges (lack of predetermined constraints on findings).

2. Emergent design flexibility—openness to adapting inquiry as understanding deepens or situations change; I will avoid getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness and instead pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge.

3. Purposeful sampling—cases for study (e.g., people, organizations communities, cultures, events, critical incidences) are selected because they are "information rich"

and illuminative; that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest. Sampling involves acquiring insight into the phenomenon rather than formulating an empirical generalization from a sample to a larger population.

4. Qualitative data—Observations that yield detailed, thick descriptions; an inquiry in depth; interviews that capture direct quotations about people's personal perspectives and experiences; case studies; careful document review.

5. Personal experience and engagement—I will have direct contact with and get close to the people, situation, and the phenomenon under study; my personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and are critical to understanding the phenomenon.

6. Empathic neutrality and mindfulness—An empathic stance in interviewing seeks to understand without judgment (neutrality) by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, and responsiveness; in observation, it means being fully present (mindfulness).

7. Dynamic systems—attention to process; assumes change as ongoing whether the focus is on an individual, organization, community, or an entire culture; therefore, mindful of and attentive to system and situation dynamics.

8. Unique case orientation—assumes that each case is special and unique. The first level of analysis is being true to, respecting, and capturing details of individual cases; cross-case analysis follows from and depends on the quality of the individual case studies.

9. Inductive analysis and creative synthesis—immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships; begins by exploring and then confirming the data, guided by analytical principles rather than rules. This process concludes with a creative synthesis.

10. Holistic perspective—the whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts; focus on complex interdependencies and system dynamics that cannot meaningfully be reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships.

11. Context sensitivity—places findings in social, historical, and temporal context; careful about, even dubious of, the possibility or meaningfulness of generalizations across time and space; emphasizes instead careful comparative case analyses and extrapolating patterns for possible transferability and adaptation in new settings.

12. Voice, perspective, and reflexivity—the qualitative analyst owns and is reflective of their voice and perspective. A credible voice conveys authenticity and trustworthiness. Complete objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity undermining credibility, the focus becomes balance—understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness.

Research Design

This was an exploratory and descriptive phenomenological qualitative study. The purpose of using phenomenology was that it allowed description of a particular phenomenon, in this case,

the participants' lived experiences in their own words (Jeanfreau& Jack, 2010). Lived experiences are the immediate thoughts of life's events prior to extensive reflection and without interpretation. These thoughts reflect unique life experiences. These lived experiences give meaning to each person's perception of their his particular experiences. As phenomenological researchers examine the uniqueness of the human experience, data analysis enables the investigation of commonalities in the experiences of study participants. The overall goal is to clarify the meanings of the phenomena of their lived experiences (Giorgi, 1997, 2005).

Following the guidelines of a phenomenological qualitative study, I collected data from teachers and administrators through in-depth interviews. From the participants' responses, I identified significant statements, themes, responses, and quotes that provided levels of understanding regarding the participants' experiences. The findings were then compiled into a structural description of the participants' experiences. From this structural description, I created a composite description that represents the collective experience. As patterns and themes emerged, interpretations about what was significant were proposed. The research questions and purpose of this study appropriately supported the interview analysis design.

Before the initiation of this study, Walden University of Minneapolis, Minnesota's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB) approved the study's proposal (10-26-16-00060029). This was prior to data collection and provided extended approval during completion of the research. Proper approval was obtained from the school district's superintendent and campus principals. I provided general feedback to the appropriate principals and teachers if requested.

Validity

No matter what research design is selected, concern for factors that could affect the validity of the design is always primary. Typically, two types of validity are considered when designing research: (a) internal validity and (b) external validity. Although both types of validity are important, emphasis may vary depending on the type of research questions being investigated. For descriptive questions (as in this study), external validity receives more emphasis because the priority of the researcher is to systematically investigate an existing sample of individuals or a phenomenon, as opposed to studying the effects of a phenomenon or an intervention (as in experimental research). The factors jeopardizing external validity (or representativeness) are often more relevant to a descriptive study.

External validity (or representativeness) is the extent to which it is possible to generalize from the data and context of the research study to broader populations and settings (Trochim, 2006,). Usually, a researcher can only generalize to the accessible population from which the sample is drawn. Several critical aspects of the populations used must be compared in order for the populations to be deemed similar. The research must also examine the environmental conditions. Campbell and Stanley (1966) investigated factors that could jeopardize external validity.

The research design of this study was as representative as possible of real-life environments and facilitated the natural characteristics of teachers. Snow (1974) recommended four conditions to make designs more representative:

1. Actual educational setting: Interviews were conducted in the actual educational setting of the teacher participants.

2. Variation of the educational setting: The three schools were chosen primarily because they are geographically and socioeconomically similar.

3. Preparation of the participants: Participants received brief instructions in-person before the interview. Strict protocol and procedures were followed. Research fidelity was observed.

4. Incorporation of a controlled delivery that uses customary approaches: The interviews were designed to be understood and completed simply using a common language.

Population and Sample

According to Moustakas (1994), essential criteria for selection of participants include the participant having experienced the phenomenon and having a strong interest in understanding the nature of the phenomenon. The participant must also be willing to be interviewed at length and agree to the interview being recorded and the data published in a dissertation or in some other form. In this study, I reviewed and made participant selection from the district's Campus Discipline Report by Teacher. This was a color-coded spreadsheet list of disciplinary actions requested by each specific teacher. This report assisted me in comparing teachers with similar discipline referral patterns to be a participant in either the pilot test group or actual research group.

The implementation of a pilot test was to assist in determining whether flaws, unidentified limitations, or other weaknesses existed within the interview design (see Kvale,

2007). The pilot test also assisted within the refinement of research questions. I conducted the pilot test with six teachers and two administrators who had similar histories of student classroom removal in the past 3 years as those who participated in the final implemented study.

The research respondents in the study included six teachers and two administrators from three middle schools in Central Texas. These three middle schools were selected for participation for their accessibility, availability, and familiarity, as well as the fact that these schools were known to have had a documented and coded history of classroom removal by each teacher every semester for more than 3 years. In qualitative research, a need exists to maintain access to the site because the researcher will typically go to the site and interview or observe participants (Creswell, 2008).

All of the certified teachers and administrators selected from the three middle schools, whether or not classified general classroom teachers, had the opportunity to participate in the study. Once approval from the IRB occurred, enlisting a sample began with scheduling a meeting with the administrators and teachers on each of the three campuses during evenings after school. During these meetings, I explained the nature and purpose of the research and detailed participants' potential involvement and use of the resulting data. The educators who agreed to be a part of the research were asked to notify me at that time or contact me through a telephone call or e-mail.

Before asking the participants to complete the actual interview, each teacher and administrator who agreed to be interviewed was screened to ensure that he or she was currently employed by the district at least part-time and was currently serving Grades 6 through 8. Each

respondent who passed the screening and was willing to participate received an informed consent form to review and complete.

For each participant, a time and location convenient for conducting the interview at the participant's school was arranged. I then met with each of the participants and completed the interview, which was audio-recorded. The procedures of data collection focused on "sensitivity to the challenges and ethical issues of gathering information face-to-face in people's homes or workplaces. Studying people in their own environment creates challenges for the qualitative researcher" (Creswell, 2008, p. 213). I estimated that each interview would take approximately 45 minutes to complete. The actual average time for each interview was 35 minutes. After transcribing interviews, I scheduled a follow-up session with each participant to ensure that the information, as transcribed, was a clear reflection of her or his statements during the interview.

Participation in this study was voluntary, and the participants were not identified. Confidentiality was a critical aspect of this study. All interview sessions began by stressing to participants that whatever was said in the context of the interviews would be confidential and that the participant's anonymity was protected, as well as any sensitive information obtained through the study that might reveal the participant's identity. An assurance was given to the participants that they would be able to recant permission or assent at any time. To ensure the accuracy of data and security, all recorded interviews and transcriptions were held in a secure location to which only I had access. No monetary compensation was offered as an incentive to participate in the study.

Interview Questions

The participants were asked 15 open-ended questions during a semistructured interview. These questions reflected two of the traditional major purposes of qualitative research: to explore and describe (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). To validate these questions, an expert panel consisting of six middleschool teachers and two middleschool administrators, who did not otherwise participate in the study, were asked to examine the 15 questions to determine their appropriateness for addressing the research questions of the study. Any feedback suggesting needed revisions of the questions was taken into account in determining their final wording. The 15 questions submitted to the pilot group were the following, classified by the research question to which they applied.

RQ 1: How do teachers and school administrators make meaning of their experiences in removing students from the classroom and assigning them to alternative education?

1.Tell me what it is like to maintain classroom discipline.

2.To what extent does maintaining classroom discipline affect your goals and aspirations to teach?

3. How do you personally manage the demands of maintaining discipline in the classroom?

RQ 2: In the context of these classroom discipline experiences, what kinds of situations have teachers and administrators encountered?

