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# Preschool Teachers' Perspectives of Professional Development Related to the Management of Challenging Behaviors

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MA, Pacific Oaks College, 2001

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Many young children enter preschool programs exhibiting challenging behaviors and are suspended from preschool at a rate 3 times more than K–12 students. Many preschool students who need help are instead suspended or expelled. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support these students. Knowles' theory of andragogy served as the conceptual lens for this study. Interview questions were developed to elicit in-depth participant responses to answer the two research questions on preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. Data were collected from interviews with seven preschool teachers purposively selected from private schools and open coded to identify themes amongst their experiences. The following themes were identified from the analysis of the data: teacher lack of knowledge and information on how to manage challenging behavior is a motivation to seek help, adult learners attend professional development based on their need and view professional development based on how they can apply the new strategies, and professional development desired by teachers directly related to and focused on students with challenging behaviors. This study can lead to positive social change by drawing attention to the strengths and gaps in professional development.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father who believed in the power and importance of education, he dedicated his life to make sure that all his children will be educated regardless of their gender. He died before the completion of this degree. Rest in peace my loving father, Sampson Onwugharam Aaron.

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I want to thank and appreciate my family, my husband, and my children, Judith and Sharon, who always looked over my work, and Jessica, they told me it's time to go back to school. To all my sisters, friends, and family who encouraged me along the way. I want to thank everyone who supported me in any way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Preschool teachers provide a child's first educational experience and can impact development and later outcomes in life (Hubela et al., 2020). The problem under study was due to challenging behaviors, many preschool students who need help are instead suspended or expelled from preschool (see Stegelin, 2018). Yoder and Williford (2019) noted that 9% to 13% of children attend preschool with behaviors identified as disruptive or challenging. Around 10% to 25% of children enter a preschool classroom with behavioral problems (Beaudoin et al., 2017), while 30% of children living in poverty exhibit challenging behaviors (Kuhn et al., 2017). Despite the prevalence of behavioral issues in preschool students, preschool teachers may not receive the training necessary to manage challenging behaviors (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2017). Because preschool students are suspended at a rate 3 times higher than that of K–12 students, training preschool teachers to appropriately address challenging behavior could have positive social implications for children in private preschool classrooms (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Preschool students are sometimes suspended due to challenging behaviors, denying them access to valuable instructional time (Stegelin, 2018). Approximately 59% of children ages 0–5 are cared for in out-of-home settings (Hubela et al., 2020). Seven million children attend some form of childcare or preschool (Gilliam et al., 2016). Hooper and Schweiker (2020) described private schools as providers of preschool services for a disproportionately high number of children from low-income and minority families. Within this setting, a teacher's role involves interacting with students sensitively and responsively as well as creating a positive learning environment (Hubela et al.,

2020). Without appropriate professional development and training, preschool teachers may resort to suspension as opposed to other interventions that would allow preschool students to remain in instructional settings (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Teacher-student relationships have a long-term effect on children's school readiness; cognition skills; and social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes (Zinsser et al. 2016). President Barack Obama's call to strengthen the capacity of the early childhood educator workforce through trainings shows the relevance of improving teacher education (Zinsser et al. 2016). Building on Obama's call to action, Hooper and Schweiker (2020) recommended providing mental health support for teachers and professional development geared toward working with students with challenging behavior. Utilizing data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education with multistage probability sampling, Hooper and Schweiker focused on the private school setting suspension and expulsion rate. They increased the sampling size from all 50 states with in-person interviews, phone calls, and online contact with participants before completion of the questionnaires. Hooper and Schweiker also advocated for the provision of the same level of support for childcare providers as the support provided at center-based programs. They identified a need for more research on this group, finding that not enough research had been conducted to review the expulsion practices of this group. The authors recommended a review of the ethnic match of providers and students as a possible reason for expulsion as well as more research into why students are expelled by caregivers. They also recommended that a provision of professional development and mental health services that have proven effective for other teachers be made and the use of qualitative data to

better understand the support that teachers find helpful in preventing expulsion (Hooper & Schweiker, 2020).

A review of the literature revealed that collecting teachers' perspectives on professional development are essential because it influences if they implement the strategy they learned with fidelity (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). The types of professional development that best support teachers' learning are designed in response to teachers' identified needs and experiences. Teachers should be viewed as adult learners coming into professional development trainings with prior knowledge (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2015). This perspective requires the use of Knowles' theory of andragogy to see if their needs are being met.

Because preschool attendance is positively correlated to future academic success, there are important social implications of ensuring preschool teachers are prepared to manage challenging student behaviors and reduce suspensions (Ehrlich et al., 2018). However, there is minimal research and a gap in practice concerning teacher trainings related to students with challenging behaviors and little data on teachers' perspectives of the professional development they need to support these students in preschool classrooms. The problem of preschool students' challenging behavior and increased suspensions for preschool children is present in both public and private schools throughout the United States (Gilliam et al., 2016).

## Background

California Assembly Bill (AB) 2698 (2018) recommended that early childhood programs should not only academically prepare young students but also promote

teachers' health and wellness by providing appropriate training and professional development to empower teachers to work with children with social and emotional challenges. This bill is a follow-up to AB 752 (2017) which supports preschool classrooms and provides incentives for preschool programs in multiple settings, including private schools. These supports include models for providing a positive learning environment, training, supportive teacher practices, and strategies for supporting all children. The U.S. Department of Education (2011) policy statement on expulsion and suspension in early childhood education settings recommended providing resources to support challenging behavior for teachers and providers of services for young children. Identified needs related to challenging behaviors of preschoolers in classrooms include not only "teacher training, but also teacher perspective, teacher stress, and support" (Stegelin, 2018, p. 3). There is evidence that few general education teachers are trained to handle challenging behavior (Kourkoutas et al., 2018). Obama's call to strengthen the capacity of the early childhood educator workforce through trainings shows the relevance of improving teacher education (Zinsser et al., 2016).

