Student Discipline Strategies: Practitioner Perspectives

by
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Statement of Original Work

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Abstract

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This applied dissertation presented a mixed method design to gain a broader perspective of the perceptions of classroom management practitioners within a particular school district. Many teachers, or practitioners, experience issues with classroom management because of their understanding of strategies they use. Because of the researcher's position within the education system, it was recognized practitioners are mandated to utilize specific classroom management strategies. As such, the study was designed to glean the perceptions of these practitioners in relation to the misunderstandings and mandates related to the strategies dealt with on a daily basis.

The perspectives gleaned afforded opportunities to generate statistical data. The last question presented to the study participants allowed each participant to express his or her ideas, related to the questionnaire or otherwise, in any way they saw fit. The analysis of the study took into consideration the open response comments as they pertained to the statistical data generated.

Findings revealed the most favorable, as well as most effective, strategies as perceived by actual practitioners. Practitioners also expressed their opinions indicating their displeasure regarding mandated classroom management strategies commonly referred to as Office Referrals. Practitioners indicated they perceived revoking student privileges, placing students in time-out areas, and utilizing counseling services as more effective when choosing strategies relative to managing their classrooms.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For decades, the study of classroom management has been one of the most significant concerns among educators and other stakeholders (Gaudreau, Royer, Frenette, Beaumont, & Flanagan, 2013; Gov.UK, 2011). The debate continues regarding the best discipline strategies to employ, as vast arrays of perspectives are premised by a variety of philosophers, scientists, educators, psychologists, and psychoanalysts.

As a result of these theories, many classroom management assumptions and discipline strategies, such as peer mediation, assertive discipline, positive reinforcement, and relationship or community building, have been and are still used by educators (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Mundschenk, Miner, & Nastally, 2011; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). Educator training and existing literature provide strategies and experiences that, if applied incorrectly, can lead to inconsistent and ineffective discipline (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). Therefore, the researcher measured the researched discipline and classroom management strategies employed in an urban elementary school to comprehend the effectiveness of the strategies at managing the classroom. Obtaining these measurements occurred through the use of two survey instruments to determine the frequency of use for different classroom management strategies, as well as the perceived efficacy of these strategies. Many early strategies that researchers advocated have not generated desirable effects; thus, the conflicting evidence and the continued search for strategies remains an active pursuit of researchers.

Statement of Problem

Teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders in the study population struggle with effective classroom management and discipline strategies, where they are unable to

handle disruptive students, which, in turn, leads to higher levels of school professional burnout. Teachers experience students' behavioral disruptions in their classrooms on a daily basis, which inhibits the effective delivery of lessons to their students. The schools in the study population are Positive Behavior Support (PBS) certified. Schools that obtain PBS certification do so to eliminate discipline referrals. Despite the implementation of PBS, during the period of August through December 2014, an average of 53 office referrals occurred for each of the four schools in the study population. Training regarding protocols on how to handle and discipline student behavioral issues have not been adequate, nor have in-service teachers acquired effective classroom management techniques, which prevents them from using strategies to reduce office referrals and maintain order in the classroom. When students are disruptive in a classroom where a teacher is not properly trained to discipline the disruptive student, other students as well as the self-efficacy of the teacher are compromised (Gaureau et al., 2013).

Background and Justification

For decades, researchers have recognized that the number one issue and concern in the classroom is the behavioral issues of school-aged children (Simonsen, Britton, & Young, 2010). During the past 2 decades, the prevalence and intensity of behavior problems recognized by school administrators has increased (Mundschenk et al., 2011; Read & Lampron, 2012; Simonsen et al., 2010). Classroom behavior issues are cited as a priority concern by teachers, administrators, and the general public, particularly in the schools that serve the low socioeconomic demographic (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Simonsen et al., 2010). Mundschenk et al. (2011) highlighted the fact that discipline is frequently ranked one of the main difficulties public schools contend with. In 2009, Indiana passed a law that addressed the necessity for educators to discipline students and

to regain control of their classrooms (Walsh, 2011).

Indiana State Attorney General, Greg Zoeller, and Representative Peggy Welch, assured Indiana teachers that they would fully support teachers' actions, within the policy guidelines, regarding the maintenance of disciplinary control in teachers' classrooms. Furthermore, policymakers stated that this policy is meant to help maximize students' educational experience, demonstrating that even at the state level, vested interest exists in effective classroom management (Walsh, 2011).

Osher, Bear, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) noted that even when school officials administer punishment to students for their unacceptable behavior, the tactics typically produce poor results. Moreover, the authors explained that the types of punishments, including suspensions, expulsions, or transfers, are ineffective, are merely a short-term fix rather than a long-term solution (Osher et al., 2010). Tauber (2007) explained how vital classroom management is; nearly 5 decades of research consistently points to discipline as a primary concern for educators. Tauber also noted that for decades, Gallup polls have acknowledged inadequate discipline as a major concern for schools.

Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, and Smith Collins (2010) asserted that the content of teacher training programs varies extensively, causing a divide between principle and practice that results in new teachers entering the classroom with limited real-world training. MacSuga and Simonsen (2011) concurred that educators have not been properly prepared to handle the longstanding and increasing classroom management problems found in their schools. Because a disconnect exists between training and the classroom, behavioral issues have become the focus of classroom management.

Simonsen et al. (2008) published a comprehensive study and reviewed more than 40 years of classroom management literature. Simonsen et al. identified five main

categories of discipline similar to those presented within this study. Simonsen et al. concluded that approximately 20 different strategies can be employed for the purpose of effective classroom management. Additionally, the researchers stated that empirical evidence exists for provincially developed lessons that address the needs of a particular school, classroom, or group of students (Simonsen et al., 2008). The researcher hoped to glean data from this study that either supports the current approaches to classroom management at the local site or provides insight regarding alternative approaches to addressing students' behavioral issues.

Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) advocated honing in on the management climate of the school as a whole if a clearer picture is to be considered. This would help determine what is working and what is failing so that educators and researchers can examine, compare and contrast, and identify trends related to their schools or subjects of interest (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). St. George (2011) reviewed the findings of a discipline study conducted by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and Texas A & M University. The researchers addressed the disparities in discipline strategies among comparable schools where different tolerances, approaches, and methodologies could be responsible for the discipline gap (St. George, 2011). According to St. George, the authors surveyed nearly a million students in corresponding schools within the Texas school system. The findings were significant because they demonstrated how different choices and practices of the teachers affect the students and schools (St. George, 2011). It was the researcher's intention to investigate the student discipline strategies, research, and practices used by educators within an urban elementary school, and provide educators with an evidence base for the best practices to employ when behavior problems occur. Because teachers lack the training for classroom management, many become frustrated

and their sense of self-efficacy is diminished, which decreases their effectiveness as an authority figure (Gaudreau et al., 2013). With proper classroom management training and the knowledge of the best discipline strategies for students' behavioral issues, teachers can effectively manage, and therefore control, their classrooms (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010).

Audience. In addition to the study population, teachers, parents, stakeholders, and school administrators will benefit from this study, as the results provide insight regarding effective discipline and classroom management strategies. The researcher evaluated current practices for their effectiveness, and suggested alternative.

Definition of Terms

Behavioral issues. A student's actions that negatively affect or disrupt the classroom learning environment and that distracts their peers (Gov.UK, 2011).

Classroom management. "An umbrella term that encompasses teacher efforts to oversee the activities of the classroom including student behavior, student interactions and learning" (Martin & Sass, 2010, p. 1). Further, this term refers to the "behavioral tendencies that teachers utilize to conduct daily instructional activities" (Martin & Sass, 2010, p. 1).

Discipline. Refers to the structures and rules describing the behavior expected of students and the teacher efforts to ensure students comply with those rules (Martin & Sass, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to ascertain the measurable perceptions of practitioners regarding the use and efficacy of certain disciplinary strategies currently employed by confident practitioners within the population of interest. Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) posited that the solution to the lack of discipline within the school

environment lies within the school's practitioners, including administration, and the collection of data of the group as a whole. This suggested solution indicates that a need exists to divert attention from the traditional view that effective classroom management relies on student behavior.

Further, the purpose of this study was to explore the classroom environment and gather the quantifiable opinions of each practitioner as to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their particular approach to classroom management and behavioral issues. The researcher gathered these opinions using responses from the first five questions denoting quantitative perception scores. The researcher sought to obtain this data as a means to assess current and future approaches to classroom management and the resolution of student behavioral issues. By collecting these data alongside data regarding self-confidence, the researcher aimed to compare teacher confidence with the specific strategies that they perceive as effective or tend to use most often.

Findings heightened awareness regarding which disciplinary strategies teachers perceive as most effective and ineffective in the classroom, noting any statistical relationship determined between the use and perception of these strategies and how effective practitioners perceive themselves to be. Administrators will be able to compare and contrast the data with their own findings from the data gathered by supervisory stakeholders of the targeted school. Given the importance of this subject, I provided a comprehensive overview of the research and practices associated with discipline strategies. These findings should also contribute to an ability to guide lower confidence practitioners to use similar strategies, as those used by practitioners have higher levels of confidence.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The leading concern in the classroom is behavioral issues (Simonsen et al., 2008). Discipline is continually ranked as one of the main difficulties in public schools, particularly those that serve the low socioeconomic demographic (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Mundschenk et al., 2011; Simonsen et al., 2010). Behavioral issues cause disruptions in the classroom and have ongoing negative consequences on factors, such as academic performance and teacher and student efficacy (Andreou & Rapti, 2010; Kyriacou & Ortega Martin, 2010). Students' behavioral issues stem from various causes, including socioeconomic issues, environmental issues, and unproven disciplinary approaches (Gov.UK, 2011; MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). A number of intervention methods to address classroom behavioral issues have been developed. Among these methods are reality therapy (William Glasser Institute, 2010), learning communities (Edwards, 2005), school-wide PBS (Simonsen et al., 2010), self-advocacy behavior management (Sebag, 2010), caring behavior management (Paciotti, 2010), progressive approach (Kohn, 2008), functional assessment protocol (Patterson, 2009), cognitive-behavioral strategy (Thompson & Webber, 2010), and disciplinary methods used by schools.

Researchers have studied discipline and classroom management through case studies, mixed methods, quantitative, and qualitative methods in an effort to explore the most effective way to approach the problem. In this quantitative study, the researcher ascertained the perceptions of practitioners regarding effective and ineffective disciplinary strategies because, as Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) stated, the solution to

the problem lies within the school's practitioners, administration, and group data collection.