4.Describe your experiences of being involved in situations where students were removed from the classroom and assigned to an alternative education setting.

5. Describe the process of student removal situations as you understand it.

6. How did you manage your personal issues and other responsibilities in these situations?

7. Describe your experiences of feeling emotionally torn when students were removed from the classroom and assigned to an alternative education setting.

RQ 3: During removal situations, what safety issues do teachers and administrators encounter?

8. During removal situations, what safety issues (physical, political, or career) have you encountered?

9. Describe these safety issues.

10. How were you affected personally?

11. How did you manage it?

RQ 4: What training do teachers and administrators receive in their education and profession to manage removal issues?

12. What classroom or school system discipline topics were covered in your academic program?

13. What type of training or continuing education in school disciplinary issues have you received since becoming a full-time professional educator?

14. Identify and assess the policies, procedures, and criteria you follow when a student is removed from the classroom and assigned to alternative education.

15. Assess your level of confidence in managing these situations.

Data Analysis

After each interview was completed, I transcribed the audiotapes. To ensure accuracy, I double-checked each transcript against the tape when the transcript was complete. Each participant was also asked to review the student transcript to authenticate that the transcripts agreed with their actual statements. I then proceeded to qualitatively analyze the interviews. The purpose of this analysis was to describe and clarify the meanings of central themes in the participants' experiences in order to understand the participants' meaning regarding the questions asked without interpretation by the researcher (Kvale, 1996). This analysis was an inductive process resulting in "organizing the data, generating categories, identifying patterns and themes, and coding the data" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p.96).

I first listed the responses of the 12 participants to each of the interview questions. I then carefully examined words and phrases in these responses for developing codes that represented identical and similar words and ideas in the responses of the 12 participants. This examination developed categories of meaning out of these codes. Based on these categories, the responses to each interview question produced relevant themes. Of particular interest were relevant themes that might bridge across the participating middle school campuses. Given this goal, specific campus issues were not highlighted, and themes were mentioned only if at least two campuses reflected those themes.

I then organized the findings from the analysis into a structural description of the participants' experiences with (a) classroom discipline, (b) dealing with student removal and assignment to alternative education, and (c) their training for these roles. A composite

description represented the general structure and collective meaning of the participants' experiences. At the conclusion of the study, the results were made available to the participants if they wished to receive the results. Participants were advised of this fact during the presentation to enlist their participation.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study consisted of interviews with teachers and administrators, which I then qualitatively analyzed. The interviews were conducted with six teachers and two administrators from three middle schools in Bell County, Texas. After I identified the teachers and administrators who were willing to participate in the study, qualitative data were collected from the participants through semi-structured interviews with 15 open-ended interview questions. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. I then analyzed the transcribed interviews using qualitative methods to determine themes from the participants' responses. Following this, the findings were organized into a structural description of the participants' experiences with the topics raised in the interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover and describe the experiences of middle school teachers and administrators as they manage disruptive student behavior in their classrooms and decide whether to remove students and assign them to alternative education. The central phenomenon was the meaning educators ascribe to those experiences and how that meaning affected them personally and professionally. There were four overarching research questions that guided this research study.

RQ 1: How do teachers and school administrators make meaning of their experiences in removing students from the classroom and assigning them to alternative education?

RQ 2: In the context of these classroom discipline experiences, what kinds of situations have teachers and administrators encountered?

RQ 3: During removal situations, what safety issues do teachers and administrators encounter?

RQ 4: What type of training have teachers and administrators received in their education and profession to manage removal issues?

In this chapter, I first discuss the pilot study I conducted. I then describe the research setting and present participant demographics. Following these sections is an outline of the data collection and data analysis process before the evidence of trustworthiness. I then present the results of the data analysis followed by a chapter summary.

Pilot Study

To vet the interview questions, volunteers were solicited from the district's three middle school campuses to participate in the pilot study. These volunteers appeared eager to help with the study and scheduled their interviews the week they were recruited. At each campus as a condition to qualify for an interview, the selected participants were interviewed individually after being screened about whether they had any experience with the phenomenon of having a student removed from their classroom for discipline issues and if they had an interest in understanding the nature of the phenomenon. The interviewed participants were also asked if they consented to being recorded and the data results published in a dissertation or in some other form. If they answered yes to both questions, they were selected. Before each interview session began, participants were read the content of the informed consent for participation. Each participant stated they understood that participation in the one-time interview was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time.

The selected participants agreed to and signed the consent form and the confidentiality agreement. The pilot study participants consisted of six middle school teachers and two middle school administrators. The participants were asked to provide feedback regarding the relevance and appropriateness of the 15 questions to their professional experience, the clarity of the questions, and how they interpreted the alignment of the questions with the research objectives.

The interview questions for each of the pilot study participants were the same, including subtle changes in terminology germane to the participant (teacher or administrator) addressed. The pilot study participants included male and female middle school teachers and administrators

from the three campuses in the district. Once interviews were concluded and responses

reviewed, it was determined the questions met the participants' approval without suggestions for

modification or changes.

Setting

The interviews for this study were conducted in mid-February, which fell at the

beginning of the Spring Semester. The participants had returned from a 2-week Winter Break in

December and had returned to work the first week in January. The time frame of the interviews

was just before a 3-day break to recognize Presidents' Day. The scheduled time off for the

teachers and administrators may account for the relaxed flow of communication between the

participants and myself. This apparent stress-free and relaxed atmosphere appeared to reduce

any negative influence of interviewing at the campuses that may have been present at another

time of year. Participants were allowed to decide where they wanted to be interviewed. This

meant they could choose where they were most comfortable. All the participants chose to be

interviewed at their campus. This choice was convenient for the participants and allowed easy

access from participant to participant. Participants expressed that meeting on their campuses

prevented them from feeling rushed or hurried to get back to work or from interfering with their

after-school activities.

Demographics

I recruited eight participants for the study. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), a

sample size ranging from six to ten participants is sufficient to generate meaningful results and

achieve data saturation. Because the sample size for this research study fell within that range, I

could conclude that there was no further need to recruit participants. The research participants included six teachers and two administrators from three middle schools in Bell County, Texas. Participants included five European Americans and three African Americans. There were two males and six females. The average age was 29.5, with an average 12 years in education. Table 1 summarizes participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Alphanumeric Identifier /Participant Number	Ethnicity	Age	Occupation	Sex
L-001 / 1	Caucasian	26	Teacher	Male
L-002 / 2	Caucasian	32	Teacher	Female
L-003 / 3	Caucasian	30	Teacher	Female
L-004 / 4	African-American	24	Teacher	Female
L-005 / 5	Caucasian	39	Teacher	Male
L-006 / 6	African-American	32	Teacher	Female
L-007 / 7	African-American	27	Teacher	Female
B-001 / 8	Caucasian	26	Teacher	Female

Data Collection

Once IRB approval was granted for the full research study, I began to recruit participants for the research study. Three middle schools in Bell County, Texas were selected for participation based on the following criteria: (a) accessibility for myself; (b) availability and willingness to provide me with consent to recruit participants for the research study; (c) familiarity with each school's respective location; and (d) the documented and coded history of

classroom removal by each teacher, every semester for more than 3 years. Participant recruitment was open to all certified teachers and administrators from all middle school grade levels. At each campus, I was allowed to set up a recruiting table (complete with flyers and invitations to participate) in the main hallway, during a district scheduled "Teacher Work Day." There were no students in the building on any of the three campuses. I scheduled meetings with the administrators and teachers who expressed an interest in each respective middle school on their breaks, before school, and after- school. I reviewed the research study with the participants and explained aspects of the study such as the nature of the research study, the purpose of the research study, the participants' involvement in the data collection process, and the use of the resulting data. Selected teachers who expressed a willingness to participate in the research study were asked to choose a meeting location and a time.

As each participant scheduled with me, I made sure each participant met the inclusion criteria through a brief screening process. After screening, I scheduled a date and time for an interview with each participant. During this time, I also provided a copy of the informed consent form to review before the scheduled interview. For each participant, a time and location convenient for conducting the interview at the participant's home or school were arranged. I conducted interviews with a total of eight participants for the research study, each interview lasted an average of 35 minutes. I audio recorded each interview and took detailed notes of participants' responses during each interview. Each participant was asked a total of fifteen interview questions, which connected directly to the four overarching research questions. Table 2 outlines each research question and itsapplied research questions.