In this study, I explored private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. The findings will increase awareness of private preschool teacher perspectives on professional development and what they need to support challenging students in their classrooms. The study will also fill the gap in practice on the types of professional development teachers receive and what they need to support them as they

work with students with challenging behaviors. With appropriate teacher support, students can receive the help they need without being suspended or pushed out of the preschool classroom (Malik, 2016). Ultimately, this research will support preschool administrators as they plan professional development for teachers working to prepare preschool students for kindergarten.

## Problem Statement

Preschool teachers need essential expertise and training to prevent or mitigate challenging student behavior (Arthur-Kelley et al., 2017). The problem is due to challenging behaviors, many preschool students who need help are instead suspended or expelled from preschool (Stegelin, 2018). Suspension denies students access to instruction. In California, it is estimated that counties with the highest suspension rate have an estimated 45% days of instruction lost, 15% higher than the state average (Losen & Whitaker, 2017).

Assemblywoman Blanca E. Rubio of El Monte, California, wrote AB 752 (2017) to support and protect families whose children were being forced out of preschool settings through a process described as "soft-expulsions" (Romney, 2017). California, where this study took place, ranks 16th in the United States in preschool suspension, with an expulsion rate of 7.5 per 1,000 preschool students, well above 6.7 per 1,000 national average (Fernandes, 2018). The goal of AB 752 was to prevent expulsion and suspension of preschool students in the area where this study was conducted. Bohn et al. (2018) identified a need to examine professional development and its influence on teacher self-efficacy. Teachers are important agents in addressing challenging preschooler behavior

and changing the trend of preschool suspension and expulsion. Preschool expulsions and suspensions are adult decisions made because of the teacher's feelings about whether the resources and supports available to them are adequate to meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors (Gilliam, 2016).

## Purpose of the Study

Lauermann and Konig (2016) indicated the need to gain an understanding of the professional development provided to teachers that aid them as they work with students with challenging behaviors. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. The private schools in California receive California Department of Education funds as reimbursement (i.e., funds provided as payment for services) for students enrolled in their care through agencies, such as Crystal Stairs. These schools are also subject to all California Department of Education and Community Care Licensing Division of the California Department of Social Services guidelines.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing

professional development opportunities related to students with challenging

behaviors?

RQ2: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on the

resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging

behaviors?

**Conceptual Framework**

I used Knowles's (1977) theory of andragogy, which is grounded in the idea that

teachers need professional development that is targeted to meet their specific need based

on their daily experiences, as the conceptual framework for this study. Knowles (1977)

defined andragogy as an adult learning style; it is the art and science of teaching adults.

Merriam (2001) further described andragogy as the science of helping adults learn.

Andragogy was introduced in the late 1960s as part of the trend for self-improvement and

the need for individuals to keep up with their changing roles in the society. This theory

contributes to the understanding of adult learners and what motivates an adult to learn.

In the current study, I utilized this construct to examine teacher needs and the

professional development they are provided. The research questions focused on the

professional development currently provided to teachers and the teachers' perspectives on

what resources/professional development they need to be equipped to handle challenging

behaviors. Knowles's five assumptions provided a framework with which to understand

teachers' responses as adult learners. More details about the theory of andragogy can be found in Chapter 2.

## Nature of the Study

In this basic qualitative study, I explored private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. It is important to know teachers' perspectives of professional development because it influences the way they address challenging behavior in the classroom. Well-designed professional development creates a foundation from which teachers can effectively work with students with challenging behaviors (Lauermann & Konig, 2016). The experiences of teachers must be understood to effectively describe this phenomenon. Data were collected through interviews of teachers at private preschools and then open coded to establish patterns and themes from the responses collected (see Burkholder et al., 2016).

Qualitative study samples are generally smaller than those in quantitative studies; the sample size and saturation are influenced by the aim and scope of the study (Mason, 2010). In a study with homogeneity between participants, saturation can be reached with six participant interviews and can provide enough data for interpretation (Mason, 2010). I used purposeful sampling to select seven preschool teachers from six private preschools as participants for the study. Teachers from surrounding private preschools with similar demographics were targeted as potential participants for the study. I conducted teacher interviews via telephone due to the COVID-19 pandemic and audio recorded for

transcription. Interview questions were focused on professional development opportunities related to private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors.

## Definitions

*Challenging behavior*: A repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with, or risks interfering with, a child's learning or prosocial interaction (Kuhn et al., 2017).

*Classroom management*: Actions teachers take to create an environment that fosters both academic and social-emotional learning (Akdag & Haser, 2016).

*Early childhood education*: Experiences that are purposely planned to impact developmental transformation in children before their admission into the third grade (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, 2015).

*Early childhood teacher/educator*: Any person who works with young children and their families to purposely plan opportunities or experiences to impact the developmental transformation in children before their admission into the third grade (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, 2015).

*Social emotional learning*: The development of social emotional skills such as an individual's ability to recognize their own emotions, manage social interactions, and control and display responsible social behavior (Zinsser, 2016).

## Assumptions

An assumption is a condition that is taken for granted in a study (Buckholder et al., 2016). One assumption in this study was that teachers were being provided with professional development related to their work because the state of California requires that preschool teachers be provided supportive training. In this study, I interviewed teachers to identify their perspectives on the professional development they are provided to support them as they work with students with challenging behavior. Therefore, I also assumed that the responses provided by the teachers were accurate, honest, and would support the validity of the research. This assumption was made because the participating teachers have worked in preschool classrooms with students with challenging behaviors. To ensure accurate responses from participants, I protected their confidentiality by using pseudonyms for each participant. This assumption was necessary as a basis for data validity.