This literature review outlines the importance of effective classroom management, which includes the ongoing effects of classroom management (Prior, 2014), the relationship between classroom management and academic performance, and the negative effects classroom mismanagement has on teacher and student efficacy. This chapter also includes the causes of classroom behavior issues, interventions currently used to address behavior issues, methodologies used to study the problem, and the study design.

Documentation

The peer-reviewed article research process began with keyword searches using the following databases: ERIC, ERIC Firstsearch, ERIC ProQuest, Wilson ProQuest, Sage Publications, and ProQuest Educational Journals. The researcher accessed these databases through the Nova Southeastern University library. The researcher used different combinations of keywords related to the three sections of the literature review to locate research studies. Some of these keywords included: *student behavior, behavioral sciences, classroom management, classroom discipline, school discipline management, school student behavior, student management,* and *student discipline*. The majority of these articles were from peer-reviewed journals published between 2010 and 2014.

Gaps in the Literature

As Andreou and Rapti (2010) discovered, a correlation exists between perceived efficacy and the teacher's experience. These researchers also found that perceived low self-efficacy tends to correlate with teachers employing more punitive strategies. As the researchers highlighted, "Low self-efficacy in combination with self-defensive

attributions may lead to ineffective interventions due to the absence of specific information or extensive need to protect levels of esteem" (Andreou & Rapti, 2010, p. 62). With these findings, the authors suggested examining teacher beliefs relative to the causes of problem behavior to address a gap in the literature. Furthermore, Andreou and Rapti suggested examining the perceptions of teachers as they employ strategies to meet student behavioral needs. In this study, the researcher examined teachers' perceptions of discipline strategies in the classroom in an attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

Theoretical Framework

The study followed the quantitative method, utilizing a quasi-experimental descriptive approach. This method was used to gather measureable perception scores form the Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire, as well as to gather tallies on the frequency of use and perceived efficacy for certain disciplinary strategies. The researcher then compared the data with self-confidence to determine the strategies confident teachers tend to use. The researcher used Dreikurs' (1972) social discipline model, as it is a psychological learning theory in nature (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968).

Teachers, administrators, and school districts employ a variety of techniques and approaches for classroom management. Dreikurs (1972) suggested student misbehavior in the classroom stems from the student having unmet personal needs, such as social recognition. When students feel they are not receiving due social recognition, they act out in the classroom in an attempt to draw the attention of their peers (Malmgren, Trezek, & Paul, 2005). Dreikurs' (1972) social discipline model guides a teacher in focusing on preventing misbehavior through the development of positive relationships that help fulfill a student's need for recognition and social acceptance (Malmgren et al., 2005). Dreikurs' (1972) social discipline model allowed the researcher to explore teacher perceptions of

effective classroom discipline strategies as well as the frequency in which the teachers employ these strategies in this quantitative study.

Importance of Effective Classroom Management

Adler, Glasser (1994), Gardner (2011), Dreikurs, and Nietzsche are among the most cited researchers in modern studies on behavior programs, including those under development (Plucker & Esping, 2014; William Glasser Institute, 2010). All of these theorists have intellectual underpinnings embedded within popular, and often times controversial, psychoanalysis. The aforementioned theorists challenged traditional thought and sought to spur human introspection regarding what they determined to be right and wrong behavior. Many of the past psychologists belonged to organizations that espoused ideologies deeply rooted in socialistic societies (Boeree, 2006). Moreover, a large portion of what modern day theorists base their beliefs upon are borne from Adler's philosophy (Boeree, 2006). Adler was drawn to socialist thinking through the human condition and his association with Freud (Boeree, 2006).

Aggression Drive

According to Boeree (2006), Adler's philosophy was shaped by the trauma he witnessed as a physician during World War I. From these experiences, Adler began to focus more on public concerns because he believed human survival was dependent on society changing (Boeree, 2006). As a result, Adler constructed his theory of the aggression drive, which refers to the response humans have when other requirements, such as nourishment, sexual satisfaction, the need to be productive or loved, are unfulfilled (Boeree, 2006). Adler examined the motives of individuals because of what they feared they would not satisfy. Assessing these types of motivations may enable teachers to address a child's misbehavior within the educational setting (Webster-Stratton,

Reinke, Herman, & Newcomer, 2011). Thus, the teacher or administrator can employ this knowledge in such a way that a child may be able to more effectively satisfy his or her need, causing the child to misbehave in the classroom through instruction or other strategy.

Individual Psychology

Dreikurs and Grey's (1968) theory of individual psychology was formulated through their experiences with and study of theorists like Dewey, Freud, and Adler. Dreikurs and Grey summarized most of the modern day theorists, but premised his study on Adler's pursuit of what must be understood by parents and teachers in terms of behavior (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968). Dreikurs and Grey believed that to resolve historical errors, educators and families needed to understand what child rearing required in such a difficult era. Dreikurs and Grey further explained that educators and parental figures will need to be prepared to address issues related to adolescents who challenge traditional roles and principles by petitioning to be equivalent participants in the social order.

Dreikurs, Cassel, and Dreikurs-Ferguson (2004) also wrote about Adler in a book entitled *Discipline Without Tears: How to Reduce Conflict and Establish Cooperation in the Classroom.* Dreikurs et al. (2004) outlined the basic theory that children exhibit behaviors and actions because of their need for a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging is the reason for their behavior, and when educators react without knowing the cause, behavior management or discipline is without success (Dreikurs et al., 2004). Dreikurs et al. expanded upon Adlerian philosophy by determining which drive is being employed or the reason for an unacceptable behavior incidence rather than employing discipline based solely on the behavior exhibition itself (Edwards, 2005).

Ongoing Effects of Poor Classroom Management

Researchers have found ongoing effects of poor classroom management to still exist despite attempts to alleviate it (Prior, 2014; Wong & Wong, 2009). When teachers are unable to control the classroom, multiple negative factors may occur, which affects the overall learning process and success of both the teacher and students (Prior, 2014). Prior (2014) noted that teachers who are unable to effectively manage the classroom experience high levels of stress and often feel inadequate in their careers. In addition, negative classroom management leads to a loss of instructional time.

Relationship between classroom management and academic performance. From personal experiences, Prior (2014) acknowledged that when she first started teaching, she had "the worst-behaved class ever" (p. 68). Prior initially thought the students were the problem, but soon realized it was her own management skills, or lack thereof, that created a negative classroom environment. Prior investigated how relationships play an important role in the management of students in the classroom. Through experience, Prior detailed a recipe for classroom management for teachers, which included love, engagement, support, and consistency. The first ingredient, love, coincides her emphasis on the importance of teacher-student relationships. Prior stressed that "children need to feel cared for and valued" (p. 69), backing-up Glasser's (2010) choice theory, which includes love and belonging as one of the five basic needs driving behavior (William Glasser Institute, 2010, "Choice Theory").

The second ingredient to Prior's (2014) recipe for classroom management is engagement, which draws on Dewey's (1966) seminal work detailing the positive effects of engagement on learning and behavior management. Prior stressed the importance of finding a balance between over-stimulating and under-stimulating activities, both of which can cause behavior problems. The third ingredient, support, regards informing

students of clear expectations, and reinforcing positive behaviors in lieu of simply reprimanding students without showing students how to properly meet expectations (Prior, 2014). Last, Prior noted that consistency, the final ingredient to managing classroom behaviors, entails reinforcement of positive behaviors and expectations. Wong and Wong (2009) also regarded consistency as an integral element of a successful classroom environment. Ultimately, it is the teacher's responsibility to care for and support students, while stimulating an engaging environment and consistently reinforcing positive behaviors (Prior, 2014).

Xenos (2012) outlined a point system approach as a real-world application to modify student behaviors. Xenos' point system approach compares to PBS; however, the researcher implemented positive behavior reinforcement from a different angle. From personal teaching experience, Xenos found that implementing a point system in the classroom enabled the researcher to deal with negative student behaviors by providing instant feedback towards those behaviors, via subtracting points, as well as encouraging positive behaviors by rewarding points to compliant students. The researcher used this system frequently throughout the school day by keeping point totals "easy to access, quick to update, and current" (Xenos, 2012, p. 251), ensuring the tallying of point totals did not disrupt teaching. Overall, Xenos split this approach down into four main areas: (a) assigning points to and subtracting points from students for accordingly accomplishing or failing certain tasks; (b) reinforcing point values for behaviors, both desired or discouraged; (c) equally applying the point system to remain consistent; and (d) creating an accurate and efficient point tallying system for other teachers to easily implement. According to Xenos, a point system allows the teacher to improve classroom management, thus improving students' academic performance.

Negative effects on teacher and student efficacy. Students' negative behaviors can present a significant deal of stress for teachers, which can, in turn, hinder a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom (Andreou & Rapti, 2010). The authors studied 249 primary school teachers' causal attributes to student behavior problems and teachers' perceived efficacy of classroom management relating to selected interventions. The researchers found teachers' years of experience influenced teachers' perceptions of what factors effect student behaviors.

Specifically, teachers with between 6 and 15 years of teaching experience believed both school-related and family-related factors influenced student behaviors, whereas teachers with 16-22 years of teaching experience believed family factors were at the root of student behaviors (Andreou & Rapti, 2010). Andreou and Rapti (2010) determined that teachers with longer experience contributed external factors as the cause of student behaviors. From this finding, the researchers stated that teachers with more experience "feel detached from behavioral problems and constrained by the educational system" (Andreou & Rapti, 2010, p. 61). Therefore, those seasoned teachers perceive themselves as enforcers of the curriculum, while younger teachers are more apt to be concerned with the social and emotional wellbeing of students (Andreou & Rapti, 2010). Ultimately, the researchers concluded that teachers need programs that provide interventions regarding how to effectively deal with misbehaving students, as well as information on common roots of and what drives those behaviors (Andreou & Rapti, 2010).

Kryiacou and Martin (2010) implemented a questionnaire that focused on 176 beginning secondary school teachers' perceptions of student misbehaviors in Spain. The participants, who were student teaching at the time, attributed students' misbehaviors in

class to "parents who do not instill [*sic*.] pro-school values in their children" (Kryiacou & Martin, 2010, p. 415). The teachers identified that the best discipline strategy to deal with negative student behaviors was to have a conversation with the misbehaving student after class. However, the results of the questionnaire revealed that the young teachers did not feel confident about their abilities to deal with negative student behaviors. This coincides with Andreou and Rapti's (2010) findings that the number of years of teaching experience significantly affects teachers' perceptions of the causes of student behaviors, as well as how to deal with those behaviors. Roache and Lewis (2011) and Wolfgang (2009) also reviewed relevant literature (as cited in Kryiacou & Martin, 2010) and found that as teachers gain experience, they identify more interventionist attributions (i.e., the teacher's ability to intervene successfully) and less pathognomonic attributions (i.e., the students' problematic attributes) to explain misbehaviors in the classroom. As Kryiacou and Martin (2010) found that beginning teachers expressed lower confidence in their abilities to deal with students' behaviors, an increasing demand exists for programs that effectively teach educators how to deal with these students to increase teacher retention and students' academic performance.