Table 2

Connection Between Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Questions
Research Question 1: How do teachers and school administrators make meaning of their experiences in removing students from the classroom and assigning them to alternative education?	1. Tell me what it is like to maintain classroom discipline. 2. To what extent does maintaining classroom discipline affect your goals and aspirations to teach? 3. How do you personally manage the demands of maintaining discipline in the classroom?
Research Question 2: In the context of these classroom discipline experiences, what kinds of situations have teachers and administrators encountered?	1. Describe your experiences of being involved in situations where students were removed from the classroom and assigned to an alternative education setting. 2. Describe the process of student removal situations as you understand it. 3. How did you manage your personal issues and other responsibilities in these situations? 4. Describe your experiences of feeling emotionally torn when students were removed from the classroom and assigned to an alternative education setting.
Research Question 3: During removal situations, what safety issues do teachers and administrators encounter?	1. During removal situations, what safety issues (physical, political, or career) have you encountered? 2. Describe these safety issues. 3. How were you affected personally? 4. How did you manage it?

Table 2. Continued

Research Question 4: What training do teachers and administrators receive in their education and profession to manage removal issues?	1. What classroom or school system discipline topics were covered in your academic program? 2. What type of training or continuing education in school disciplinary issues have you received since becoming a full-time professional educator? 3. Identify and assess the policies, procedures, and criteria you follow when a student is removed from the classroom and assigned to alternative education. 4. Assess your level of confidence in managing these situations.

After the eight interviews were completed, I began the process of transcribing the audio recordings into a Word document. I double-checked each transcript against the audio recording after I completed each transcript to ensure accuracy. At this point, I asked each participant to review their transcript to verify the accuracy of the transcript with their thoughts and experiences. There were no notable variations or unusual circumstances in the data collection or occurrences outside of what was presented in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

After each transcript was cross-referenced with the audio recording and reviewed by the respective participant, I uploaded each interview transcript into the computer-assisted qualitative

data analysis software (CAQDAS) NVivo 11. NVivo 11 was used as a tool to help me organize

and manage the qualitative interview data (Bazeley & Jackson,2013). The software does not run

analysis on its own, instead, it was guided by myself to help facilitate the organization of the

data. After the transcripts were uploaded into NVivo, I began the qualitative analysis of the

interview data. Data analysis proceeded in several distinct phases: (a) familiarization with the

interview data through reading and re-reading the data,(b) generating the initial codes from the

data and reviewing the codes

against the whole dataset, (c) examining the relationships between the codes and clustering codes

based on that relationship, (d) examining the relationships among the clusters of codes and

labeling those various clusters based on a comprehensive theme, (e) examining the resulting

themes against the dataset as a whole to ensure it represents the dataset and define the theme, and

(f) writing the final report. I maintained the security of the data by utilizing a password-

protected laptop to which only I had access to. All physical documents, such as informed

consent, were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office to which only I had access.

Coding

During the first step of the data analysis process, reoccurring and prevalent topics were

noted for each interview. These topics helped guide the second step of the data analysis process,

the creation of the initial codes from the data. In addition, meaningful insights that participants

shared during their interviews were noted. Each segment of data was labeled according to the

meaning conveyed in the excerpt. This continued for each interview transcript. Table 3 outlines

an example of the coding process.

Table 3

Example of Coding with Raw Data

Raw Data	Code
Interviewer: Describe the process of student removal situations as you understand it. B-001: Students, with the exception of high-level offenses (drugs/weapons), are given several chances to correct behaviors. Teachers must document behavior with tracking forms and referrals. These documentation forms do result in consequences for the students – detention, ISS, OSS, etc. Once a student hits the end of the discipline matrix, he is removed from the classroom and sent to the alternative setting.	Political Aspects
Interviewer: How did you manage your personal issues and other responsibilities in these situations? B001: In most situations, I continued with teaching as though nothing happened. It made for a smoother transition in class for the other students. It also provided for the removed student's discipline confidentiality. If I had tracked the student's behavior, I usually followed up with an administrator and handed over any documentation.	Managing Classroom after Disruption Political Aspects
Interviewer: Describe your experiences of feeling emotionally torn when students were removed from the classroom and assigned to an alternative education setting. B-001: There are some students who teachers know will end up at AES. It doesn't make it sad to watch them go because they asked for it by their behavior, which is unfortunate. However, there are students who make the one grave mistake and it tears your heart out because you know they knew better.	Emotional Aspects

There was a total of 25 unique and significant codes generated during the second phase of data analysis. Examples of the codes are outlined in Table 4. The full list of codes and applicable excerpts are noted in Table 4.

Table 4

Codes and Applicable Excerpts

Codes	Excerpt
Consistent expectations	"Maintaining classroom discipline is tough but it is based on stating expectations from the beginning and remaining consistent."
Handling emotions	"I have gotten angry with students, but I usually keep my emotions in check…no yelling or belittling."
Disruption of classroom	"If a student is persistently disrupting class after attempts to redirect. The student needs to be removed."
Discipline hierarchy	"They emphasized the importance of classroom management, but only highlighted a general step system. 1.) Warning 2.) Call home/Conference w/ student 3.) Behavior plan 4.) Office referral."

Once I generated a list of codes, I compiled those codes into one list and began to examine the relationships between those codes. An example of this would be the codes (a) challenge, (b) necessity of discipline, (c) fluctuations with classroom discipline, and (d) manage demands of discipline that were combined to create the category Effect of Discipline. This category illuminated the Effect of Discipline on Teachers, which was the sub-theme that the category helped inform. There were two additional categories under the sub-theme of Teacher: (a) Behavior and (b) Thoughts and Feelings. The category Behavior was compiled from the

codes: (a) consistent expectations, (b) teacher as a model, (c) keep kids busy, (d) organization, and (e) managing classroom after the disruption. This category reflected the behaviors that teachers adopted in the classroom to help manage their class after a disruption and removal situation. There were five codes clustered together under the category of Thoughts and Feelings, (a) keep the personal out, (b) affected personally, (c) emotional aspects, (d) handling emotions, and (e) level of confidence managing discipline. Teachers shared their thoughts and feelings about classroom discipline during the interview. They recognized that the student's behavior prevented others from getting an education and as a result needed to be dealt with accordingly.

This process continued for the remaining two sub-themes, (a) Students and (b) Administration. The resulting sub-themes of Teacher, Students, and Administration were further examined to assess if there was an overarching theme that encompassed the participants' perspectives. The overarching theme of Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior was discovered, which helped tell a comprehensive story about the data from the participants' perspectives about the central phenomenon. Table 5 outlines the process from codes to categories to sub-themes to the theme. Figure 1 illustrates how the research questions were connected to the emergent themes.

Table 5

Codes, Categories, Sub-themes, and Theme

Codes	Categories	Sub-themes	Theme
(1) Consistent expectations, (2) Teacher as a model, (3) Keep kids busy, (4) Organization, and (5)	Behavior		

| Managing classroom after disruption		Teacher	
(1) Keep the personal out, (2) Affected personally, (3) Emotional aspects, (4) Handling emotions, and (5) Level of confidence managing discipline	Thoughts and Feelings		
(1) Challenge, (2) Unable to teach without discipline, (3) Ups and downs with classroom discipline, and (4) Manage demands of discipline	Effect of Discipline		Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior
(1) Student threats faced, (2) Disruption of classroom, (3) Recognition of behavior, (4) Reoccurring behavioral issues, and (5) Students broke up fight	Behavior	Students	
(1) Teacher not involved in AES, (2) Administrative support, and (3) Inconsistent removals	Removal/AES	Administration	
(1) Discipline hierarchy, (2) Discipline training, and (3) Political aspects	Political		
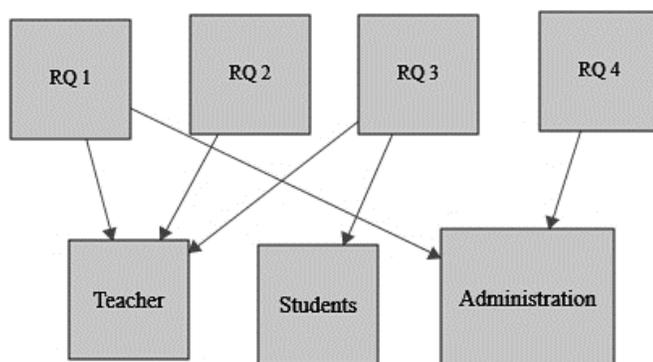
Figure 1. Connection between research questions and themes.

This phenomenon explored the meaning educators ascribe to those experiences and how that meaning affected them personally and professionally. It was found that there were three central components to their experiences and perspectives: (a) their personal perceptions and actions as educators dealing with classroom disruptions and subsequently classroom removal, (b) the ways in which students' behavior and threats affected educators, and (c) the role that administration played in the removal of disruptive students from educators' classrooms. All coded data were used in the creation of the sub-themes and the overarching theme. There were no discrepant cases in this research study, as many sentiments and experiences were reported by more than one participant.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility was established with member-checking both the interview transcripts and the final results. After I completed each interview transcript, I asked each participant to review the student respective transcript to ensure that the information conveyed in the transcript matched

the student perspective and point of view. If there were any changes participants wanted to make to their transcript, the transcripts were amended to reflect those changes. Once all interview transcripts were confirmed to be accurate accounts of participants' feelings and thoughts, I began analyzing the data and generating the results. After analyzing the data and generating the results, I emailed each participant a copy of the results for the student review. At that point, participant suggestions with regard to the analysis and interpretation of results were noted and implemented as I deemed fit.