## Scope and Delimitations

The scope of a study frames the group selected for the study (Buckholder et al., 2016). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on professional development related to behavior management in preschool classrooms and what they need to support these students. The study involved teachers in a poor section of a major California city who work in low-income, private preschool settings. The low-income classification is based on federal income guidelines. I purposively selected the participants with the following inclusion criteria: 18 years or older and teachers that have worked or currently work in a classroom with students with

challenging behaviors. Years of teaching experience was not considered for participation in this study. Although experience and gender were identified in the study, names and other identifying details were kept confidential. Due to the demographics selected for the research, the findings may not be transferable to other demographics.

## Limitations

Limitations identify weaknesses in the design or methodology of a study (Buckholder et al., 2016). Knowing the limitations of a study helps a reader identify whether the results can be transferred. The limitations in this qualitative study include location, sample size, and researcher bias. The location is specific, and the seven participants were purposively selected, which limited the number of participants to only preschool teachers that meet the required criteria. I work as a program director in the field of early childhood in a public school setting, and my schools are located in a major city in the region where this study was conducted. My personal bias may also taint my view of participant responses. To limit researcher bias, I kept a reflective journal to reflect on interviews and audio recorded the interviews. The final data analysis was also reviewed by an expert reviewer to check for bias.

## Significance

This research was ultimately aimed at influencing teacher practices. The identified gap in research centers around a lack of information about teachers' perspectives on professional development trainings related to behavior management in private preschools. AB 752, followed guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017) to prevent children from being unnecessarily expelled

or unenrolled in preschool in the California State Preschool Program or other child and developmental care services. The bill is aimed to "disrupt the preschool-to-prison pipeline" (U.S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 5). Local education agency administrators expressed similar concerns based on their observation that each year they enroll a minimum of five preschool students who have been expelled from surrounding private preschool programs.

Preschool teachers shape a child's first educational experience; this can greatly influence the child's development and later outcomes in life. Without appropriate teacher support, a child is more likely to experience later academic failure in K–12, become disengaged from school, and drop out (Malik, 2017). This negative path has the potential to lead to adult incarceration (Malik, 2017). The policy changes enacted by AB 752 have led to many studies and professional development that advocate for trainings and programs that support PreK–12 classroom teachers serving students with challenging behaviors. This research builds on previous studies and may lead to social change through drawing attention to the strengths and the gaps in professional development provided at the state level for local school districts, early education programs, and private preschools. The findings offer insights on the best ways to equip teachers to prepare preschool students academically for kindergarten while avoiding expulsion or suspension.

**Summary**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives of professional development related to behavior management and students with challenging behaviors and what the teachers need to support these students.

Data were gathered from teachers in interviews. My hope is that this research will lead to positive social change by drawing attention to the strengths and weaknesses of professional development for preschool teachers in the state of California and offer insights on the best ways to equip teachers to manage classroom behavior.

In Chapter 1, I discussed the research problem, background of the study, purpose of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework for the study, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of literature on challenging students' behavior, its effect on teachers, effective professional development, and Knowles's theory of andragogy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Preschool teachers need training and expertise to prevent or intervene in preschool children's challenging behavior (Arthur-Kelley et al., 2017). Challenging behavior in young children refers to repeated behavior that affects their learning or social interactions and can lead to teacher burnout (Kuhn et al., 2017). In response to challenging behaviors, many preschool students who need help are being suspended or expelled from preschool (Stegelin, 2018), but suspension denies students access to instruction. It is estimated in California that preschool students in counties with the highest suspension rate have 45% days of instruction lost, 15% higher than the state average (Losen & Whitaker, 2017). Because preschool attendance is positively correlated to future academic success, there are positive social implications to ensuring that preschool teachers are prepared to manage students' behavior to reduce expulsions (Ehrlich et al., 2018).

Preschool teachers influence a child's first educational experience, which can impact their development and later outcomes in life. Teachers need a wide range of skills to provide learning for all students; engage them as active learners; and induce positive changes in their previous knowledge, expertise, and attitudes (Del Villar et al., 2019). Teachers need to master the skills required to teach and continuously adjust the teaching techniques and strategies required to meet students' needs by setting goals and interacting with the learning environment. Additionally, effective teachers must possess positive expectations, classroom management skills, and knowledge of how to design lessons; however, the skills required for teaching success are not all learned in school. They also

come from attending professional development workshops, practice, and making

mistakes and correcting them (Del Villar et al., 2019).

The gap in research and practice addressed in this study was a lack of information

about behavior management training provided to teachers as well as a poor understanding

of teachers' perspectives of this professional development in the private preschool setting

and what they need to support students with challenging behaviors. There is a need to

gain an understanding of the types of professional development that equip teachers to

work with students with challenging behaviors (Lauermann & Konig, 2016). The purpose

of this basic qualitative study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on

past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with

challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support

students with challenging behaviors.

**Literature Search Strategy**

I used the following databases to conduct an extensive search of the literature:

ERIC, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Frances, JSTOR, Education Source,

California Department of Education, Google Scholar, Child Care and Early Education

Research Connections, ProQuest Central, PsycINFO, and Thoreau Multi-Database

Search. In initial searches, the following keyword search terms were used: *children,*

*young child, challenging behavior, early childhood, teacher preparation, teacher self-*

*efficacy, continuing professional development, early childhood education, teachers'*

*perceptions, teachers' training, mentoring, professional learning, workforce, context,*

*collegiality, criticality, change discipline, parenting preschoolers, educational quality,*

*early childhood teachers, instructional leadership, leadership role, professional continuing education, coaching (performance), mentors, communities of practice, child development centers, professional development, administrators' professional development, professional development needs, professional development impact,* and *professional development barriers*. Secondary searches included the following additional keywords: *social background, teachers' expectations, toxic stress, mental health, trauma effects, symptoms of trauma, stress in children, quality preschool criteria, teaching strategies,* and *resilience*.

## Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

I utilized Knowles's (1977) theory of andragogy as the conceptual framework for this study because it supports the fact that teachers need professional development that is targeted to meet specific needs based on their daily experiences. Knowles described andragogy as an adult learning style and the art and science of teaching adults. Merriam (2001) further described andragogy as the science of helping adults learn. Andragogy was introduced in the late 1960s when the trend was self-improvement, and individuals were focused on keeping up with their changing role in society. Andragogy contributes to understanding adult learners and what motivates adults to learn. Adult learning is focused on five assumptions: Adults are independent and can direct their knowledge; an adult has experiences that are a source of learning; adults have changing needs based on their current role in society; adults' needs are problem centered and focused on immediate and direct application, and adults' motivation to learn is based on internal motivation. Knowles's andragogy is an extension of pedagogy and contributes to adults' self-

education, which is a lifelong process. Though Knowles did not consider how privilege, race, and gender affect learning, the theory of andragogy does reflect on the society surrounding adult learners and can be a means for social change (Loeng, 2018).

Based on Knowles's (1977) theory, adults should be allowed to assist in planning their learning because individual learners are autonomous and growth oriented. Adult learners are self-directed and see themselves as producers and doers rather than full-time learners. Additionally, the setting of the learning environment influences their learning. Adults tend to feel more comfortable in friendly and informal environments where they are known by name, are free to share without fear of reprisal, and are valued as individuals. A lecture hall with a podium creates the perception that they are being talked down to, but a small group setting—with individuals sitting in a circle or around a table—is more conducive to adult learning (Knowles, 1977). Furthermore, adults are ready to learn when the skills acquired are aligned to what they need in order to be successful; learning, to an adult, is problem centered or performance centered. The homogenous grouping of learners supports the acquisition of new skills. The orientation of learning and the immediacy of application drives learning. Learning is an internal process controlled by the learner by engaging and interacting with the environment (Loeng, 2018).

Knowles's theory of andragogy can help understand what motivates an adult to learn and be used to frame what teachers think about professional development. If a teacher does not recognize the usefulness of the professional development, they will not have a positive perspective of the professional development provided and will not utilize

the new learning (Knowles, 1977). When created with teachers' collaboration,

professional development will benefit teachers and they will attend and participate in it

without feeling coerced (Knowles, 1977). For instance, self-evaluation and self-reflection

support teachers in the learning process. In this study, Knowles's five assumptions

provided a guide for generating interview questions and a framework with which to

understand teachers' responses as adult learners.

## Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

Nationwide in 2016, about 50,000 preschoolers were suspended at least once and

at least 17,000 were expelled, which translates to about 250 students suspended each day

(Data Research Center for Child and Adolescent Health, 2017). Furthermore, preschool

students are suspended 3 times more frequently than K–12 students (Data Research

Center for Child and Adolescent Health, 2017). These experiences have a negative

impact on a child's future success in school and development later in life. Children who

have been suspended or expelled also develop negative attitudes toward school and are

10 times more likely to drop out of school or be incarcerated as adults (Stegelin, 2018).

### Challenges

Challenging behavior is the repeated pattern of behavior that affects learning or

prosocial interaction, such as how children get along with others (Hooper & Schweiker,

2020; Kuhn et al., 2017). Teachers have described the following behaviors as

challenging: biting, hitting, and being noncompliant (Kuhn et al., 2017). Teachers also

described disruptive behavior as patterns such as being easily distracted (i.e., inattention),

a child often being out of their seat (i.e., hyperactivity), and displaying defiance (i.e.,

oppositionality; Yoder & Williford, 2019). According to Yoder and Williford (2019),

9%–13% of preschool students display disruptive behavior in the classroom, and a total

of 58% of childcare and preschool providers documented at least one child suspension or

expulsion each year due to challenging behavior. The Early Childhood Consultation and

Partnership (ECCP) described behavior as the language used by preschoolers 3–4 years

old to express needs which they may be unable to verbalize because they have limited

language skills (Turner, 2016). Unmet needs can manifest themselves as challenging or

disruptive behavior in the classroom (Turner, 2016).

Kuhn et al. (2017) identified a child's behavior as one of the top three reasons for

removal of a student from a preschool program; however, some of these behaviors are

developmentally appropriate for the children at preschool age. According to Bosacki et

al. (2015), young students are still learning gender and socially appropriate behaviors.

The decision to expel a student is a teacher's decision based on their perception of the

situation; the teachers fear being held responsible for the child harming themselves or

harming others and their stress level (Kuhn et al., 2017).

Despite the age appropriateness of some disruptive behaviors, they still need to be

resolved or negative patterns may persist into adulthood and lead to peer rejection,

delinquency, and poor mental health (Kuhn et al., 2017). Challenging behaviors test a

teacher's abilities, especially when teachers lack the proper skills to intervene or share

effective strategies with parents to maintain consistency between the home and school

environment as related to the student's behavior (Kuhn et al., 2017). Private and public

preschools are expelling students for behavioral concerns, denying them the opportunity

to acquire essential preacademic skills. Positive parent-teacher relationship promotes collaboration and positive outcomes for students (Kuhn et al., 2017).

Bosacki et al. (2015) identified the preschool period as a time when children are learning and acquiring gender roles. Teachers tend to prefer students adhering to these gender roles. Expressions of aggression are one facet of socially constructed gender roles: girls are typically associated with relational aggression and boys with physical aggression. The participants for Bosacki et al.'s study were drawn from a larger sample of 416 teachers: 405 women and 11 men. A small sample of 22 participants (i.e., 11 women and 11 men) were selected for their study. Participants completed online questionnaires and behavior vignettes. After watching the vignettes, the participants responded to questions, and their responses were compared to those of the larger group. Bosacki et al. asserted that a teacher's gender influences their perspective of what they consider challenging behavior from a student. Their findings indicated that male teachers viewed student aggression as acceptable and that aggression did not impact male teachers' perceptions of student outcomes. Aggression hinders children's academic achievement and has a negative outcome for students, yet in Bosacki et al.'s study, male teachers believed that physical aggression, such as roughhousing, had a positive influence on students' academic development and caused peers to like them more. Female teachers, in contrast, saw aggressive behaviors as unfavorable and impactful to student learning outcomes. Female teachers believed that physically aggressive students would be most likely excluded and less well liked. Bosacki et al. recommended further studies that

examine how a teacher's gender affects their perception of a child's aggressive behavior in the classroom.