Causes of Classroom Behavior Issues

In their qualitative case study, MacSuga and Simonsen (2011) highlighted that issues emerge when educators implement ineffective behavior management or modification strategies. According to MacSuga and Simonsen, when examining a child's background, the researchers focused on the student's family situation as an indicator of the researchers' overall social perspective; this was done to identify what affected behavioral actions. Educators are cognizant that being disconnected with aspects of the student's life lends to ineffective disciplinary action (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011).

Particularly problematic are the schools that serve the lower socioeconomic demographic (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011). Gov.UK (2011) reported that when dealing with urban classrooms, emotional and behavioral issues of school-aged children are the number one concern among educators, administrators, and the surrounding community.

In their mixed-method study, Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) suggested that efforts, though unintentional, are in vain and misdirected as these efforts ultimately lead to misguided management and disciplinary policies. In addition, the staff at the researcher's school has studied and discussed Payne's books as a means of approaching their demographic in a more effective manner. MacSuga and Simonsen (2011) explained the problems students encounter within their respective educational settings and societal categories. The researchers described the behavior scenarios most frequently exhibited by students in this social category and proceeded to suggest alternatives as valid solutions. MacSuga and Simonsen depicted realistic scenarios driven by personal observations to serve as examples and assumptions regarding student behaviors.

While MacSuga and Simonsen (2011) focused more on student problems in educational settings in their study, Thompson (2008) researched teacher and student perspectives of classroom discipline in a high minority, low-performing school of 3,200 students in southern California through a series of questionnaires and focus groups. According to Thompson, 97% of teachers believed they cared about their students' well-being in and out of school; however, only 61% of the student respondents agreed. Thompson asked teachers and students about discipline and their agreement with the statement, "I treat my students in the same way that I would want my own children's teachers to treat my children." Of the teachers, 96% agreed with the statement, whereby only 86% White, 81% Latino, and 78% African-American students agreed with the

statement (Thompson, 2008, p. 52). Thompson stated that educators must change the way they think about African-American and Latino students as well as their parents to ensure educators are working with these students to address and understand students' needs, and demand the same high-quality education for all students. Thompson attributed racism, unfair practices, lack of knowledge, inadequate teacher training, insufficient professional development practices, stereotyping, and the lack of understanding concerning race relations for the differences in students and teacher perceptions regarding approaches to discipline in the classroom (Thompson, 2008).

Interventions to Address Classroom Behavior Issues

Reality therapy and choice therapy. Glasser (2010) published his approach to psychotherapy, termed *reality therapy*, in 1965 (William Glasser Institute, 2010). Reality therapy is defined as the instruction and application of choice theory. Later, Glasser combined his position with Powers' control theory, thereby creating a hybrid model that became known as choice theory, which premised the field of human behavior by specifically addressing the how and why of human behavior (William Glasser Institute, 2010). According to Glasser, "Choice Theory states that: a) all we do is behave; b) almost all behavior is chosen; and c) we are driven by our genes to satisfy five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun" (William Glasser Institute, 2010).

Essentially, "the mission of The William Glasser Institute is to teach all people choice theory and to use it as the basis for training in reality therapy, Glasser Quality School Education, and lead management" (William Glasser Institute, 2010, para. 1). Reality therapy has grown internationally, producing the Institute for Reality Therapy where rudimentary training on the application of Glasser's concepts have been offered to more than 75,000 people globally (William Glasser Institute, 2010). Through a set of

extensive activities and workshops that infuse choice theory, participating schools become classified as Glasser Quality Schools (William Glasser Institute, 2010).

Consequently, when dealing with unacceptable behavior, Glasser Quality Schools do not employ punishments, at least traditional punishments, but instead seek to isolate the student for the purpose of thinking. This time spent thinking is directed toward an inquiry and command process by which teachers ask students questions about their actions, violations, and possible solutions to the behavior infractions (Wolfgang, 2009). The teacher then moves to the commanding part of the process, which entails stating clearly what the student has done wrong, such as, "You are breaking the rules and cannot be part of the group. You cannot have back your privilege (or be part of the group) unless you tell me your plan" (Wolfgang, 2009, p. 155). With choice theory receiving wide spread notoriety, Wolfgang (2009) added Glasser's philosophy entails that punishment is not a viable concept in preventing unacceptable behavior.

Learning communities. Edward's (2005) theory is an all-inclusive approach to negative behaviors with a realistic application of democratic values, known as learning communities. Edwards advocated employing a democratic process by which teachers instruct students to monitor and approach their academics and discipline. According to Edwards, one of the main issues structured education struggles with is the disconnect between state government mandated curricula and the realistic needs of students. Edwards stated that educators need to provide educational tasks to maximize the students' innate abilities, hence the use of learning communities designed by teachers and directed by students. With proper training and guidance, students regulate and control their own behaviors and give themselves the learning experiences needed to reach their goals (Edwards, 2005). Edwards contrasted the inherent distrust adults may have with students

directing their own learning and activities in a manner that accomplishes public mandates and assumptions of academic progress.

Conversely, learning communities aid students in developing better relationships with teachers and peers as they become closely connected to them. Researchers have also found that connectedness in schools enhances a student's resiliency and is even more of a prominent protective approach to negative behaviors (Edwards, 2005). According to Edwards (2005), hundreds of prospective teachers have expressed and applied individual philosophies of discipline under his influence; therefore, Edwards' theory and ideological premise has affected many developing teachers.

Tauber (2007) posited that it is not in a teacher's best interest to pick-and-choose facets of varying disciplinary philosophies. Tauber referenced diversity when he stated that forcing a teacher to choose a single discipline model is not an easy thing to do, but a necessary thing to do. Tauber recognized and validated many philosophies. The researcher suggested that teachers find a philosophy best suited to their personal and environmental needs (Tauber, 2007). He said whatever a person's personal beliefs, they will be happier and function on a higher level in an environment of similar philosophies (Tauber, 2007).

Edwards (2005) and Tauber (2007) presented their positions with clarity, which lent validity to the theories they advocated. Edwards (2005) examined discipline models from past theorists, such as those presented by Dreikurs and Glasser. From his analysis and educational experiences, Edwards formulated his own theoretical premise for disciplining students. Wolfgang (2009) wrote on the subject of theories and the array of discipline strategies that are making their way into present educational settings. Wolfgang attempted to categorize all of the theorists, including their strategy of behavior

management, and explained how the philosophies are affecting educational practitioners in the 21st century. Consequently, these theories have made their way through educational circles and into modern teaching strategies (Tauber, 2007).

Positive behavior support. Clunies-Ross, Little, and Kienhuis (2008) suggested that researchers exploring a behavioral approach should focus on said behaviors of teachers and students as they interact in their natural environment. The behaviors were broken into two groups where actual observations of the teacher-to-student interactions took place during classroom management scenarios (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). More positive comments were observed during *academic interactions* that resulted in less misbehavior in the students. However, in the second group, termed *social*, the researchers observed more negative responses (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). What the researchers found was that the actual practices of educators in the area of discipline are in fact different. Furthermore, Clunies-Ross et al. suggested that teachers are driving their future behaviors and decisions from inaccurate information and perceptions. Overall, the findings suggested that teachers are abandoning their positive response techniques when dealing with student management in social situations compared to the academic scenarios (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

O'Connor (2010) deducted a relationship between a child and teacher affected behavior in a positive manner. Through careful analysis of several factors, such as race, income levels, parent involvement, high quality interactions, and classroom management skills, O'Connor produced evidence that the quality of the relationship forged by a student and his or her teacher plays a role in a child's social and behavioral development. Furthermore, O'Connor posited that as the child-teacher relationship grows richer in experience and quality, it opens pathways where the teacher can engage in more

instructional and supportive activities.

Dweck (2007) led a team who studied more than 400 fifth-grade students to observe their reaction to praise. In the study, Dweck's team constructed three tests that contained varying degrees of difficulty so that praise could be used to aid the participants in overcoming challenges from a test that was cognitively too difficult for them. Within this research, Dweck's team employed different kinds of variable praise, praising intelligence as opposed to effort. The researcher determined if the participants would react favorably to an easier test administered later, depending on the type of praise they experienced (Dweck, 2007). Dweck provided evidence that the type of praise a student receives plays a role in his or her self-perception, which affects his or her ability to accept challenges, become motivated, persevere, or tell the truth.

Simonsen et al. (2010) focused on both the effect of the classroom management strategies educators employed and the cause of the behavior. Simonsen et al. examined the effect of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) on an alternative educational setting. SWPBS was implemented to reduce the occurrences of serious behavior issues in a particular school. The SWPBS strategy broke down student and educator support to identify measurable outcomes, where they could then use the data to make informed decisions, select and apply evidence-based practices to improve student behavior, and develop methods to maximize efficiency and increase staff support (Simonsen et al., 2010). With the data collected, researchers drew comparisons between the previous behavior occurrences and the times in which the behavior occurred (Simonsen et al., 2010). Simonsen et al. concluded the intervention was successful, as SWPBS appeared to be positively associated with changes in student behavior.

Westling (2010) proposed an alternative method to examine classroom behavior.

Westling examined general education and special education teachers to see how they related to students who presented challenging behaviors. In total, 70 teachers completed a questionnaire based on a Likert-type scale where Westling inquired about teachers' perceptions toward coping skills and behaviors related to difficult behavior scenarios. Westling employed both a correlational and regression analysis where several key findings were discovered about the teachers' behaviors. For instance, they did not use strategies commonly considered effective, at least in the field of applied behavioral analysis and positive behavioral support. Westling reported that participants who felt they were thoroughly prepared during their preservice training were more confident and reported a number of effective strategies to improve behavior.

Self-advocacy behavior management. Sebag (2010) examined the behavior of secondary students who had learning disabilities in a Title I urban school setting in Washington, D.C. Sebag approached students' behaviors using a self-advocacy behavior management model. This approach encouraged the student to identify the areas of behavioral struggle; devise a strategy to successfully tackle the struggle; and reflect on success, progress, and areas with room for improvement (Sebag, 2010). Though his approach was founded in theory and research from other authors, Sebag developed five core steps that education practitioners can use to implement the self-advocacy behavior approach when developing their own classroom management system.