Transferability

Transferability was established through thick description during the research process. I outlined the research setting, detailed how data collect was conducted, explained how data analysis occurred, and described the results of the research study. By doing so, I made sure that all relevant information about the research study was conveyed and reported should future researchers wish to extrapolate the findings to a similar population or location. I also utilized the technique of variation in participant selection to further establish the transferability of the research study's findings.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability was established with an audit trail, which outlined the research process from participant recruitment to final reporting of the results of the research study. An audit trail clarifies the decisions made throughout the data collection process and allows a qualitative researcher to provide the rationale for those decisions. Confirmability was established through the use of reflexivity. I was reflexive during the data collection and data analysis process in

order to mitigate potential researcher bias. I recorded my initial thoughts and feelings about the research study after each interview, which continued into the data analysis procedures.

Results

There were three sub-themes encompassed in the overarching theme of Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior, which emerged from the data during the data analysis process: Teacher, Students, and Administration. Each sub-theme played an important part in conveying the participants' perspectives about their experiences with Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior. This section was organized by sub-theme, starting with Teachers and concluding with Administration.

Teacher

The sub-theme Teacher culminated in the behaviors that teachers employed within their classroom when dealing with disruptive students, the thoughts and feelings the teachers had when managing a disruptive student, and the effect of discipline in regard to their being able to teach once the disruptive student was removed and any student threats were dealt with. Figure 2 outlines the hierarchy of the sub-theme Teacher and the applicable categories. Table 6 outlines the codes that created each respective category.
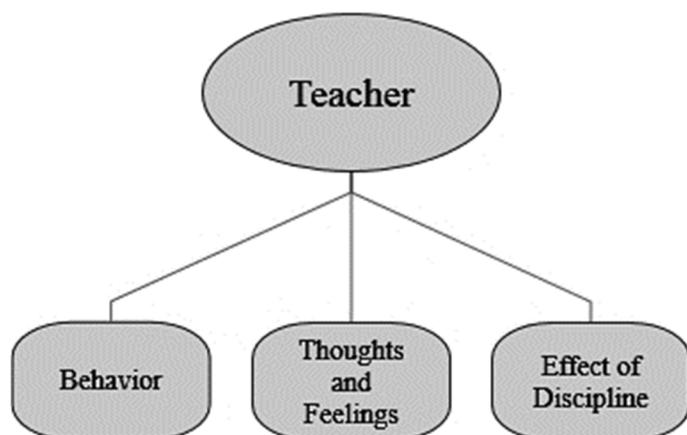
Figure 2. Teacher sub-theme and categories.

Table 6

Thematic Breakdown of Teacher Sub-theme

Sub-theme	Category	Codes
Teacher	Behavior	(1) Consistent expectations, (2) Teacher as a model, (3) Keep kids busy, (4) Organization, and (5) Managing classroom after disruption
	Thoughts and Feelings	(1) Keep the personal out, (2) Affected personally, (3) Emotional aspects, (4) Handling emotions, and (5) Level of confidence managing discipline
	Effect of Discipline	(1) Challenge, (2) Unable to teach without discipline, (3) Ups and downs with classroom discipline, and (4) Manage demands of discipline

Behavior. Participants shared what they felt were some ideal behaviors to employ in the

classroom, both in general and when dealing with a disruptive student. Several participants

noted the importance of being consistent in the behavior they expected from their students and to

be strict in how they dealt with disruptive students. For Participant 3, she felt that "by setting

clear expectations and remaining consistent, I find it simple to maintain classroom discipline for

the majority of my students." Other participants noted this as well, and one who stated that "by

allowing students to set some of the expectations [it] allows them to be invested in them"

(Participant 4). One participant shared how the relationship she built with her students made an

impact as well:

> Classroom management is deeply rooted in your relationship with the students. I tend to
>
> build close bonds with my students, so even on days when they are upset or don't feel
>
> like working, they will come around if I talk to them. However, if they do not, they
>
> already know the outcome. I constantly remind my students of my goals for them & my
>
> expectations during class. They can then choose to comply or not. (Participant 7)

She fostered an environment with her students where her students were aware of the

repercussions of their actions but also took the opportunity to speak with them about what was

going on in their lives. She cared about her students enough to "build close bonds" (Participant

7) with them and to take an active interest in their lives, but also held them to the same standard

as everyone else when it came time to complete work.

When it came time to manage a disruptive student, participants explained that the best

thing to do was to "get my other students started on an activity and then handle the student in

question" separately (Participant 6). By "directing students away" (Participant 4) from the

disruptive student and bringing their focus on the task at hand, teachers can focus on "sending

children to admin as needed" (Participant 6). After dealing with a disruptive student, Participant 8 shared that:

> In most situations, I continued with teaching as though nothing happened. It made for a smoother transition in class for the other students. It also provided for the removed student's discipline confidentiality. . .. I just continued as normal. I made sure to reassure any frightened students.

For her, she felt it was important to move on from the disruption that the student created and get students back on track after reassuring any frightened students. She noted:

> I felt that my students would base their emotions on my reaction to the situation. I still feel that way. Students, especially at the middle school or lower level high school years, are still children. They look to the adult for how to respond and how to process their emotions.

As a result, she thought it was best to continue with the lesson plan and maintain her composure for her students. In doing so, she hoped her students would be able to refocus on the task at hand and not continue to dwell on the disruptive behavior of the other student.

Thoughts and feelings. Participants were very expressive during the interview and relayed how they both felt and thought about managing classroom disruptions. A couple of participants felt that it was vital to keep the personal out of discipline situations and to remain professional. Participant 5 explained "you really want to keep your personal issues out of these situations. Don't let what is going on in your personal life impact your discipline." It was very

important that teachers "speak with a calm voice and keep my distance. If a student needs to psychically be removed, I call for admin" to take care of the disruptive student (Participant 7).

After especially stressful student removals, Participant 1 would spend time "venting to a colleague or administrator" about the situation and behavior. While participants recognized that it was important to keep their own emotions in check when dealing with a disruptive student, Participant 1 believed that venting to others who understood the situation was beneficial. There were a couple of participants who acknowledged that sometimes the struggles of dealing with a disruptive student and trying to keep on task with the lesson plan made them question their decision to teach. Participant 5 stated that "on days when students do not want to comply, it puts us behind on learning and makes me sometimes go home questions my decision to teach." This was echoed by Participant 6 who shared that a disruptive student "makes teaching less effective [for the whole class] and the desire to continue teaching dwindle."

The majority of teachers felt confident in dealing with discipline issues within their classroom. Only two felt mediocre in managing discipline issues. One participant shared her emotions related to dealing with disruptive students:

> There are some students who teachers know will end up at AES. It doesn't make it sad to watch them go because they asked for it by their behavior, which is unfortunate. However, there are students who make the one grave mistake and it tears your heart out because you know they knew better. (Participant 8)

This was a sentiment shared by other participants, that while it was sad those students had to be removed from the classroom it was better for the other students that they are removed.

Participant 5 expressed that "you feel bad when you would much rather they be in your class and learning, but sometimes it is best for them to go for the other students." Other participants shared how relieved they felt with the disruptive student gone, even stating that "I am relieved when the student is removed because I am now able to focus on the other 20-something instead of the one" (Participant 6).

One participant believed that students misbehaved in the classroom "on purpose to get attention," (Participant 4) which may have to do with not receiving any attention at home. Participant 3 shared how she became the most emotionally affected "in the past regarding the student's home life," which inevitably affects the student's school life. Despite those circumstances surrounding the student's life at home, teachers have a responsibility to all the students in their classroom to follow their lesson plan- regardless of those circumstances. While they can try to connect with the student outside of the classroom and try to be a good role model for those students, within the classroom environment they have certain responsibilities to all students that they must adhere to.

Effect of discipline. Participants talked about the effects of discipline on their ability to teach in the classroom and how they managed the demands of classroom discipline. They shared the challenges of classroom disruption, and the ups and downs they faced with classroom discipline. A couple participants shared that classroom discipline and classroom disruption were "constant challenges that leave me feeling like I spend more time trying to maintain than teaching" (Participant 6). There were "days where every class seems to be a challenge [can] take a toll on you. Teachers have to reset overnight and take each day, day by day" (Participant 7).

Teachers can become exhausted from the consistent ups and downs that come with classroom management and discipline.