Yoder and Williford (2019) reviewed teacher perceptions of preschool students' disruptive behavior and the impact of teacher demographics, professional backgrounds, and belief characteristics on their perceptions. In their study of 160 preschool classrooms with 160 teachers and 2,427 students ages 2–5 years old, Yoder and Williford found that teachers' initial perception of student behavior determines how they will interact with the student, and teachers' perception of their ability to handle student behaviors impact how they describe the behavior. Teacher-child interactions impact how students perceive school and shapes their academic experience. A teacher's perception of a student is formed at the beginning of the school year, and teachers have difficulty interacting with students they view as disruptive. Therefore, it is important to provide teachers with the skills to respond to children who display challenging behavior to avoid the formation of negative teacher–student relationships. Emphasis should be placed on providing training on developmentally appropriate behavior expectations and developmental attention skills (Yoder & Williford, 2019).

Adamu and Hogan (2015) stated that children born into poverty benefit the most from quality early childhood opportunities. However, for students to benefit from these programs, they must be in school and not pushed out. Early childhood programs have the potential for long-term benefits for children from challenging backgrounds. Adamu and Hogan found that 65% of families are in the workforce, and they view preschool as affordable childcare. As a result, many of these students are enrolled in private school

setting (Hooper & Schweiker, 2020). Adamu and Hogan identified the positive

interaction between a teacher and a student as the single most important factor that

determines if a child stays in preschool or becomes a part of the preschool-to-prison

pipeline. Student behavior among Black students, such as confidence and self-expression,

are often viewed as challenging behavior and receives harsher treatment. They also found

that indicators of a high-quality preschool program include teacher-child relationships,

class size, and specialized teacher training. Training for teachers needs to include

professional development in diversity, but only 7% of the teachers that participated in the

study received training on diversity. Without the proper training and resources, teachers

have no other recourse than to push children out of school. Peer perception of students is

related to teacher perception of the student.

Adamu and Hogan (2015) also identified absenteeism as related to school climate

and student self-perception. Chronic absenteeism is closely related to suspension,

expulsion, and poor academic outcomes. They asserted that teachers need the opportunity

to engage in learning activities that support classroom management and relationship-

building strategies that support learning for all students. Adamu and Hogan

recommended more research on the effects of early childhood disciplinary practice,

preschool suspension, and expulsion in later grades.

Ehrlich et al. (2018) conducted a longitudinal study of 3- to 4-year-old students

enrolled in a preschool program. During a 4-year period, almost 1,200 student attendance

records were reviewed to study absenteeism, which was defined as missing school at least

10% of the year. The authors estimated the preschoolers in their study missed school an

average of 30% of the time. Although scholarly attention has focused on programs to close the achievement gap, Ehrlich et al. identified a gap in research regarding preschool absenteeism and its long-term effect on student outcomes. The gap in the research reviewed is the effects of absenteeism and at what point it significantly affects learning outcomes.

The more years a child spends in preschool, the more benefit the student receives. Consistent school attendance is a critical component of education, as preschool offers an opportunity for students to develop social skills, substantial academic gains, emotional benefits, acquire school readiness skills, and learn to interact positively with peers (Ehrlich et al., 2018). The use of suspension as a consequence for challenging behavior leads to absenteeism, which has a negative impact on a student's future outcome. Absenteeism impacts a student's behavior because the child misses the opportunity to interact with peers and develop skills that support their social and emotional development (Ehrlich et al., 2018).

Frequently absent students also struggle to acquire the academic skills necessary to succeed in future grades (Ehrlich et al., 2018). Many students affected end up needing academic intervention by second grade. The students identified with excessive absences were from low income, single-parent homes, and were racial and ethnic minorities. According to Ehrlich et al. (2018) this group of students need the benefit of attending preschool in order to close the achievement gap. They end up struggling to catch up with their peers, struggle with social-emotional skills, self-regulation, and baseline skills needed for kindergarten. Ehrlich et al. recommend focusing on attendance to close the

achievement gap. They also recommended understanding the role of the family, resources, and health on chronic absenteeism and the link between Pre-K learning and attendance using mentors to support students.

In a review of the policy statement from the National Association of the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC), Turner (2016) declared that expelling students is not a form of intervention. This policy was endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In a program in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services and ECCP, the organizations worked to support teachers in building social emotional skills for all students by providing tools and ideas to restructure the classroom. Turner examined research conducted by Gilliam and staff from Yale University on the effects of the ECCP intervention on the early childhood classroom. The ECCP team defined behavior as a language used by young children. According to the ECCP team, 3- and 4-year-olds act out as an expression of their need that they are not able to verbalize due to the limits of their language skills. The behavior can also be an early red flag of mental illness (Turner, 2016).

ECCP in collaboration with CDCFS provided support in the form of observation and pointers (Turner, 2016). Teachers were taught how to utilize the environment and avoid using words such as "no," "don't," and "stop" in the classroom because students need to be taught and told what they can do and not what they are unable to do. The teachers were taught to respond to behaviors with respect, patience, and understanding, rather than with big feelings of their own, which generally leads to suspension. The research from Yale University showed that the teachers' intervention methods

significantly reduced the number of suspensions and expulsions. Of the 30,000 students that received support, 98% of them were still suspension free 6 months after the research (Turner, 2016).