Sebag (2010) employed the strategy with his reading resource class and reported whether or not students accumulated points, using the five steps he devised as a process in which students monitor their own behavior. The five steps included completion of a weekly conduct form, teacher and student conferences, developing goals and strategies for behavior improvement, and making appropriate adjustments to goals and strategies

(Sebag, 2010). During two 9-week courses, Sebag reported, "the model proved to be successful for 13 of 21 students during the fall 2008 semester (62%), and for 3 of 6 students during the spring semester" (p. 23).

In 1999, Macciomei and Ruben published a book that referenced 250 proven strategies for assessing the reason for inappropriate classroom behavior and to for managing said behavior within a classroom setting. However, Macciomei and Ruben offered no success or failure rates for the strategies they advocated. Macciomei and Ruben highlighted the fact that schools and teachers do not respond effectively to behavior issues or the use of consequences. The researchers posited poorly managed reward and punishment schemes can lead to students who are either dependent upon rewards or confused about the consequences they may receive (Macciomei & Ruben, 1999).

Based on empirical evidence, the researchers' suggestion was to employ a strategy by which a teacher methodically uses rewards and gradually fades out of the system as the student becomes more effective at identifying the behaviors that yield them the results they seek (Macciomei & Ruben, 1999). What the authors were suggesting is not uncommon in its premise. However, the reward system tends to engage students in acceptable behavior merely for the reward itself, not for the sake of bettering themselves academically and personally, according to Macciomei and Ruben. Additionally, the reward must be gradually taken away for the same inherent reason it was initiated. For the purpose of this study, the reward was initiated to train proper behavioral patterns within subjects; therefore, once the students made satisfactory progress, the reward would be withdrawn and the behavior itself would remain in place because of learning. The behavior would then be part of the students' innate behavioral schema and is understood

to the degree that acting otherwise would seem out of the norm (Macciomei & Ruben, 1999).

Functional assessment protocol. Patterson (2009) conducted a study to examine the out-of-seat behavior issue of one male subject. Through careful execution of a functional assessment protocol, Patterson took the time with the subject to calculate baseline data essential to configuring a hypothesis and formulating a plan to address the child's needs. Additionally, Patterson employed suggestions offered by Wong, a nationally recognized teacher and expert in student behavior management strategies. Consequently, Patterson offered empirical evidence of a reduction in unwanted behavior in subjects as the intervention was applied, and an increase when withdrawn. Patterson offered suggestions and evidence as to the efficacy of the intervention; however, the study only included one student. Further, Patterson's study required teachers to employ a large portion of time and attention to configure baseline data, study procedures, a hypothesis, and a course of action for a chosen intervention.

Similarly, Filter and Horner (2009) employed a function-based assessment to ascertain students' behavior issues. Through this method, the authors identified two students with chronic behavior problems as a function of their academic skills in certain classrooms. By working within a single case reversal study design, the authors selected two interventions for each subject—one intervention was drawn from their function-based assessment, the other was derived from outside literature apart from their assessment. The results indicated the function-based assessment produced fewer behavior problems from the subjects than the intervention drawn from outside literature (Filter & Horner, 2009). However, the authors highlighted that many variables exist to consider when assuming this type of study. For example, Filter and Horner had the technology and

additional resources to determine and connect the function of the behavior issues and to establish a suitable intervention from their data. In this study, unlike with Patterson, the authors were not the subjects' teachers. Practitioners seeking information to solve student behavior issues inquired regarding the access to similar resources, such as time, study materials, and expertise in the behavior modification field to aid in the execution of such a study in the future. Finally, the authors noted that practitioners should understand the selection process of an intervention prior to its intervention (Filter & Horner, 2009).

Cognitive-behavioral strategy. Thompson and Webber studied the effect of Student Agreement Realignment Strategy on 10 middle school students during a 36-week period. This cognitive-behavioral (CB) strategy entailed gleaning students' emotions and feelings toward their behavior infractions and aligning the teacher's behavioral expectations with the student struggling with behavior. Teachers in the study used five classroom or behavior norms or rules: (a) Do your work; (b) Keep your body parts to yourself; (c) Be considerate of others; (d) Follow directions; (e) Be on time in assigned areas (Thompson & Webber, 2010). By employing a simple CB study design and plotting data from the five rules, Thompson and Webber calculated a statistical difference between baseline and intervention phases of the study. The researchers were able to provide evidence that teacher and student expectations of behavior and school norms can be more aligned, and office discipline referral (ODRs) can be reduced, leaving these students in the classroom learning rather than serving punishments.

Existing Discipline Strategies

In-school and out-of-school suspension. Cloud and Kritsonis (2006) examined the effects of in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspension (OSS) on students who broke school rules. This research was unique because the data provided on its

usefulness could be combined with consultative elements. The researchers found ISS showed promising gains in behavior management when combined with some form of counseling program (Cloud & Kritsonis, 2006). The study included examples of schools around the United States that have benefited from this hybrid model of disciplinary action. Cloud and Kritsonis (2006) offered their findings to assist in specific areas of the educational setting (e.g., parental and community involvement).

Wheelock (n.d.) posited that in order for ISS to be an effective deterrent for misbehavior, the program must contain several key components related to counseling and instruction. Wheelock explained that mixed results were found upon checking in with schools around the country that used the program model. While the results gleaned were from interviews with administrators who used comparative data, before and after program implementation, the study did not offer the reasons behind the differing success and failure results.

Counseling. Simonsen, Myers, and Briere (2011) posed a direct challenge to the standard practice of urban middle school counseling. Standard practice in urban middle school counseling is the normal procedure agreed upon and understood to be effective within a district (Simonsen et al., 2011). Through targeted-group intervention, the researchers sought to gain quantitative data consisting of a variety of activities for students and teachers to monitor behavior referred to as Check-In Check-Out (CICO; Simonsen et al., 2011). Check-In Check-Out is a "multicomponent intervention based on a simple strategy for increasing ongoing structure and feedback for at-risk students" (Stuart, 2013, p. 4). This intervention strategy affords mentors and students a chance to speak and set goals at the beginning of each day: Check-In. At the end of the day, the mentors and the students reconvene and assess how the student progressed in relation to

his or her behavior and his or her goal achievement (Stuart, 2013).

Simonsen et al. (2011) employed an experimental group design in which only Tier 2 students were chosen to participate. *Tier 2* refers to an escalated level of support school staff must offer to students who do not respond to primary levels of support for their behavior issues (Simonsen et al., 2011). From these parameters, the authors divided 42 students within the Tier 2 group: 15 for standard practice group and 27 for the CICO group. After 6 weeks, the authors collected data through direct observation of the students, as well as documents generated from interns, teachers, administrators, and interviews (Simonsen et al., 2011). By employing a pre- and postintervention analysis, the researchers received divergent findings (Simonsen et al., 2011).

Many school systems have implemented Behavioral Education Programs (BEPs) to specifically address behavioral issues (Simonsen et al., 2011). Through lessons, BEP offers tools for students to utilize instead of participating in unwanted behavior (Simonsen et al., 2011). Simonsen et al. discovered through observational data that a statistically significant difference exists in off-task behavior for those students assigned to the BEP group. However, when examining data generated from school staff, primarily rating-scale documents, no statistically significant difference was measured. The authors stated in the limitations section that not all participants were consistent in their participation and this group-intervention was the first of its kind as other researchers have employed a single-subject research methodology (Simonsen et al., 2011). Despite work by other researchers, such as Abebe and HaileMariam (2007), Cloud and Kritsonis (2006) Filter and Horner (2009), Khon (2009), Paciotti (2010), Patterson (2009), Payne (2006), Simonsen et al. (2011), and Wheelock (n.d.), researchers have not brought forth the data to eliminate or decrease the behavior issues present in schools.

Referrals. To parallel the National Center for Education Statistics study, a tracking program titled School Wide Information System (SWIS) was designed and used in behavior studies to break down scenarios generated by the school's office discipline referral. An ODR is a report filed with an administrator for further disciplinary actions (Educational & Community Supports, 2017). This program is employed by the schools in an effort to glean information from the behavioral problems seen throughout any given school day. The SWIS facilitated this study using data and statistics that would lend to the decision-making process and for determining strategies for chronic behavior problems. Educational and Community Supports (2017) uncovered hidden trends and issues that permitted educators to drive planning and curriculum, but did not offer suggestions regarding how to rectify what was discovered. The school's leaders felt justified and reasoned enough to therefore continue using the SWIS program and modify the disciplinary strategies with which it found to benefit the affected classrooms the most.

Moreover, Spaulding et al. (2010) analyzed a study that offered empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of SWIS to provide stakeholders data that would aid in determining the most appropriate plan of action for addressing behavioral issues. The study showed these database systems enable educators and researchers to explore the relationship among administrative decisions that occur after ODRs and showed more proactive instructional consequences, such as individual and personalized instruction. Such information is helpful in the design of effective school-wide and individual student interventions (Irvin et al., 2010).

However, further examination of a study conducted by Thompson and Webber was released in 2010 that based its success or failure standard on the amount of ODRs submitted to administration. Findings indicated the SWIS software system has validity, as

its findings remained consistent throughout the years of research.

Thompson and Webber's (2010) study was structured around a 36-week intervention where single-subject data were generated using the proportion-frequency procedure in conjunction with the two standard deviations statistical test. The authors tested for clinical, visual, and statistical significance between the participants as measured by their ODR rate pre- and postintervention. Thompson and Webber's intervention, Student and Teacher Agreement Realignment Strategy, is a promising practice that employs student self-evaluations related to teachers' awareness of student compliance with clearly stated classroom guidelines. In addition, this CB strategy stems from social learning theory, which ties into Dreikurs' (1972) social discipline model and provides an effective plan for teaching classroom and school expectations.

Furthermore, Thompson and Webber (2010) stated that antisocial and violent behavior among students in public schools can be addressed via CB and social skills training. Thus, the authors provided five rules the study participants were expected to follow, along with two social skills lessons taught in the classroom (Thompson & Webber, 2010). Using a yes or no format, four teachers performed the data collection and reported every 30 minutes whether or not the student's behavior was aligned with the five rules. The results of this intervention proved to be successful. Through the measure of ODRs, the two-tailed *t* test demonstrated significant differences between the participant's baseline mean and the intervention phase: $M = 22.20$, $M = 12.10$, respectively taught in the classroom (Thompson & Webber, 2010). However, the two standard deviations tests demonstrated that only 40% of students significantly improved above their baseline ODR averages. Though this statistical test is more rigorous, Thompson and Webber viewed it as a success and posited that questions exist regarding whether the data lend sufficient

evidence to the intervention's overall success.