One participant compared classroom discipline with "handling cats" because of how difficult the task can be depending on the day (Participant 5). Sometimes participants felt they were at their wits end with students "talking, [being] out of their seats, not working" in the classroom (Participant 7). This made it very difficult to be able to teach the other students who were not misbehaving. Unfortunately, teachers felt as if they could not teach without discipline because of those students who disrupted the classroom environment and prevented other students from learning. Participant 3 noted that "without classroom discipline, I would not be able to maintain a learning environment for my students, which would affect my goal of raising my students' data scores" (formal test scores). This was a shared sentiment with both Participant 2 and Participant 4, who said that "in order to have an efficient classroom where learning is the number one concern, maintaining classroom behavior is a must" (Participant 4).

Some participants outlined what they felt were important steps to manage the demands of discipline in their classroom. Participant 3 shared four steps that she felt established the expectations and consequences of disruptive behavior in her classroom:

1. Set clear expectations.

2. Communicate clearly with students and parents on student behavior.

3. Be consistent with all students.

4. Document. (Participant 3)

These steps connect back to the first category of Behavior, where consistent expectations were explained as an important behavior to maintain as a teacher. This only further confirmed the need for teachers to set consistent expectations within the classroom. Participant 5 reiterated this point, "Stay consistent and firm. Be respectful to your students and they will often times respect you back. If they don't, you have to 'put them in their place' and make them recognize where they are wrong." While most teachers gave students a second chance to change their behavior, if the behavior continued, then it was time to enact disciplinary measures. Overall, participants felt that classroom discipline was the most challenging aspect of being a teacher and shared that without discipline, they would not be able to manage and teach their students.

Students

This sub-theme encompassed how teachers reported the students' behaviors that led to classroom disruption and classroom discipline. They talked about the safety issues they faced as teachers and spoke about their experiences with classroom disruption. A couple of participants spoke about how the students who disrupted class often had reoccurring behavioral issues in other classes. There was even mention of students who would get angry at first but after a moment of calming down, they would recognize their mistake in acting out. Figure 3 outlines the relationship between the sub-theme Students and the category Behavior. Table 7 provides a thematic breakdown of the sub -theme Students to the codes within the category Behavior.
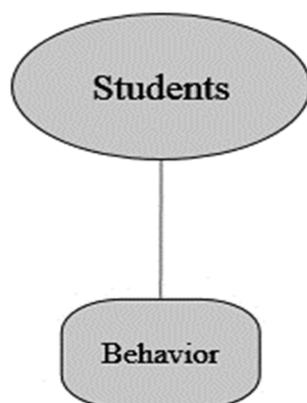
Figure 3. Student sub-theme and category.

Table 7

Thematic Breakdown of Students Sub-theme

Sub-theme	Category	Codes
Students	Behavior	(1) Student threats faced, (2) Disruption of classroom, (3) Recognition of behavior, (4) Reoccurring behavioral issues, and (5) Students broke up fight

Behavior. Participant 8 shared how:

There are days when, for some reason, a student does not want to follow instructions.

Having to stop and work with the individual hinders the environment that was

established. . . . I had a few students who went to alternative ed schools for offenses

ranging from sexual harassment to drugs to fighting. It seems that these students were

mostly the ones who disturbed the learning process. I did notice that in several instances,

a child who went to AES (alternative education school) usually went more than once during his/her educational career.

Participants did notice that the majority of disruptive students were students who had reoccurring offenses in other classrooms as well, just as Participant 8 noted. Participant 4 stated "students who are typically removed have issues in more than one of their classrooms," a sentiment that was shared by other participants.

Refusal "to work and accept directives" (Participant 1) were the primary disruptive behaviors that participants identified. While teachers reported that classroom discipline was the most challenging aspect of managing a classroom, participants recognized that it was an effective method to get the classroom to focus on the task at hand. Participant 7 explained that "after one [student] is sent out, the rest get on task and stay on task. If not, they know the outcome, which they usually do not like." One participant spoke about how some students behave when being removed, "If a student needs to be removed, they are never happy about it, often cursing you as they leave" (Participant 5). Despite that, she stated, "After they calm down and see what they did was wrong or disrespectful, they usually come back feeling remorse or learning from the mistake" (Participant 5). She did not feel threatened or unsafe in situations like that because she recognized that "often kids say stuff they don't mean in the heat of the moment" (Participant 5). When the students became aware that their behaviors and actions were wrong or disrespectful, then there was an opportunity that those students could begin to change those behaviors and actions. This was a hope that every participant had about their disruptive students.

There were a couple of participants who shared their experiences with student threats and felt unsafe as a result of those. During Participant 8's first year of teaching, she said:

I believe the only true safety issue I encountered was a student who brought a gun to school. It turned out to be a paintball gun, so there wasn't a true safety concern, but we did not know it was a paintball gun at first. #2. I did have a student make threats against me and the class during his first day back from the alternative. He went back to AES the following day. I wasn't worried once I knew he was gone, but if he had stayed in my class, I would have been scared every day.

Participant 8 was very lucky to have that student quickly removed from her classroom. She even reported how "I remember feeling shaken up to my core. I had never met an individual, let alone a 14-year-old, who seemed so innately evil." That student made a lasting impression on her, to the point where she remembered the event vividly. Other participants reported that students would "curse loudly, throw things, and storm out" when they were asked to leave the room (Participant 4). The majority of the teachers did not feel threatened by students' behavior, with one participant stating that "rarely have I felt the student was trying to intimidate me" (Participant 1).

Administration

The sub-theme Administration was generated from participants' responses to interview questions about the disciplinary process of removal/AES and the political aspects that were involved in discipline. Participants spoke about two main categories of the sub-theme Administration, the removal/AES process, and the political aspects. This section was organized

based on those two categories. Figure 4 illustrated the thematic hierarchy of the sub-theme

Administration. Table 8 highlighted a thematic breakdown of each of the categories within the

sub-theme Administration.

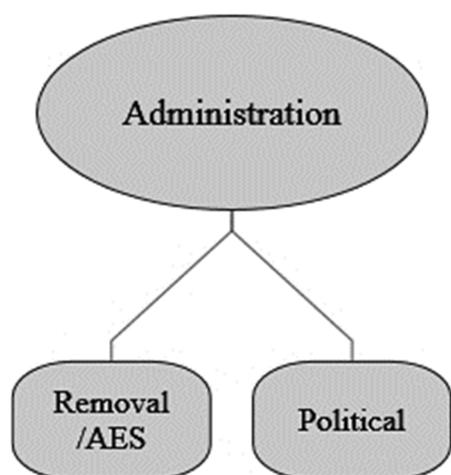*Figure 4*. Administration sub-theme and categories.

Table 8

Thematic Breakdown of Administration Sub-theme

Sub-theme	Category	Codes
Administration	Removal/AES	(1) Teacher not involved in AES, (2) Administrative support, and (3) Inconsistent removals
	Political	(1) Discipline hierarchy, (2) Discipline training, and (3) Political aspects

Removal/AES. Participants talked about the administrative support they received when asking for a student to be removed and mentioned how the teachers themselves were not involved in the AES relocation process. When a teacher encountered a student who was disruptive, they reached out to the school administrators to remove a student from the classroom. Participant 7 noted that "if a student needs to be physically removed [from the classroom], I call for admin" to take care of the problem. Another participant noted that the disciplinary "structure and admin support" were essential elements to managing a disruptive student. Participants did talk about what they believed were inconsistent removals, with one stating that "some are kept out longer than others for reasons not well communicated (Participant 1). Participants talked about the process of AES placement as well, stating that "when it is at the alternative point, the individual teacher is not involved" in the process because "the transition to an alternative is beyond the scope of teacher control" (Participant 2).

Political. Participants shared information about the discipline hierarchy, with an overwhelming number stating how important documenting offenses were "in order for them to be removed to an alternative campus" (Participant 5). Participant 3 shared what she thought were three important steps, "Document, communicate, and reach out to parents." Participant 7 shared what the discipline training she received was and the discipline hierarchy as she knew it:

> I went through an alternative cert. program. They emphasized the importance of classroom management, but only highlighted a general step system. 1.) Warning 2.) Call home/Conference w/ student 3.) Behavior plan 4.) Office referral. If the student is removed from class, it is usually just for the class period. We are to provide them with

their assignment for the day. If a referral is needed, they are then in the hands of the

assistant principal. If they are in ISS, we provide notes & assignments & are required to

check in with students. If they are sent off campus, we are no longer responsible for their

education.

After these steps have been accomplished, there often is not much more a teacher can do. At that

point, the administration decides what the best course of action would be for the student and

involves the student's parents at that point. One participant shared how students are given

multiple chances to correct behaviors and stated that:

Students, with the exception of high-level offenses (drugs/weapons), are given several

chances to correct behaviors. Teachers must document behavior with tracking forms and

referrals. These documentation forms do result in consequences for the students

detention, ISS, OSS, and so forth. Once a student hits the end of the discipline matrix, he

is removed from the classroom and sent to the alternative setting.