**Effects of Challenging Behavior on Teachers' Perception**

In addition to experiences with suspension, a teacher's expectations can also negatively impact students. Bouderbane (2020) examined how teacher expectations affected students learning and how teachers behave differently toward different students' groups. Bouderbane found that the students internalized teacher beliefs about them. This means that students tend to provide the responses and behaviors that teachers expect from them. Many factors lead teachers to develop expectations for students such as teacher perceptions on a student's sex, appearance, race, and type of school (private or public). Students labeled as low achievers may lose self-esteem and motivation, whereas positive, respectful feedback from a teacher gives students a sense of security and encourages them to participate more in class (Bouderbane, 2020).

Teachers need to be trained to address challenging students' behavior and social emotional needs to enhance the development of preschool students. Teachers must also model these skills in the classroom. The support provided should target the specific needs of the students to maximize gains (Murano et al., 2020). Teachers are in close contact with students and can support students in the social emotional domain, which is a goal of social emotional learning competencies. They need to know how to adapt to the classroom environment to meet the needs of specific students. Teachers play a critical role in constructing the learning environment; their emotional well-being can affect

classroom management and their relationship with students. Without adequate training, stressful classroom environments can lead to depression and cause teachers to burn out and leave the profession. Teachers view social-emotional learning as more important than math and literacy development in children, but they view managing students' behavior as the most stressful part of their job (Sibanda, 2018; Zinsser, 2016).

Murano et al. (2020) reviewed the effect of social-emotional learning on preschool students with problematic behaviors. This meta-analysis was collected from 15,498 students in preschool settings. Preschool is a period of optimal development; students need more than cognitive skills to succeed in school and beyond. This idea was also reflected by Zinsser et al. (2016), who found that students require more than math and science skills in a preschool classroom. Murano et al. noted that positive social interaction benefits students from lower socioeconomic status. Emotional skills developed during preschool years with the support of teachers have a long-term effect on student outcomes. Teachers need to be explicitly provided social-emotional training to enhance the development of preschool students' social skills. The support provided to teachers should target the specific needs of the students to maximize gains (Murano et al., 2020).

Murano et al. (2020) recommend future studies that measure outcomes in other areas, such as school readiness and academic outcomes. One of the main challenges identified by Murano et al. was the lack of information related to early childhood education. The researchers identified more information from gray research—theses and

dissertations published by graduate students—which they did not include in their meta-analysis because these sources are not peer-reviewed.

Sibanda (2018) argued that a paradigm shift must occur to ensure that learning continues for preschool students with challenging behavior. This entails supporting teachers while they work with challenging students. Sibanda utilized an interpretative paradigm and adopted a qualitative and naturalistic approach to understanding the motive and meaning of their observations. A case study design was used to help the researcher understand the phenomena and to determine the benefits of providing social skills training for teachers and students.

According to Sibanda (2018), teaching social skills leads to modified student behavior at multiple levels of education. It is a proactive response to managing student behavior and an interactive process that prevents reactionary responses such as suspension. Disruptive student behavior hinders the teaching and learning process; therefore, learning strategies should include strategies that teach students self-control and self-regulation. When applied, these skills translate into a positive learning environment.

Teaching social skills proactively ensures that young students obtain the skills needed to function in society. Social skills allow learners to participate in their self-regulation, and just like academic skills, social skills can be taught to students at any age or grade level. These concepts can be integrated into existing curriculum and are a part of a holistic approach to education. A holistic approach to teaching yields positive results based on the research findings. If learners are kept engaged and occupied, their behaviors will change for the better. Many teachers, however, do not know effective discipline

strategies. They terminate students from the school for challenging behavior and they utilize other aversive consequences. Teachers use strategies such as threats, timeout, or other unacceptable methods to suppress challenging learner behavior. Sibanda (2018) recommended that schools intensify teacher training programs that focus on teaching positive social skills. Sibanda also recommend further study in private school settings because their study was conducted in a public school.

Hubela et al. (2020) researched teachers' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as a determinant of the quality of the social and emotional environment the teacher creates in their classroom. Thirty-five preschool centers participated in this research; 75% of the centers were private preschools, 29% faith-based, and 6% nonprofit—91% of these schools that participated in accepted state-funded financial assistance. Approximately 349 early care and education teachers participated in the study. Questionnaires were distributed to the participants; 58 teachers were randomly selected for classroom observation. About 73% of the teachers admitted to having had one ACE and 22% had experienced four or more ACEs.

Teachers are essential adults in a preschool student's life. About 59% of children up to 5 years old are in out-of-home care in a center setting (Hubela et al., 2020). A teacher's role involves interacting with students sensitively by creating a positive learning environment. The quality of the environment is influenced by the demographics, the workplace characteristics, and the teacher's prior experience. Hubela et al. (2020) inferred that ACEs influences the way a teacher responds to challenging student behavior and how a teacher utilizes the resources provided to them. ACEs can impact teachers'

capacity to provide care to students. Hubela et al. stressed that attention should focus on

the adversity experienced by teachers. Ongoing professional development and

supervision was recommended to better aid preschool teachers as they work with

students. Teachers who are engaged in positive supportive interaction with colleagues

and supervisors display proactive, rather than reactive, responses toward student problem

behaviors. According to the researchers, the relational based approach should be

considered when providing training for teachers. The researchers recommended more

research on the connection between ACEs experienced by early childhood education

(ECE) teachers and the relationship between planning and intervention they are provided.

Herman et al. (2020) utilized the 3c model: coping (metacognition,

mindset/mindfulness), competence (classroom management, relationship, and student

behavior), and context (school context and societal context). Herman et al. reviewed

seven studies that conceptualized stress. The transactional theory of stress and stress

mindset theory grounded the research.