Stichter, Lewis, Whittaker, Johnson, and Trussell (2009) presented compelling evidence indicating a high use of quality praise aids in the development of effective classrooms by minimizing unacceptable behavior. The authors pinpointed that the exact ratio of positive to negative comments optimal within a classroom was "3:1 - 4:1 ratio of praise to correction appears to be the most effective" (Stichter et al., 2009, p. 69). Moreover, the data presented allowed the researchers to examine the results of ODR, wherein the study added to the existing literature base that supports evidence-based classroom management as a significant role for effective instruction (Stichter et al., 2009).

The authors examined strategies employed across Title I and nonTitle I schools and found significant differences existed among the schools pertaining to the total number of ODR for the year, $\chi^2(3) = 94.72$, $p < .001$ (Stichter et al., 2009). Additionally, a chi square analysis was performed on data to examine school characteristics, such as free and reduced-fee meals, special educations services, and gifted services (Stichter et al., 2009). By drawing parallels with their own data, and studies from the past, this quantitative approach provided an opportunity to view the results from a more tailored perspective. Stichter et al. (2009) reassured readers that the strategies discussed were effective and can be employed using data-driven reasoning.

Study Design

The research design for this study was a quantitative quasi-experimental descriptive design. Use of a quantitative quasi-experimental descriptive study design enabled the researcher to collect numerically measureable data pertaining to teachers' perceptions of classroom management and the frequency of use, or the efficacy for

specific disciplinary strategies (see Appendices A and B). Because of the quantitative nature of this study, the use of these strategies may be statistically compared with the practitioners' self-confidence scores to determine the top used strategies of confident teachers. Because the researcher did not describe the detailed thoughts or experiences of these practitioners, a qualitative design was rejected. Though qualitative data are rich and provide exhaustive detail to a specific case, the quantitative design does not allow statistical certainty that the use of specific strategies are related to a teacher's confidence (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This allowed the researcher to infer that certain strategies may contribute to heightened efficacy or confidence without concern of bias or misinterpretation based on human error, as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2014).

Summary

The researcher's objective was to ascertain the numerically measureable perceptions of practitioners regarding the effective and ineffective disciplinary strategies currently employed in the school where the study occurred. Discipline issues are affecting the quality of education and efficacy of schools in general. The purpose of this study was premised on the belief that the opinions of practitioners in the classrooms, who have the most contact with students, are often times forgotten. Though many researchers seek the motives of the behavior of students, the validity of their findings and suggestions are oftentimes failing to make improvements, as evidenced by Kohn's (2011) findings that behavior issues have been the top complaint of stakeholders for decades. In light of this, the opinions of those employing the researchers' finding and suggestions should be investigated to determine their validity and effectiveness in real-world settings. Thus, actively seeking the measureable and statistically examinable perceptions of those practitioners will provide verifiable information that either schools are employing the

most effective strategies, or if they are failing to do so. Using the data, future researcher can also examine certain strategies for a statistical link with teacher self-confidence.

The researcher sought to provoke educational stakeholders to think critically when approaching classrooms behavior issues; thus, the articles presented here offer the opportunity to do so. The literature review showed that people across professions are thinking critically about education. Consequently, varying approaches can cloud the picture of how best to remedy discipline issues within schools and classrooms. Thus, the varying perspectives can be more confusing than helpful, particularly for those entering the teaching profession. This literature review was designed to examine the classroom management and disciplinary strategies currently available to educators to determine their efficacy in decreasing or eliminating behavior problems. The result of the extensive literature review, therefore, lend evidence to support some researchers' conclusions that altered theoretical approaches and hastened adoption of strategies create a patchwork effect in schools and classrooms.

Research Questions

Because of the literature reviewed and the extent by which many authors have conducted or constructed their research and theories, the researcher formulated the research questions. These questions targeted the practitioners' perspectives of the strategies they are employing. The practitioners provided information regarding strategies that they perceive as effective, as well as the frequency with which they use these strategies.

Research Question 1: What disciplinary strategies do teachers indicate as most effective within the sampled practitioners?

Research Question 2: What disciplinary strategies are indicated to be most widely

used within the sampled practitioners?

Research Question 3: What differences, if any, exist in perceptions of strategy effectiveness, and frequency of use between practitioners with high versus low confidence?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Given the comprehensive nature of the study, the researcher employed a quasi-experimental descriptive research design to answer the research questions of this applied dissertation. In addition, data analysis involved statistical analysis to investigate possible mean differences between disciplinary strategies and the efficacy ratings between participants with high versus low confidence in their support and ability to administer discipline. The researcher sought to analyze the discipline strategies, measure the efficacy, and highlight the current disciplinary culture at participating schools as a model for similar studies.

Participants

The researcher consulted with the district where the study occurred to assure key components of the study were completed to set parameters and protocol within the administrative standards. The district required that the study be offered to schools not within the researcher's sphere of influence. The Accountability, Research, and Continuous Improvement Committee specifically requested that the researcher complete the study at schools where the researcher has never taught, volunteered time, or taken tutoring positions connected with outside firms serving a particular school. In their request, they explained that they felt that teachers within these schools may be influenced by the researcher's personal relationships with students, families, and personnel as stakeholders in the school.

All participants were selected based on employment and their role in creating the environment driving the discipline at these select schools. To obtain information on the true nature of the administration of discipline within said schools, teachers in

kindergarten through Grade 8 had the opportunity to participate in the study. Additionally, teaching assistants formally referred to as para-professionals had the opportunity to participate in the study because of their involvement with student disciplinary measures.

To facilitate the collection of data and to demonstrate the inclusive nature of select schools, some administrations have integrated all students, including behaviorally challenged students, into the general education classrooms, while others have not. This integration is irrespective of students' full time enrollment status. Regardless, the scope of the study captured the perspectives of those teachers within and excluded from students with special needs, relative to their behavioral categorization.

Furthermore, to capture the disciplinary culture of participating schools, the researcher included all of the teachers who were in contact with the students. Students are also in contact with the custodial staff, cafeteria workers, and office personnel, and it was necessary to capture the behavioral infractions witnessed by these school personnel because of the unstructured environments in which they interact with the students. Even within these environments, personnel must make disciplinary. Therefore, the researcher chose to include as many student conduct scenarios and the manner in which they are handled from the practitioners' perspective as possible. To meet the requirements for analyzing the efficacy of their disciplinary decision making, the questionnaire examines past decisions, which were factored into the practitioners' responses (Irvin et al., 2010).

Instruments

The instruments used for the nonexperimental descriptive research design included the Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire (see Appendix A) developed by Westling (2010).

Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire. The Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire measures perceptions regarding the origins of challenging behavior, support services and preparation, and strategies in response to challenging behavior. This instrument has three subscales, including Beliefs on Challenging Behavior, Support Services and Preparation, and Strategies in Response to Challenging Behavior. The Support Services and Preparation scale is calculated as the continuous mean of each of the items pertinent to that scale. This scale indicates the degree to which a teacher feels confident in his or her ability to address challenging behavior. The Beliefs on Challenging Behavior and Strategies in Response to Challenging Behavior are descriptive and provided details to inform Research Questions 1 and 2, which measured the degree to which teachers utilize specific responses, as well as their beliefs on the reason for the behaviors.

Alignment chart. The researcher used an alignment chart to assure that the information aligned to the effectiveness of specific disciplinary strategies (i.e., questions #6-23), as well as the frequency with which these strategies are used (see Appendix B). The frequency of use for each strategy reflected which strategies high versus low confidence practitioners utilize. Frequency scores for each strategy ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*), where higher scores correspond with a higher frequency of use. The effectiveness scores determined which strategies the participants perceived as most effective. Effectiveness scores for each strategy ranged from 1 (*not effective*) to 5 (*very effective*), where higher scores correspond with a higher degree of perceived effectiveness. The researcher presents any information gathered from these surveys not used in analysis to describe the sample.

Procedures

Design. The researcher obtained data from a cohort of personnel at chosen schools to add an additional design element to the structure of the study. Thus, the sampling followed a nonprobability procedure. Finally, the researcher quantified the data to statistically compare the efficacy of these strategies. Efficacy measurements and correlational outcomes were gleaned using descriptive statistical measurements and hypothesis testing. Specifically, the researcher statistically measured responses from participants to glean whether or not a particular strategy is considered more highly related to classroom management than others are. All research questions elicited direct responses from school personnel regarding the efficacy and frequency of use for the disciplinary measures they employ. Because the researcher then analyzed the responses for comparative measures, a quantitative quasi-experimental approach was appropriate for this study.

In structuring the study, the researcher met with each school individually to explain the study and its effect on their school and staff. Subsequently, within this district, the researcher was able to request and obtain permission from four schools because of prior knowledge of the school's administration. The researcher and the individual administrations from each of the four schools agreed to the study within their schools. With further communications, the researcher schedule an agreed-upon date to make a presentation and thoroughly explain the study to the staff and practitioners at each school.

Once completing the presentations, the researcher explained that the participants would receive the questionnaire once a month for 4 months, after receiving IRB approval. An email was sent once a month to remind all participants that the questionnaire was

available within certain time parameters. The participants could access the questionnaire from their classroom computers and fill them out accordingly. The results were then submitted to the host site, SurveyMonkey.com, where they were aggregated and accessible by the researcher.

The researcher felt as if the external validity of the study was diminished because of the select group employed for data collection. However, the objective was to determine the disciplinary culture of this school within the district and provide a methodology that can be replicated by future researcher or motivated adults to execute within their own setting or target population. The internal validity was addressed through the construct of comparing one strategy to another. In this case, the researcher compared the efficacy, as perceived by teachers and adults on staff, of discipline strategies employed at the school. Though the researcher examined one select group, the internal validity was anticipated to be high, given the objectives to determine the disciplinary efficacy and the culture created within the school district.

The dates for this study included the prerequisites of the Nova doctoral program and the State of Florida. Surveys were completed and returned either the same day or following day. The research questions for this study identified the behaviors and disciplinary actions most often displayed by students and staff accordingly. Therefore, the researcher sought to determine perceived efficacy of disciplinary strategies employed, and sought to offer significant insight regarding these educators in the form of a best-practice approach to a highly contentious issue. The information from this study offers children a chance to have their emotional, social, physical, and academic needs met more effectively by allowing the school personnel to manage these students using successful disciplinary strategies. This increased choice of effective strategies benefits students'

academic quality of instruction. Finally, this study offers empirical evidence to real-life practitioners regarding the practice of disciplining in the school setting.