One participant felt that for "repeat offenders, in most cases students have not been removed

from the education environment" because of the "many processes in place [which makes it] so

that students cannot be removed" (Participant 3). Teachers receive some basic classroom

management training, with some even citing how they were not taught this information during

college courses. One participant mentioned how the school she taught at "started a restorative

discipline training program" for teachers (Participant 8). Participant 7 shared that at the school

she taught at "we are presented with the discipline plan we are expected to follow for the year."

Discrepant Cases

There were no discrepant cases within the data set, every code generated was used in the creation of the three sub-themes. For the first sub-theme of Teacher, there were 14 unique codes used across the three categories. The second sub-theme, Students, encompassed an additional five codes, bringing the total number of codes used to 19. The last sub-theme Administration used the remaining six codes across two categories, bringing the total number of codes used to 25. Every code that was generated from the data analysis was incorporated in one of the three sub-themes.

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Summary

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There was a total of three sub-themes under the overarching theme of Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior: Teacher, Students, and Administration. These sub-themes comprehensively detailed participants' experiences and narratives about the disciplinary process. All the coded data were used in the generation of the sub-themes and the overarching theme. Each sub-theme provided an answer to a research question, with the sub-theme Teachers providing an answer to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. The sub-theme Students provided answers to Research Question 3, whereas the sub-theme Administration provided answers to Research Questions 1 and 4. Participants talked about their own personal behavior when dealing with students who were disruptive in the classroom, and shared their thoughts and feelings about classroom management. They spoke about the difficulties of classroom management and the students' behavior that lead to classroom disruption. Participants shared that at times, they questioned and reconsidered their decision to teach because of classroom management. The

administration was one of the last resorts when it came to managing a student or removing a student from the classroom. Chapter 5includes a discussion of the implications of the findings for future researchers and to practitioners, the limitations this research study faced, and the recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory and descriptive phenomenological study was to discover and describe the lived experiences of middle school teachers as they manage disruptive student behavior in their classrooms and decide whether to remove students and assign them to alternative education settings. The central phenomenon was the meaning teachers ascribe to those experiences personally and professionally. In this era of ever-increasing accountability for student outcomes, on educators and the education system as a whole, there remains a need for deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

To fulfill the purpose of the study, a purposeful sample of six teachers and two administrators from three Texas middle schools were interviewed to determine their experiences with student discipline and the process of student removal and assignment to alternative education. I also investigated the educators' views regarding their training for dealing with disruptive students. The teachers and administrators were asked 15 open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews that were audio recorded, transcribed, and qualitatively analyzed.

There were four fundamental questions that framed this research:

RQ 1: How do teachers and school administrators make meaning of their experiences in removing students from the classroom and assigning them to alternative education?

RQ 2: In the context of these classroom discipline experiences, what kinds of situations have teachers and administrators encountered?

RQ 3: During removal situations, what safety issues do teachers and administrators encounter?

RQ 4: What type of training have teachers and administrators received in their education and profession to manage removal issues?

The findings of the study revealed three sub-themes under the overarching theme of Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior: Teachers, Students, and Administration. These three central components to the educators' experiences and perspectives consisted of: (a) their personal perceptions and actions as educators dealing with classroom disruptions and subsequently classroom removal, (b) the ways in which students' behavior and threats affected educators, and (c) the role that administration played in the removal of disruptive students from classrooms.

The three sub-themes comprehensively detailed participants' experiences and narratives about the disciplinary process. Each sub-theme provided an answer to a research question, with the sub-theme Teachers providing an answer to RQ 1, 2, and 3, the sub-theme Students providing answers to RQ 3, and the sub-theme Administration providing answers to RQ 1 and 4. All the coded data were used in the creation of the sub-themes and the overarching theme of Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior.

This chapter presents an interpretation of the findings detailed in Chapter 4. In addition, the chapter includes a discussion of the limitations and recommendations for future research and implications of the findings for future researchers and practitioners.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study are organized into four areas consistent with the literature review in Chapter 2. These areas consist of the teachers': (a) behavioral responses to the challenge of class disruption, (b) emotional responses when dealing with student discipline, (c) classroom management strategies, and (d) training and administrative support for dealing with student discipline. This section is divided into four subsections concerning these areas and providing an interpretation of the study's findings in relation to prior research.

Teachers' Behavioral Responses to Class Disruption

Findings regarding participants' behavioral responses to classroom disruption and arise mainly from the study's Teacher subtheme and to some extent from the Student subtheme and provide answers to RQ 1 and 2. The study findings serve to support the results reported by other researchers who have found that disruptive behavior in the classroom is a major challenge for schools and teachers (Oliver et al., 2011; Public Agenda, 2004; Skiba, 2014).

The middle school teachers and administrators in this study repeatedly expressed their views that dealing with class disruptions was a primary hindrance to their attempts to maintain a productive classroom environment in which they could effectively carry out their educational plans. This has been found to be true in previous studies (e.g., Abebe & et al., 2011; Abebe & Kitterman, 2006; Akinsola, 2014; Jones & Jones, 2007; Macías & Sánchez, 2015; Pereira & Gates, 2013; Rieg, et al., 2007; Sharma, 2015; Smith & Smith, 2006; Stair et al., 2012). In this study, one teacher (Participant 6) spoke of the "constant challenge" of maintaining classroom discipline, while other participants agreed. Participant 5 compared dealing with his students to

"handling cats" on some days. This comparison suggested that classroom disruptions sometimes involved several students behaving in disruptive ways at the same time. These comments and others by the participants reflected the difficulties that these middle school teachers face when they are required to deal with disruptive students.

The main type of disruptive student behavior described by the participants consisted of students who refused to follow a lesson plan or class activities. Participant 1 referred to students who refused "to work and accept directives "while Participant 7 talked about students who were "talking, out of their seats, not working," in the classroom. The primary problem such disruptive students presented to the teachers was that the students' behavior interrupted current class activities as was indicated in a study by Shernoff et al. (2011). In the present study, disruptions resulted in teachers having to redirect their attention away from the educational task at hand and toward dealing with the disruptive student's behavior. As a result, teachers found it necessary to put on temporary hold the teaching of the other students in the classroom who were not misbehaving while the teacher dealt with the disruptive student. For instance, Participant 8 commented, "There are days when, for some reason, a student does not want to follow instructions. Having to stop and work with the individual hinders an environment that was established, [in the classroom]."

Some of the teachers revealed that the typical way they handled a disruptive incident was to first direct the other students in the class to engage in some activity and to then deal with the discipline problem. Participant 6 remarked that she would "get my other students started on an activity and then handle the student in question." Participant 4, an administrator, noted the

importance of "directing students away" from the disruptive student so teachers could focus on whatever task they had given them. Participant 4 also remarked that misbehaving students did so "to get attention." To the degree that getting others' attention is indeed a motivation for a student to misbehave, then the teacher's taking the other students' attention away from the misbehaving student and back to their assigned classwork can be considered a strategy for showing the disruptive student that their behavior is not succeeding in its purpose.

The teachers revealed that given the occurrence of class disruptions, it was necessary to discipline misbehaving students. Generally, disciplinary action ranges from telling a student to stop disrupting the class (Seeman, 2014) to sending the student to the principal's office.Most of the participants in this study mentioned giving disruptive students a second chance to change their behavior. If the behavior continued, the teachers judged it to be time to enact disciplinary measures, which consisted of sending the student to the office. This practice of giving a disruptive student a second opportunity to stay in the class is similar to the three strikes rule that Healy (2014) claimed is commonly used by teachers to deal with disruptive students.

Participants' comments reflected their recognition that removing a disruptive student from the class was often a necessary method to get the classroom back to whatever activity was intended. Participant 5 remarked "You would much rather they [the removed student] be in your class and learning, but sometimes it is best for them to go for the other students." Participant 6 agreed, remarking that when the student is removed from the class "I am now able to focus on the other 20-something instead of the one."

Teachers' Emotional Responses to Dealing with Student Discipline

Participants' comments about their emotional responses related to the discipline of students were categorized under the Thoughts and Feelings of the Teacher sub-theme and under the Student subtheme. These comments were pertinent to answering RQ 1, 2, and 3.

The remarks of several teachers in this study suggested that having to deal with disruptive students resulted in considerable personal stress. This finding agrees with those of other studies indicating that having to deal with student discipline leads to teacher stress. These include studies by Abebe and HaileMariam (2011), Friedman-Krauss et al. (2014), Geveng (2007), Provini (2014), Sharma (2015), and Shernoff et al. (2011).