A significant amount of research has been done on student outcomes, but none

has focused on teachers that support students as they attain the desired goal. A teacher's

wellbeing impacts students' success. Teachers with students with challenging behavior

experience stress and burnout and have low coping skills. Herman et al. (2020) described

stress as an emotional, cognitive, and physiological experience that occurs when

environmental demands exceed an individual's resources to adapt and manage those

demands. According to Divsar (2018), environmental demands can lead to teacher stress,

which impacts student success. Teacher stress and burnout negatively impact student

outcomes, mental health, and wellbeing. Divsar examined how teachers respond to classroom challenging behavior and why teachers utilized the strategies they selected. Divsar utilized an observation checklist, semi-structured questionnaires, and 45 observation sessions, and found that disruptive student behavior and low socioeconomic status were associated with higher teacher stress, exclusionary discipline practices, and student achievement.

Teachers' mental health was identified by Zinsser et al. (2016) as an essential aspect of student success. The authors examined the impact of providing social-emotional support for teachers and what happens when teachers apply new learning to fidelity. According to Zinsser et al., when social-emotional strategies are implemented with fidelity, social-emotional competencies increase. A teacher's ability to teach is affected by their mental health, and their ability to intervene is dependent on their social-emotional competence. In an early childhood setting, teacher responses are affected by multiple factors, such as challenging student behavior (Zinsser et al., 2016).

Without adequate training for teachers to support children's social-emotional learning, teachers are left to their own devices and are more likely to resort to suspension of students (Zinsser et al., 2016). The decision to suspend students was identified by Kuhn et al. (2017) as a teacher decision. To change this trend, Kuhn et al. recommended providing specialized training and professional development around behavior management, streamlining the referral process, and providing a supportive workplace that prevents teachers from expelling students that display challenging behaviors. Collectively and individually, teachers' perceptions of the kind of training they need are the same.

When teachers implement social-emotional strategies, they feel less stressed and more equipped to handle challenging behavior. They have a more positive perception of students in their classrooms, utilize more reflective practices, and use more positive strategies outside of expulsion (Zinsser et al., 2016).

Divsar (2018) postulated that a poorly managed classroom generates a stressful environment. Teachers' maladaptive strategies for managing student behaviors can lead to undesirable motivational patterns that may lead to failure. However, training in classroom management provided by school leadership can alleviate teacher stress. Successful teaching comes from well-managed environments where students feel a sense of belonging. Divsar described classroom management as actions taken by teachers to create and maintain a conducive learning environment that avoids chaos for learners. Classroom management is essential in teaching and learning. The researchers recommended more studies to determine if there is a link between student achievement gap, school-to-prison pipeline, and health disparities.

Five intervention strategies for high-quality classroom management were identified by Evertson and Weinstein (2006) (as cited by Divsar, 2018). These strategies include developing a supportive relationship among learners, managing instruction to optimize learning, establishing rules and regulations to encourage academic engagement, and helping students develop self-regulation skills. Finally, teachers should be knowledgeable about appropriate methods to handle behavior problems (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, as cited by Divsar, 2018). Divsar (2018) also outlined five intervention strategies from Cruickshank et al. (2009): Ignore the behavior, using non-verbal

intervention, utilizing verbal reprimand to show teachers' feelings regarding a specific behavior, using time-out or excluding students from activities, and overt severe punishment. The findings identified teachers' age as a factor in selecting an intervention strategy for the class. Older teachers chose a more controlling approach. Female teachers used more aggressive strategies than their male counterparts. Challenging behaviors identified by teachers during the study included distracted behavior and talking with peers; these student behaviors encumber the effectiveness and smoothness of the learning process. They found that students were more likely to feel safe and make mistakes in a learning environment where peers and teachers would not ridicule them. They recommend further studies to investigate the effect of a teacher's response to a student learning outcome.

Teacher self-efficacy is a task- and situation-based construct (Bullock et al., 2015). Three hundred ninety-five early education teachers from preschools and childcare programs participated in Bullock et al.'s (2015) quantitative study. Teachers in the study, primarily female, identified handling disruptive behavior in the classroom as the most challenging and stressful part of their job. The research focused on classroom management and the link between a teacher's personality traits and their self-efficacy. Bullock et al. found preschool teachers' self-efficacy is increased by specialized training focused on classroom management strategies. A teacher's years of experience also played a role in their self-efficacy; the more experience in successfully managing a classroom with challenging behavior, the more confident the teacher was in their ability.

Bullock et al. (2015) noted that an experienced teacher's self-efficacy diminishes without ongoing training and collaboration with peers. Bullock et al. attributed declining self-efficacy to the fact that teachers begin their careers with training on care, education, and development of infants to preschool. This initially boosts their self-efficacy, but over time, without ongoing support, self-efficacy declines. Bullock et al. identified a need for qualitative research to ask open-ended questions to better understand classroom management and self-efficacy.

According to Khairani and Makara (2020), teachers' self-efficacy is context-specific; the meaning and structure of self-efficacy differ depending on the culture or location. Teachers' sense of self-efficacy was positively correlated to student achievement. Successful teacher performance, observation, and support from the school community positively impact a teacher's self-efficacy. A purposive sampling framework was utilized by Khairani and Makara to select a total of 120 preservice teachers and 190 in-service teachers. They replicated Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's work on teacher self-efficacy by utilizing the efficacy scale with modifications.

The authors identified three types of teacher self-efficacy: efficacy for instructional strategies, efficacy for classroom management, and efficacy for student management. Efficacy for instructional strategies refers to the ability to manage instruction, teaching strategies, approaches, and handling teaching and learning processes. Efficacy for classroom management is the ability to manage classroom behavior, maintain discipline, and mitigate disruptive elements in the classroom. Efficacy for student engagement is the ability to increase student motivation to learn or engage in

a school activity. Having the necessary tools and skills enhances a teacher's perspective and willingness to apply the skills learned. The results revealed a high correlation between efficacy for instructional strategies and efficacy for student engagement. Khairani and Makara (2020) recommend that more research should be done to determine the reason for this correlation. They also recommend research to validate the teacher's self-efficacy construct when compared with a teacher's quality of work-life and commitment to their work. More research is also needed to examine how teacher self-efficacy varies across many teacher sub-groups based on gender and educational level.