Data Analysis

Following collection, the researcher entered data into SPSS Version 22.0 for Windows. The researcher conducted descriptive statistics to describe the sample demographics and the research variables used in the analysis. In addition, the researcher calculated frequency and percentages for nominal data of interest, as well as calculated means and standard deviations for continuous data of interest. Such data included average perceptions of the origin of students' behavior, or average use of strategies in response challenging behavior (Howell, 2013).

Research Question 1. What disciplinary strategies do teachers indicate as most effective within the sampled practitioners? To examine Research Question 1, the techniques examined included referrals, counseling, time-out, revocation of privileges, and family involvement. Responses for each strategy were collected and an average score was calculated for each. Scores for each strategy ranged from 1 (*not effective*) to 5 (*very effective*), where higher scores correspond with a higher degree of perceived effectiveness. The spread (standard deviations) and central tendencies (means) were tabulated for ease of interpretation.

Research Question 2. What disciplinary strategies are indicated to be most widely used within the sampled practitioners? To examine Research Question 2, the techniques examined included referrals, counseling, time-out, revocation of privileges, and family involvement. Responses for each strategy were collected and an average score was calculated for each. Scores for each strategy ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*), where higher scores correspond with a higher frequency of use. The spread (standard

deviations) and central tendencies (means) were tabulated for ease of interpretation.

Research Question 3. What differences, if any, exist in perceptions of strategy effectiveness, and frequency of use between practitioners with high versus low confidence?

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant difference in perceptions of strategy effectiveness between confident and unconfident teachers.

H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in perceptions of strategy effectiveness between confident and unconfident teachers.

$H_0$2: There is no statistically significant difference in the frequency of discipline use between confident and unconfident teachers.

H_a2: There is a statistically significant difference in the frequency of discipline use between confident and unconfident teachers.

To examine Research Question 3, the researcher constructed two hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 examined the difference in perceptions of effectiveness between practitioners with high versus low self-confidence. Hypothesis 2 examined the difference in the frequency with which highly confident versus minimally confident teachers employ the use of the disciplinary strategies in question.

The researcher tested the hypotheses using Mann-Whitney *U* tests. One Mann-Whitney *U* test was used for each strategy of interest (i.e., referrals, counseling, time-out, revocation of privileges, and family involvement) resulting in a comparison of two tests for Hypothesis 1 and for Hypothesis 2: high confidence and low confidence. Analysis examined incorporated responses to Survey Questions 1 - 5, while correlating the aggregated responses to Survey Questions 7 - 21; these were both the dependent variables for their respective hypothesis. Again, in both analyses, the independent variable was

high versus low self-confidence, as measured by the Support Services and Preparation portion of the Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire. Thus, aggregating the data to form an average level of self-perceived confidence, the researcher was then able to perform a median split to group participants into a high or low confidence group.

The Mann-Whitney *U* test is the appropriate analysis when the goal of researcher is to determine if statistically significant differences exist in the responses to an ordinal Likert-type survey item between two groups (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). The Mann-Whitney *U* test compares the number of times a score from one sample, such as those with low confidence, is ranked higher than a score from another sample, such as those with high confidence. The scores from both samples were ranked together, where Rank 1 is used for the lowest score, Rank 2 for the next lowest score, and so on. When scores have the same value, a tie is determined. The scores are ranked and those ranks are added together and then divided by the number of scores. Each of the tied scores is then assigned the same ranking (Cramer, 1998). Once the data are ranked, calculations will be carried out on the ranks. Given the nonparametric nature of this statistical analysis, there are few assumptions to assess. These assumptions include random samples from populations, meaning that the two samples have independent observations and the measure of the two samples have at least an ordinal scale of measurement (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006). Appendix B indicates the alignment of survey questions to the research question that they inform.

Limitations

Limitations of this study were inherent through the structure of using only one set of teachers within participating schools, and the demographically skewed population of the participating schools. Further, the uniqueness of the schools, within this district

affects the generalizability. What these limitations mean, however, is that readers and researchers may consider conducting a similar research study to gain generalizations about their unique situation or target sample. Moreover, all readers must consider that the data collected for this study was inclusive of a combination of elementary schools and middle schools. Generalizing this data to a school within alternative grade brackets is not recommended because of the nature, maturity, and differing perspectives on discipline regarding students within some middle schools or high schools.

Over reliance on referrals can be detrimental to a study. As mentioned by Lane, Wehby, Robertson, and Rogers (2007), reliance on discipline referrals may actually be a measure related to the teacher more so than an accurate reflection of the student(s) behavior. With this in mind, the researcher wishes to glean opinions from teachers regarding their own personal experiences rather than relying on the referrals themselves because "the absence of a validated system may be more indicative of teacher behavior rather than student behavior" (p. 4).

Potential Ethical Limitations

The researcher saw no immediate ethical issues threatening the design or results of the study. Data were handled with the utmost of care, given the nature of the opinions provided. Some personnel may have wished to keep their opinions private, given the current climate of discipline or interpersonal relationships among other personnel. Consequently, the validity of the study rests on the quality of responses provided, determined by the perceived safety and privacy that school personnel detect in the face of administrative analysis relative to the questionnaire and findings. Through the presentation, the researcher explained the reason for the study, the participants' role in the study, and the anonymity built into the questionnaire via SurveyMonkey.com.

Additionally, the presentation explained where the results would be published and how the findings could affect the school and district in general.

The researcher handled the results from the initial stages of the study with objectivity and privacy. The issues surrounding the information gleaned, though not detrimental to the teachers, may be construed as harmful to the school's administration. The researcher handled the results within the confines of anonymity and with respect to said data having the potential to harm the school's reputation as a whole. All data were tallied for the purpose of statistical analysis and received fair and equal treatment until all data were analyzed in their entirety and compiled into a summary report for the school personnel to view.

Chapter 4: Results

Students' behavioral disruptions are a daily part of many teachers' classrooms and this experience can inhibit the effective delivery of lessons to their students. Teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders to students in kindergarten through Grade 8 struggle with effective classroom management and discipline strategies, as they are unable to handle disruptive students, which leads to higher levels of school professional burnout. Educator training and existing literature provide strategies and experiences that, if applied incorrectly, can lead to inconsistent and ineffective discipline (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2011; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). As such, the purpose of this research was to ascertain the measurable perceptions of practitioners regarding the use and efficacy of certain disciplinary strategies currently employed by confident practitioners within the population of interest. To meet this goal, the researcher used the following research questions to guide the study.

1. What disciplinary strategies do teachers indicate as most effective within the sampled practitioners?

2. What disciplinary strategies are indicated to be most widely used within the sampled practitioners?

3. What differences exist in perceptions of strategy effectiveness and frequency of use between practitioners with high and low confidence?

Data Collection

After meeting parameters for both the IRB and the participating district's research board, the researcher made arrangements to begin the study. Data were planned to be transferred to the aforementioned survey host site, SurveyMonkey.com. This process

resulted in a link forwarded to the participating district's head of research. The researcher then disseminated the link, as well as an introductory letter mandated by the district, to the preselected schools within the district. The head of research informed the researcher of the invite sent to approximately 1,000 eligible participants. The preselected schools had approximately 1,000 eligible participants. Of the participants, 209 responded to the survey, resulting in a 20.9% response rate.

Upon retrieval of the data, it became apparent that there were no responses to the *perceived efficacy* of disciplinary strategies items. Because of this lack of data, the responses used to measure each strategy's efficacy could not be gathered. These efficacy variables were relevant to Research Question 1, and would have included the perceived efficacy of referrals, counseling, time-out, revocation of privileges, and family involvement. Examination of the final data indicated that only the questions regarding the *frequency of use* were included. These responses consisted of the following: (a) frequency of use for referrals, (b) frequency of use for counseling, (c) frequency of use for time-out, (d) frequency of use for revocation of privileges, (e) frequency of use for family involvement, and (f) teacher confidence.

Because no data for the perceived efficacy of these strategies was available, Research Question 1 could not be answered. However, based on the questions regarding frequency of use for each of the strategies of interest, Research Question 2 could still be examined. In addition, the researcher examined Research Question 3 in terms of frequency of use, though the examination of perceived effectiveness was unavailable.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1. What disciplinary strategies do teachers indicate as most effective within the sampled practitioners? To examine Research Question 1, data were

originally planned to result from a series of questions that were not loaded onto the survey host site due to a technical error. These questions would have asked participants to rate their perceptions of each disciplinary strategy's effectiveness. However, because of the error with survey uploading, the survey questions pertaining to perceived efficacy were not included. This technical difficulty limited the study in this regard, and did not allow for an examination of efficacy. However, this error did not affect the questions regarding the frequency of use for the disciplinary strategies of interest, which are examined as proposed in the analysis of Research Question 2.

Research Question 2. What disciplinary strategies are indicated to be most widely used within the sampled practitioners? To examine Research Question 2, the survey gathered participants' estimation of how often they used each of the disciplinary techniques of interest. The Support Services and Preparation Questionnaire included several items that asked participants about how often they used time-out, revocation of privileges, referrals, and behavior intervention plans. Responses to these questions were numeric, and the researcher collected responses for each strategy and calculated an average score for each. Scores for each strategy range from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*), where higher scores correspond with a higher frequency of use.

In addition to the means and standard deviations, the researcher calculated frequency distributions. The mean was calculated as the sum of all participants' responses, divided by the total number of participants, while the standard deviation was calculated as the square root of the average squared difference from the mean, or $s_x = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n-1}}$. By using these two views of the data, every detail could be examined.

Among the sample of teachers in kindergarten through Grade 8, behavior intervention plans had the highest average use, with nearly half responding they sometimes use, and another 24.90% responding they used behavior intervention plans often. Revocation of privileges was the second most commonly used strategy. Of the participants, 146, more than half, responded that they either often or sometimes used this strategy. However, of the participants, 43 noted they rarely use the strategy, which turned out to be more than those who often used the strategy.

Lesser used strategies included time-out and referrals. Time-out was used far less, where nearly half indicated they sometimes used time-out, and 29.70% used it rarely. Approximately 130 participants used time-out either sometimes, often, or very often. Time-out was a strategy in which participants chose the response of sometimes the most with 47.4% of the participants employing this strategy with this frequency. The study district also put in place a policy where time-out should be employed prior to the decision to employ more severe consequences for unacceptable behavior.