In this study, participants' remarks about experiencing stress by having to deal with student misbehavior are of concern because they indicate that the stressful events reduced their motivation to remain in the teaching profession. Participant 5 commented, "On days when students do not want to comply, it puts us behind on learning and makes me sometimes go home questioning my decision to teach." Participant 6 remarked that student disruption "makes teaching less effective [for the whole class] and the desire to continue teaching dwindle." These comments agree with previous findings that stress resulting from student discipline can lead to teacher burnout (Fisher, 2011; Hinds et al., 2015; McCornick & Barnett, 2011). McCormick and Barnett (2011) found that stress resulting from student misbehavior predicted three components of teacher burnout: emotional exhaustion a decreased sense of personal accomplishment and treating students in a more depersonalized way. The result of such burnout may be that the teacher leaves education as a profession (Fisher, 2011; Ingersoll, 2012). Studies have also shown

that student discipline issues can lead to administrator stress (Boyland, 2011; Krzemienski, 2012; Sabina, 2014) and that stress leads to some job turnover among principals (Johnson, 2005).

Participants' comments about their stressful reactions to student discipline problems are also of concern because teacher stress has been found to have adverse effects both physically and psychologically. These effects include reduced physical health in the form of more frequent illnesses, sleep problems, unhealthy eating, and exhaustion (Shernoff et al., 2015). Stress may also reduce psychological well-being, leading to increased anxiety, irritability, and depression (Hinds et al., 2015; Shernoff et al., 2011). Such physical and psychological effects may help explain why stress is a risk factor for teacher burnout.

Participants expressed several other emotional reactions to disciplining students. These reactions included feeling sad or relieved at the removal of a disruptive student from a class. Participant 5 remarked "You feel bad when you would much rather they be in your class and learning, but sometimes it is best for them to go for the other students" while Participant 6 offered "I am relieved when the student is removed because I am now able to focus on the other 20-something instead of the one." Participant 8 expressed two different emotional reactions in the same comment: "There are some students who teachers know will end up at AES. It doesn't make it sad to watch them go because they asked for it by their behavior, which is unfortunate. However, there are students who make the one grave mistake and it tears your heart out because you know they knew better." Participant 4 reported having been emotionally affected by concerns about a student's home life, a comment that may have reflected her understanding that

students from impoverished environments face greater educational challenges, as suggested by

Fedders and Langberg (2013).

Participant 8 remarked on the importance of remaining calm during the removal process

by saying "I felt that my students would base their emotions on my reaction to the situation….

Students, especially at the middle school or lower level high school years, are still children.

They look to the adult for how to respond and how to process their emotions." Participant 5

agreed with the importance of remaining calm when dealing with an unruly student, including to

speak calmly and keep some distance from the student. Participant 5 added that in dealing with

such a situation "you really want to keep your personal issues out of these situations."

Though the participants emphasized remaining calm while dealing with a student

discipline problem, Participant 1 remarked that after a stressful student removal had taken place,

he sometimes dealt with the emotional repercussions by "venting to a colleague or administrator"

about the situation. This participant believed that it was beneficial to talk about the incident with

others who had dealt with such situations and could understand the kind of stress they could

create.

Although school safety is considered a crucial issue in K-12 schools (CDC, 2015a), most

of the participants in this study had few concerns about their safety in the class, including during

the removal process. Participant 1 commented "Rarely have I felt the student was trying to

intimidate me." Participant 4 did remark that students would sometimes "curse loudly, throw

things, and storm out" when asked to leave the room. Participant 5 agreed, saying "If a student

needs to be removed, they are never happy about it, often cursing you as they leave." She added

"After they calm down … they usually come back feeling remorse or learning from the mistake."She remarked that she did not feel threatened or unsafe in such situations because she recognized that "often kids say stuff they don't mean in the heat of the moment."

In contrast, Participant 8 did mention an incident in which she felt threatened. This incident occurred during her first year of teaching when a student brought a gun that was later found to be a paint gun to class. After returning from alternative education services (AES), the student threatened the teacher and was again removed from school to AES. She remarked, "I remember feeling shaken up to my core."

Teachers' Classroom Management Strategies

Several participants described a common strategy they used to maintain classroom order. The strategy was reflected in responses that were categorized under the Teacher subtheme and were pertinent to answering Research Questions 1 and 2. This classroom management strategy begins with the teachers clearly communicating their behavioral expectations to their students. Participant 3 commented, "By setting clear expectations and remaining consistent, I find it simple to maintain classroom discipline for the majority of my students." The strategy also includes the teachers being strict in how they deal with disruptive students. Participant 5 remarked "Stay consistent and firm. Be respectful to your students and they will oftentimes respect you back. If they don't, you have to put them in their place and make them recognize where they are wrong." Participant 3 outlined the overall classroom management strategy in four points consisting of (a) setting clear expectations, (b) communicating behavioral expectations to

students and parents, (c) being consistent with all students, and (d) documenting any disruptive

behavior and how it was handled by the teacher.

This classroom management strategy as participants described it appears similar to the

rules and consequences classroom management model which was characterized by Wolfgang

and Glickman (1986). This model focuses on teacher control of the classroom, the set of rules,

and rewarding or punishing students according to whether they do or do not follow the rules.

However, it should be noted that a possible modification of this management model was

mentioned by Participant 4, who said that she allowed the students to set some of the

expectations for the classroom because doing so resulted in the students becoming more invested

in those expectations. This practice could be interpreted as the teacher integrating the rules and

consequences model with the confronting-contracting classroom management model described

by Macías and Sánchez (2015). The confronting-contracting model emphasizes teachers having

interactions with students to attempt to jointly develop solutions for behavior problems. In the

collaboration described by Participant 4, the input of students to set classroom rules is sought in

order to help avoid future student behavior problems.

Participant 4 can also be viewed as partly using the relationship-listening model, which

focuses on creating a supportive classroom environment to help students solve problems

(Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). Commenting on the relationships she built with her students,

Participant 4 said "Classroom management is deeply rooted in your relationship with the

students. I tend to build close bonds with my students, so even on days when they are upset or

don't feel like working, they will come around if I talk to them. However, if they do not, they

already know the outcome. I constantly remind my students of my goals for them & my

expectations during class. They can then choose to comply or not." This statement reveals

elements of both the rules and consequences and the relationship-listening models. It also

suggests the teacher may understand that treating students impersonally might tend to exacerbate

their misbehavior, as indicated by a study done by McCormick and Barnett (2011).

Participant 5 is another teacher who mentioned a notable addition to the rules and

consequences classroom management model. He recommended that in dealing with a disruptive

student it was important not only to be consistent and firm but at the same time to be respectful

to your students. He commented that the result of showing respect to disruptive students was

they will often times respect you back.

Teachers' Training and Administrative Support for Dealing with Student Discipline

Participants' comments about their training to deal with student discipline issues and

about administrative support were mostly categorized under the Administration subtheme.

Comments about training were especially pertinent to answering Research Question 4.

Research shows that teachers in training consider their having to deal with discipline

problems as the main source of worry and stress (Abebe & HaileMariam, 2011; Sharma, 2015).

Yet surveys of teachers suggest that teacher training for handling discipline problems is often

deficient. A 2003 survey of veteran teachers showed that 45% of the respondents felt that "quite

a large number" of new teachers need "a lot more training on effective ways to handle students

who are discipline problems" (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003, p. 43). A subsequent survey,

the 2007-08 Schools and Staffing Survey of the National Center for Education, showed that 40%

of new teachers did not feel well prepared "to handle a range of classroom management or discipline situations" (Coggshall, Bivona, Reschly, 2012, p. 3).

The results from the current study support the findings that many of the nation's teachers feel that their training does not adequately prepare them for handling discipline problems in their classes. Several of the participants reported having been inadequately prepared for handling disorderly students. Participant 4 commented "There was not one single class on classroom management in either program. It was only addressed a little during methods courses, but that's all." Yet, despite possible deficiencies in training, all but two of the participants in this study felt confident in their ability to deal with student discipline. This result suggests that these teachers learned effective ways to deal with student discipline problems through other means, such as experience and talking with other teachers.

About administrative support for dealing with student discipline, the teachers reported receiving some basic classroom management training at their schools, with some of them stating they were not taught this information during college courses. Participant 8 mentioned how the school where she taught "started a restorative discipline training program" for teachers. Participant 7 shared that at the school where she taught "We are presented with the discipline plan we are expected to follow for the year." Administrators' comments indicated that they were aware of the current literature and practices that are available concerning school discipline. They shared their concerns for safe schools and referred to some practices they had experienced or read of in journals and books or that they hoped to try in the future. They also referred to

newsletters, articles, handbooks, and conferences that focused on discipline practices that were being used in many districts.

With respect to removing a disruptive student from the classroom to an alternative setting, the participants were in agreement about the importance of documenting offenses as they occur. They were also demonstrating their agreement with the Texas Education Code, Section 37.002, which speaks of the necessity of documentation prior to removal of a student from a class. Participant 3 emphasized three steps: "Document, communicate, and reach out to parents." Participant 7 described four steps gathered from her alternative certification program: give a warning, call home and conference with the student, develop a behavior plan, and office referral. She added "If a referral is needed, they are then in the hands of the assistant principal. If they are in ISS, we provide notes and assignments and are required to check in with students. If they are sent off campus, we are no longer responsible for their education." Other interviewed teachers agreed that once a student has been removed from the classroom to an off-campus setting, their responsibility ended with removal. They were no longer involved with disciplining the student unless he or she was eventually returned to their classroom.

Limitations of the Study

The generalizability of this study's results is limited due to several factors. First, generalizability was limited by the sample being a convenience sample instead of participants being randomly selected. Due to the use of a non-random selection method, the results of the study cannot be generalized beyond the particular Texas middle school teachers who were interviewed. The results cannot even be generalized to the other teachers in the three middle

schools involved because the interviewed teachers all volunteered to be interviewed, and there may be a significant difference between those who volunteered to be interviewed and those who did not.

The fact that this was a qualitative study also limits the generalizability of results. In qualitative studies, the nature of the methodology is such that the study cannot be reproduced exactly leads, which leads to the results being un-transferable to different groups of respondents (Nesbit &Hadwin, 2006).

In addition, the generalizability of the study is limited by the fact that the participants were all middle school teachers working in three schools located in a small city in Texas. Results for teachers in high schools or middle schools in other regions of the country or in large urban schools or schools in rural areas could be different than for teachers in the three schools selected.

Finally, generalizability was also limited by the fact that the researcher who conducted the interviews and performed the qualitative analysis was formerly employed by the school district in which the three middle schools were located as District Coordinator of Counseling Services and as District Hearing Officer from 2009 to 2012. While the researcher took care to be aware of and to avoid any possible bias, his former employment by the school district may have led to unintended bias (Breakwell, Hammond, & Fife-Schaw, 1995).

Despite these limitations on generalizability, the results of this study are suggestive for teachers in other middle schools, especially those located in small cities in Texas. Though the responses of this study's teachers and administrators cannot be strictly generalized as representing the population of middle school educators, it is likely their comments about their

behavior, emotional reactions, classroom strategies, and training in regard to classroom discipline problems are similar to those that would be made by many other middle school teachers.

Recommendations

Several recommendations for further research can be made based on this study and its findings.

Firstly, it is recommended that similar studies be carried out in other geographical regions of the U.S. This study was done by interviewing teachers and administrators of middle schools in Texas. Studies in Northeastern, Western, Southeastern, and Midwestern states might yield different results.

Secondly, it is also recommended that the study be repeated in a variety of large urban schools. The schools in this study were located in a single small Texas city of approximately 70,000 residents. The discipline problems and reactions of teachers to discipline problems might be different in schools located in large urban areas. It is also recommended that the study be repeated in rural schools and in high schools located in areas with different population densities.

Thirdly, it is recommended that more in-depth studies be conducted on the degree and kinds of stress that are engendered in teachers having to deal with discipline problems. Previous studies have indicated that teacher stress arising from dealing with discipline in the classroom is a widespread problem, and several of the participants in this study also indicated feeling considerable stress from such problems. Because research indicates that stress is a main cause of

teacher burnout and attrition (Fisher, 2011), it is important to learn more about the relationship of teacher stress to dealing with discipline in the classroom.

Fourthly, it is recommended that school personnel be encouraged to take advantage of school district's Employee Assistant Programs (EAP) if one exist.An EAP is an employee benefit that is usually offered by some employers at no cost to employees. EAPs are 100 percent paid for by employers and are often operated through an agreement with a third-party administrator. This fact is important because employees must feel comfortable being open and honest when speaking in confidence with a professional about their personal problems, to deduce the fear of losing their jobs or status at work. The program is designed as an intervention that serves to identify and help employees with resolving personal issues they may be facing. This usually includes personal, professional, financial, emotional, marital, family, or substance abuse issues. Issues that may interfere with the employee's ability to perform his duties up to the organizations standards. This benefit can be very cost effective for an organization with an employee that has an issue serious enough to put the employee and the organization at risk.

The purpose of the program is to ensure as much as possible employees are able to manage their daily lives and remain productive, even when faced with difficult life experiences. When hired, all employees should be made aware of the benefits of the EAP program and given instructions about how to access these benefits at no cost. Administrators and managers can and should refer employees to the EAP if they are unable to resolve the matter through on-the-job coaching and HR support. While the company may know that an employee has participated in the EAP, the employee's information is private and never disclosed to the employer.

In many cases, EAP services are also available to the employee's spouse, children or life partner. Again, with the goal of the employee having support to help sort things out so that the employee can experience a more positive work and personal life. Low cost legal aid and referrals to attorneys are sometimes included in EAP benefits along with access to free and low cost legal aid and referrals to attorneys in the community. The EAP is a third-party service that has many resources beyond what an employer can offer. This takes the burden off the employer and reduces risks.

An EAP could be very useful to teachers and school administrators who are under a great deal of emotional stress due to professional, marital, or family relationship discord. They may be struggling to cope with a serious health issue themselves or with a parent, have an out-of-control child at home, be facing overwhelming student loan debt, or just need to talk with a caring, trained counselor about a personal or professional problem.

With an Employee Assistance Program designed specifically for educators, educators would have a number of solutions for personal problems and a tailored menu of benefits and resources that would address their unique professional issues. An EAP Benefit Package that had a three-tiered approach that provided the traditional EAP counseling services designed to address significant life problems and everyday problems involved in juggling work and family. A second tier designed to enhance quality of life not just for your employees and their family members, but for managers and supervisors, too. And a third tier of support groups, workshops of continued education training, coaching, and overall wellness.

Implications

There are several implications for positive social change that can be made on the basis of this study. The first implication is that close attention needs to be paid to how well teachers are being trained to deal with discipline problems in the classroom. The results from this study and from previous surveys suggest that many teachers feel they are not being prepared well for the real-world problems of dealing with disruptive students in their classes. This study and previous research suggests that discipline problems are a major cause of stress for some teachers, and research indicates that stress predicts attrition, which leads to the early loss of experienced teachers from the educational system. It is thus incumbent on teacher training schools to evaluate their programs in regard to teaching class management and discipline skills to preservice teachers with an eye on improving their programs.

A second implication of the study is that middle schools should consider evaluating their own programs for continuing teacher education in regard to classroom discipline problems. The best research and recommendations for effectively dealing with classroom discipline should be sought out and incorporated into continuing teacher education within the schools. This might be done through the institution of once weekly or monthly hour-long sessions with the school's teachers in which best practices are reviewed, examined, and discussed in the light of the school's discipline issues.

A third implication of the study is that resources should be made available for any teacher who feels especially stressed due to having to deal with discipline problems. Research has shown that stress can lead to reduced physical and psychological well-being among teachers (Hinds et

al., 2015; Shernoff et al., 2011), as well as increased attrition. Therefore, it is important for school administrators to be cognizant of the possibility that one or more of their teachers are under unusual stress and take steps to provide resources to help alleviate that situation. These resources might include providing opportunities for teachers to discuss, with their peers, how they feel after a particularly difficult day of maintaining order in the classroom or after an especially difficult encounter with a student.

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Appendix A: Research Flyer

FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEWS ON
 "Understanding the Experiences of Middle School Teachers and Administrators When Students

Are Moved from Classrooms into Alternative Educational Settings."

We are looking for volunteers from your campus to complete a brief interview on their

experiences of having students moved from their classroom and placed in an alternative

educational setting. As a participant in this interview, you would be asked to answer a few

questions about your experiences.

The interview will take approximately 25 minutes for you to complete. The interview will be

conducted at a time and location you find convenient.

If you are interested, please inform me, Thomas L. Jones, LPC-S,
Doctoral Candidate by calling 254-368-6177 or by emailing tljones2@embarqmail.com
469314All contact will remain confidential

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board, Walden University.

Appendix B: Research Participation Screening Questions

This statement was read before each screening:

I am seeking participate in a doctoral research study. The purpose of this study is to extend the current research base on student classroom removal and to enhance the understanding of educators' experiences when they make the decision to remove a student. To help achieve this goal, this study will involve interviews with middle school teachers and administrators regarding their experiences with student removal.

Participation in this study will be voluntary, and the participants will not be identified. Confidentiality is a critical aspect of this study, as well as any sensitive information obtained through the study that might reveal the participant's identity. Assurance will be given to the participants that they will be able to recant permission or assent at any time. To ensure accuracy of data and security, all recorded interviews and transcriptions will be held in a secure location to which only I have access. No monetary compensation will be offered as incentive to participate in the study.

The questions:

1. How long have you been a middle school teacher/ administrator?

2. In your experience as a teacher/ administrator have you ever had to remove a student to an alternative education setting In-School Suspension (ISS), Out of School Suspension (OSS), and /or the Discipline Alternative Education Program (DAEP)?

3. If you have had this experience of student removal, how often in a semester would you say you have had to remove a student?

4. How comfortable are you with being confidentially interviewed on this topic?

5. How comfortable are you with being interviewed for about 45 minutes, here at school or at another location?

6. How comfortable are you with have your answers recorded as part of my data gathering and later being followed up with to verify your responses?