The least commonly used disciplinary strategy was the referral, where a majority responded they rarely used referrals, and 22.50% never used them. Referrals had the largest response rate for *never* used and behavior intervention plans had the largest response rate for *very often* used, which confirmed the average rank for each strategy. The data for this particular strategy indicates $n > 70\%$ chose to either rarely or never utilize this strategy. Table 1 presents the frequency of each strategy's use.

Research Question 3. What differences exist in perceptions of strategy effectiveness, and frequency of use between practitioners with high and low confidence?

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant difference in perceptions of strategy effectiveness between confident and unconfident teachers.

H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in perceptions of strategy effectiveness between confident and unconfident teachers.

Table 1

Frequency of Use for Each Strategy

Strategies	*n*	%
Time-out ($M = 2.73 \pm 0.92$)		
Never	17	8.10
Rarely	62	29.70
Sometimes	99	47.40
Often	20	9.60
Very often	10	4.80
Revocation of privileges ($M = 3.00 \pm 0.86$)		
Never	7	3.30
Rarely	43	20.60
Sometimes	112	53.60
Often	34	16.30
Very often	12	5.70
Referral ($M = 2.00 \pm 0.69$)		
Never	47	22.50
Rarely	117	56.00
Sometimes	43	20.60
Often	2	1.00
Behavior intervention plan ($M = 3.39 \pm 0.96$)		
Never	8	3.80
Rarely	15	7.20
Sometimes	101	48.30
Often	52	24.90
Very often	30	14.40

$H_0 2$: There is no statistically significant difference in the frequency of discipline use between confident and unconfident teachers.

$H_a 2$: There is a statistically significant difference in the frequency of discipline use between confident and unconfident teachers.

To examine Research Question 3, the researcher constructed two hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 corresponded to differences in perceptions of effectiveness between practitioners with high versus low self-confidence. Hypothesis 2 dealt with differences in

the frequency with which highly confident versus minimally confident teachers employ the use of the disciplinary strategies in question. However, the lack of responses regarding each strategy's efficacy in the final survey limited the ability to test Hypothesis 1 (i.e., the perceptions of strategy effectiveness). The Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire did result in a measure for the frequency of use for these disciplinary strategies, and the analysis of the frequency of each strategy's use was still available. The available analyses corresponded with Hypothesis 2 (i.e., frequency of use) and were conducted as proposed.

The researcher tested the hypotheses using several Mann-Whitney *U* tests. One Mann-Whitney *U* test was used for each strategy of interest (i.e., referrals, behavior intervention plans, time-out, and revocation of privileges) resulting in four analyses for this hypothesis. In this series of analyses, the independent variable was self-confidence (categorized as high versus low self-confidence), as measured by the *Support Services and Preparation* portion of the Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire. After gathering data from this instrument to form an average level of self-perceived confidence, the researcher performed a median split to group participants into a high or low group. To accomplish this data split, a median score was calculated and found to be 3.60. Every participant who scored above 3.60 on the confidence scale was categorized as high, and every participant who scored below the median was categorized as low.

After grouping participants based on their confidence, the researcher conducted Mann-Whitney *U* tests on the frequency of use for referrals, behavior intervention plans, time-out, and revocation of privileges. Because of the nonparametric nature of these analyses, the restrictive assumptions of this analysis' parametric equivalent, the independent sample *t* test did not apply. This occurred because the Mann-Whitney *U* uses

ranks rather than raw data points and does not rely on specific distributions (Lehmann, 2006). The Mann-Whitney *U* test calculates the sum of ranks for scores in either group, and uses this number to generate a *U* value, which can be compared to the degrees of freedom for the sample to determine a corresponding *p*-value to indicate whether the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Results of the analyses indicated no significant differences existed between those with high versus low confidence in terms of time-out use ($p = .321$), revocation of privileges ($p = .375$), use of referrals ($p = .624$), or use of behavioral intervention plan ($p = .481$). Based on these findings, the null hypothesis, stating there is no statistically significant difference in the frequency of discipline use between confident and unconfident teachers, could not be rejected. Therefore, an equally likely chance exists that a randomly selected value from confident teachers would be higher than or lower than a randomly selected value from unconfident teachers. Table 2 presents mean ranks and the statistical outcomes.

Table 2

Mann-Whitney U Test Outcomes

	Mean Rank		Mean			
Variable	High confidence	Low confidence	High confidence	Low confidence	*U*	*p*
Time-out	100.72	108.43	2.66	2.80	5005.50	.321
Revocation of privileges	101.22	107.98	2.93	3.07	5052.50	.375
Referral	106.70	103.22	2.03	1.97	5275.00	.624
Behavioral intervention plan	106.17	100.73	3.44	3.35	5022.50	.481

Summary

Chapter 4 included the outcomes of the analyses available for calculation. The

chapter began with a restatement of the problem and purpose of the study, and the researcher highlighted the importance of the following analyses. Following this introduction was a discussion of the limitations encountered during data collection, with a focus on a survey upload error that resulted in a lack of data regarding participant perceptions of disciplinary strategy efficacy from the final survey.

Because of this limitation, Research Questions 1, as well as Hypothesis 1 from Research Question 3 could not be examined. The results of the final analyses follow this explanation, which indicated no significant differences in the frequency of use for time-outs, revocation of privileges, referrals, and behavior intervention plans between participants with high versus low confidence. Chapter 5 presents these findings, as well as the limitations and implications for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary of the Findings

Previous researchers have brought to the forefront the difficulty in identifying proven and effective classroom management strategies, resulting in adverse effects from poor classroom management (Prior, 2014; Wong & Wong, 2009). In many instances, previous researchers provided little, if any, evidence regarding whether the strategies studied were, in fact, effective, or how practitioner's self-perceptions influenced the efficacy and frequency of disciplinary action. To address this perceived void in the extant literature, the purpose of this research was to ascertain the measurable perceptions of practitioners regarding the use and efficacy of certain disciplinary strategies currently employed by confident practitioners within the population of interest. As discussed in Chapter 4, because of a technical error in data collection, the purpose was narrowed to the frequency of disciplinary strategies and the relationship between this frequency and practitioners' confidence.

The resultant study revealed several findings regarding the frequency of disciplinary action and the relation to practitioner confidence. The results of the study showed that behavior intervention plans were the most frequent disciplinary strategy, followed by revocation of privileges. Lesser used strategies included time-out and referrals. Results of Mann-Whitney *U* tests revealed no significant differences between practitioners with high and low confidence on disciplinary strategy. In this chapter, the researcher interprets the findings with relation to the previously published literature. Then, limitations of the study are discussed, as well as the opportunities the limitations afford future researchers. Finally, recommendations for practitioners and administrators

based in the findings of this study are included.

Interpretation of Findings

In the following section, the researcher interprets the findings of this study, including comparing the findings to the literature. The interpretation is organized by research question. Given the limitation of the study regarding Research Question 1, the section begins with Research Question 2.

Research Question 2. The findings related to Research Question 2 involved the frequency of use of classroom management strategies. The common use of the behavior intervention plan by practitioners was consistent with the theories put forth by Glasser (1994). Glasser and his institute, The William Glasser Institute, base their teachings upon the premise that all we do, as human beings, is behave. Furthermore, Glasser teaches finding the root of the behavior is the key to changing the behavior. As a consequence of this belief, the Glasser Institute does not advocate a punishment for inappropriate behavior; rather, Glasser advocates for time and isolation so the child can think about his or her behaviors and put together a plan prior to being permitted to return to the group or other desired activities. The results of the present study, including the use of behavior intervention plans and the responses to Question 23, suggested that putting plans in place within a formal setting allows teachers of all confidence levels to be assured in the effectiveness of the behavior intervention plan.

The findings of the present study further highlighted that regardless of the level of confidence a practitioner may have, writing an office referral was perceived as an ineffective strategy in managing their classrooms. Though the administration of the participating district has, as its cornerstone, a disciplinary process put in place for the misbehavior of students, the practitioners perceive the process of writing a referral as an

ineffective means of managing unacceptable behaviors within their classroom. This indicates practitioners, despite their confidence level, may find it ineffective to complete a referral form and to then submit the form to their administration for further action. Given the PBS system, intended to reduce referrals, administrators may consider this a positive thing. However, qualitative data, collected from Question 23, validated the quantitative data in that participants noted office referrals lead to a disparity in communications and administrative punishments regarding their expectations and the context of the student's offense. Practitioners are not using less referrals because of improved students, but rather because they perceive the referral process as ineffective.

The results relating to the inefficacy of referrals may support Andreou and Rapti's (2010) findings regarding experienced practitioners. Specifically, the office referral is inherently a process by which practitioners must turn over their behavior issues to the administration, yet Andreou and Rapti noted that over time, practitioners come to mistrust the educational system's ability to address disciplinary issues. Therefore, Andreou and Rapti's findings and the findings of this study combined may indicate a failure of an office referral as part of a classroom management program. At least, the findings indicate that within this school system, participants have a negative perception of the use of referrals as a disciplinary action.

Furthermore, the findings presented within this study related to the use of referrals, and through the qualitative responses to item 23, indicate that practitioners do not favor the separation between teacher and administration that occurred when handing over their disciplinary issues to an administrator for further action. What these findings indicate, despite the findings of Spaulding et al. (2010) and Irvin et al. (2006), is the information regarding the effectiveness and impact of SWIS has a strong possibility of

being misleading. Specifically, if teachers do not generate referrals because of a perceived lack of efficacy, then the data are not available to SWIS, and therefore, SWIS-based studies will not reflect the experiences of students. Further discussion of the potential implications of the present study on SWIS data is included in the recommendations section.

Additionally, the overwhelming majority of participants (183; 87.5%), regardless of confidence level, indicated use of counseling as a disciplinary strategy. Gleaning further information from the open response question of the questionnaire, practitioners employ counseling in conjunction with punishments they administer when disciplining students. This finding was partially consistent with educational research produced by Cloud and Kritsonis (2006), and Wheelock (n.d.), who determined that counseling, coupled with ISS, were positive behavioral interventions.

The findings of the present study were consistent in finding the efficacy of counseling implemented by the practitioner, but not with the use of referrals. Wheelock (n.d.) posited the strategies were only effective when used in conjunction with one another, and studied the effectiveness of the hybrid model asserted. Through interviews and data from several schools, researchers found a favorable perception to the hybrid model, which coupled ISS with counseling (Wheelock, n.d.).

The researcher, having been in the classroom, and having had administrative duties in some capacity during a 20-year career, also agrees counseling a student while disciplining him or her makes strategies, such as ISS, more effective in terms of correcting the behavior and reducing or eliminating the behavior all (Wheelock, n.d.). Conversely, in the present study, participants used counseling, but did not use administrative intervention through referral, which is the process that results in ISS in the

district under study. Open response answers to Item 23 indicated that a lack of consistency in administrative action led to a mistrust of administrative intervention, and that practitioners therefore took discipline into their own hands.

Research Question 3. Based on the aforementioned limitation in data collection, the results related to Research Question 3 were limited to the relationship between frequency of use of different disciplinary behaviors and practitioner self-confidence. Results from the study indicated that practitioner confidence level did not influence the frequency of different disciplinary actions. As this finding differs from the body of previous literature, there are several potential interpretations that stem from the results.

The findings related to the lack of difference between practitioner confidence and disciplinary action contradicted Andreou and Rapti's (2010) findings. Andreou and Rapti found teacher experience played a significant role relative to teacher perceptions in determining classroom management and intervention strategies. Moreover, these researchers also discovered practitioner experience played a role in what they perceived to be the cause of students' unacceptable behaviors in the classroom.

Together, Andreou and Rapti's findings seemed to suggest that experienced, confident practitioners might use alternate strategies for discipline. However, the present study did not support this expectation. A potential interpretation of the result is that experience does not necessarily equate to confidence; if the study had instead examined experience, significant results might have occurred. Moreover, given Andreou and Rapti's observations about experienced teachers feeling more detached from behavioral issues and constrained by the educational system, experience, in conjunction with confidence, might be a valuable variable to include in future similar studies. In addition, the data regarding perceptions of efficacy might have brought the present study's findings

closer to Andreou and Rapti's findings by determining a significant relationship between confidence and perceptions of efficacy.

Limitations of the Study

Because a component of the study was not uploaded as part of the survey disseminated, data from the participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the different behavioral strategies could not be collected as intended. Therefore, the study was limited in its measurement of strategy efficacy as related to Research Question 1. At the end of the study, it was not possible to determine the efficacy in rank order, which would have been possible had the study been conducted exactly as designed. However, given other perceptive data gleaned, strategy efficacy can be determined from an alternative perspective. This perspective considered teachers' use of each strategy under the assumption that teachers would use strategies that they found effective more often.

The study district also put in place a policy where time-out should be employed prior to the decision to employ more severe consequences for unacceptable behavior, which may have influenced the number of office referrals written by teachers. The evidence obtained from this study highlighted practitioners are not confident in the referral system currently in place, as a matter of strategy and policy structured by the participating district.

Recommendations

Recommendations for researchers. Because of an error in the distribution of this component of the study, the present study will need to be redone to have the most significance for the gap in the literature. Understanding the role of efficacy in the relationships among practitioner self-confidence and disciplinary action will provide a clearer direction for and understanding of classroom management, which researchers

noted remained an issue (Prior, 2014; Wong & Wong, 2009). It is therefore recommended that future researchers replicate the present study as detailed in the methodology section of this dissertation.

The present study findings may have implications for the use of the SWIS model as a metric for understanding student behavior. Additional studies using the SWIS template, was specifically designed as a data collection instrument in which practitioners, by way of their administrators, actively search for trends and behavioral patterns to facilitate the supervisory and academic roles of practitioners (Wheelock, n.d.). The SWIS program is fueled entirely by the use and generation of the ODR. Via SWIS, stakeholders receive information from behavior infraction data collection; in contrast, the study presented here generated the practitioner-teacher experience through their perceptions so the results may facilitate planning in supervisory and academic roles. One revelation was that teachers do not employ ODRs for the majority of their classroom management issues; therefore, future researchers should consider further integrating teachers' perceptions into their study of disciplinary action, prior to relying on SWIS data.

From the evidence the researcher extracted from within these findings, a study regarding the practitioner's perceptions, relative to office referrals, needs to be conducted and examined further. The evidence obtained from this study highlighted practitioners are not confident in the referral system currently in place, as a matter of strategy and policy structured by the participating district. Each school in the participating district has the decision-making authority to structure the use, context, and overall policies as per the use of office referrals. Each school has been asked to implement a clear and concise policy made available to all practitioners. However, using the qualitative data from the research, referrals are perceived as cumbersome and ineffective, as exemplified by responses to

Question 23. As a result, future researchers should examine the phenomenon quantitatively. Practitioners expressed a concern relative to administrative action taken despite the perceived seriousness expressed by the practitioner written on the office referral submitted. The comments expressed indicate the practitioners' expectations, as to the manner in which the offensive behaviors were handled, were not only disappointing, but did not match the magnitude of the behavior infraction. This discrepancy highlights an opportunity for further research to understand the issue.

In contrast, practitioners reported frequent use of behavior intervention plans. Future researchers should conduct more analysis regarding this strategy, and collect additional data on practitioners' use of the behavior intervention plan in managing unacceptable behavior. It is essential to consider the guidance of practitioners within the classroom, and to evaluate whether and how the strategies they use facilitate classroom management. Through research, practitioners can better understand the effects of their current strategies, and if this research is guided by the strategies already implemented in the classroom, then teachers may be more likely to adopt evidence-based practice.

Additionally, given the lack of a relationship between practitioner confidence and the frequency of using different disciplinary action, the researcher recommends examination of other variables that might relate to this frequency. This could potentially include experience, as employed in Andreou and Rapti's (2010) study. Additional demographic variables might also provide a clearer depiction of practitioner characteristics that influence classroom management. Finally, examining the role of the infraction, including its severity or the type of misbehavior, might further provide valuable information for understanding disciplinary decision-making at a practitioner level.

Recommendations for practice. Given that the participating district has counselors at all schools and employs the use of ISS, or some variation thereof, it is apparent that the results of the present study seem to counter the hybrid model of counseling and administrative action as posited by Wheelock (n.d.). This may result from practitioners attempting to integrate counseling on their own, based on a perceived lack of efficacy at the administrative level, as revealed through responses to Question 23. Therefore, it is recommended that administrative stakeholders take action to improve perceptions of the referral process. These actions may include changing the process, increasing transparency in decision making, or involving practitioners in the decision to reduce the separation between the classroom and administration.

These findings also lend themselves to administrators who must formulate policy for an experientially diverse staff charged with maintaining, refining, and applying a successful classroom management philosophy. Practitioners reported that they integrated the systemic behavior plan when they understood it, but many practitioners also noted that the system was ineffective and inconsistently applied, or that they did not have enough training. At the district level, these complaints suggested the need for change, whether to increase communication or to implement training procedures.

Another recommendation for practice is that the participating district should dedicate time to research the behavior intervention plans put in place by practitioners and administrators with the help of other resource practitioners within the schools. As the most frequently used behavior modification tool, it is essential that practitioners are implementing effective plans to meet the needs for students. It is recommended that the district make practitioners active participants in the review of the materials to avoid further separation between administration and teachers.

Conclusions

In the school district under study, teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders in the study population struggle with effective classroom management and discipline strategies, where they are unable to handle disruptive students, which, in turn, led to higher levels of school professional burnout. Despite the PBS certification intended to improve classroom management, teachers experienced students' behavioral disruptions in their classrooms on a daily basis, which inhibited the effective delivery of lessons to their students. Based on this problem, the purpose of this research was to ascertain the measurable perceptions of practitioners regarding the use and efficacy of certain disciplinary strategies currently employed by confident practitioners within the population of interest. A technical glitch resulted in the study focusing on the use of disciplinary strategies and their relation to practitioner confidence level, as well as perceptions revealed in a qualitative survey item. It is recommended that future researchers revisit the original study purpose to understand the relationships among use, efficacy, and confidence.

The results demonstrated that the most commonly used strategy for classroom management was the behavior intervention plan, followed by counseling and revocation of privileges. Infrequently used strategies included time-out and referrals, which were, interestingly, both school-sanctioned actions according to the PBS model. There was no relation in the present study between practitioner confidence and the strategies used. The results implied that teachers, regardless of confidence level, employed personal classroom management, which through qualitative responses, was linked to a lack of confidence in the administrations' disciplinary action. The results suggest that within the

district under study, further action is required on the part of administration to revisit the referral process, implement professional development, and heal the gap between administration and practitioners. This will help ensure that teachers do not burnout or rely solely on their previous experience, which may not reflect evidence-based practice for classroom management.

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Appendix A

Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire

Appendix A

Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire

1. I have adequate preservice preparation to deal with most challenging behavior

Strongly Disagree Disagree Unable to Determine Agree Strongly Agree

2. I have adequate in-service preparation to deal with most challenging behavior

Strongly Disagree Disagree Unable to Determine Agree Strongly Agree

3. I have increased my ability to deal with challenging behavior

Strongly Disagree Disagree Unable to Determine Agree Strongly Agree

4. I have the support of my administration in dealing with challenging behavior

Strongly Disagree Disagree Unable to Determine Agree Strongly Agree

5. I have the support of my grade level team in dealing with challenging behavior

Strongly Disagree Disagree Unable to Determine Agree Strongly Agree

Strategies in Response to Challenging Behavior

6. I directly observe and take notes

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

7. I monitor to identify triggers of behavior

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

8. I model to teach acceptable behavior

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

9. I reinforce desired behavior

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

10. I use social reinforcement

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

11. I use tangible reinforcement

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

12. I measure the behavior by counting or timing it

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

13. I inquire about out-of-class conditions

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

14. I change interactions with students

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

15. I change classrooms or arrangements

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

16. I change physical arrangement of classroom or teaching approach

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

17. I ignore behavior

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

18. I use time-out

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

19. I take away desired privileges or activities

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

20. I verbally reprimand students

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

21. I send students to the office

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

22. I use a formal behavior intervention plan; or other formalized plan

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

23. Explain the impact upon your classroom management abilities relative to your school's overall behavior plan, and/or behavior management processes?

Appendix B

Alignment of Research Questions to Instrument Items

Appendix B

Alignment of Research Questions to Instrument Items

Research Question	Survey Questions
1 What disciplinary strategies do teachers indicate as most effective within the sampled practitioners? 2 What disciplinary strategies are indicated to be most widely used within the sampled practitioners? 3 What differences, if any, exist in perceptions of strategy effectiveness, and frequency of use between practitioners with high versus low confidence?	• *Technical error resulted in a lack of questions for these variables* *Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire* (Appendix A) • Items 6 - 23 <u>IV: Confidence</u> *Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire* (Appendix A) • Mean of items 7 – 11 used to indicate high vs. low confidence based on a median split <u>DVs: Frequency of use</u> *Strategy, Beliefs, and Support Services Questionnaire* (Appendix A) • Items 6 - 23