Apaydin and Kaya (2020) conducted a comparative study of Generation Z and the Alpha generation using a case study method based on a qualitative research model. Purposive sampling was used, and 12 private preschool teachers were interviewed. Content analysis was then utilized during data analysis. The authors identified a need for structural change in the educational system and a radical change in professional development and pedagogy. Apaydin and Kaya indicated the need to reform preschool teachers' pedagogy, arguing that changing student needs should drive the types of professional development provided to teachers. The current methods utilized by teachers to interact with students do not meet the intellectual, social, motivational, and emotional needs of the Alpha generation (the students currently in preschool classrooms).

In their research, they compared Generation Z and Alpha generation students. They postulated that the classroom management techniques that worked with Generation Z did not work with the Alpha generation. Teachers that participated in the research identified Alpha generation preschool students as being more self-centered, ill-tempered,

more prone to showing violent behaviors, free from rules, and with parents who had a negative view of teachers. Additionally, classroom management methods used with Generation Z preschoolers were found to be ineffective with Alpha generation preschool students because these students are easily distracted and have low concentration. It takes Alpha generation students time to focus without the use of technology. This points to a need to train preschool teachers to handle challenging behavior based on the identified needs of the students in their school setting. Techniques that have worked with previous preschoolers may not work with current preschoolers, and as such, ongoing training is needed for the preschool teachers to be effective educators.

Gilliam et al. (2016), in a random controlled trial of ECCP, examined the outcomes and effect of training offered to teachers of students with challenging behavior compared to the outcome of students whose teachers were not trained. Gilliam et al. found that students with trained teachers displayed significantly lower rates of hyperactivity and other forms of disruptive behavior issues. They concluded that the results would lead to less suspension and expulsion of students in a preschool setting. Malik (2017) identified four alarming facts about preschool student expulsion. First, parents are often bullied into medicating their children or withdrawing them from the program. Second, student expulsion is subtle and is prevalent in many preschool programs, but it is more prevalent in private preschool programs. Third, implicit bias and an awareness of what constitutes age-appropriate behaviors need to be targeted for training and professional support. These are ways to provide teachers the tools that aid them in determining what behaviors are developmental and normal child behavior and

provide opportunities for redirection. According to Malik, researchers have yet to identify

the scope of the problem of suspension and teacher training in private preschool settings.

Gilliam et al. and Malik highlighted the importance of providing teachers the support

they need to avoid student suspension and expulsion and build teacher capacity by

understanding what student behaviors are developmentally appropriate.

Arthur-Kelly et al. (2017) utilized a paired pre- and post-AB design, which

allowed for a comparison of participants' pre- and post-intervention responses. A total of

1,436 preschool teachers from different program types participated in this study.

Teachers attended multiple trainings and had a 3–4-week break between sessions to

enable them to implement new strategies and get feedback on their implementation. A

systematic case application and coaching approaches were utilized in design and

delivery; the participants had to have a target student to practice learned skills.

According to Arthur-Kelly et al. (2017), social and communication experience is

the core of the preschool experience and it sets the foundation for future learning.

Unfortunately, for some children, this experience is interrupted by challenging behavior

that impacts them as well as those around them. They emphasized that attention should

be on prevention rather than intervention. They identified a gap in evidence-based

strategies and teacher beliefs. Some researchers have looked at how community, culture,

and family shape content and function for creating a safe learning environment for

students, families, and staff. Early childhood environments should be aimed at providing

positive relationships and learning environments and the teaching of social and emotional

skills.

Arthur-Kelly et al. (2017) noted that preschool teachers do not always have the proper training on how to manage challenging behaviors in their classrooms. Early childhood professionals identify challenging behavior as a significant concern. The question, according to Arthur-Kelly et al., is whether direct support has been provided and how effective has it been in enhancing classroom practice. They identified collaboration, commitment to change, and collection of meaningful outcomes as essential elements in the design and delivery of professional development for teachers. The emphasis in teacher trainings should be placed on child learning outcomes by reviewing real-life practices and developing appropriate teaching practices that enhance learning outcomes. Effective ways to support teachers to avoid a train and hope approach include a direct mentor-model approach, in-class support, group study, and self-study. Trainings must be relevant to the teachers' everyday work; an evidence-based practice should inform the reality of the social support context. They also identified the following approaches as ineffective: academic in-service approach, participation-based approaches, and didactic transmission approach where a trainer simply transmits information to teachers.

Arthur-Kelly et al. (2017) findings show a reduced concern from staff and the recognition of the importance of working with families and highlights the need to plan and deliver partnerships with families that are practical and need-based. They recommended further studies that explore ways to bridge the gap between what happens at preschool to promote social engagement and a verification teacher self-report. Their report relied solely on teacher self-report of what happened in their classrooms. They also

recommend a study of the effect of the social and communication support received in preschool as they transition to the next academic level.

Classroom management is described as actions teachers take to create an environment that fosters both academic and social-emotional learning (Akdag & Haser, 2016). Often, new teachers come into the field with an idealistic view of teaching and once in the classroom, they face realities they are not prepared to handle. Early childhood teachers encounter a unique situation because of the students' age and the content they have to teach. Teachers are prepared with the skills and dispositions needed for the profession, but not for the realities, they have to face in the classrooms. When teachers are faced with challenging behavior, their self-perception is affected, and this impacts their self-esteem. Challenging behavior affects classroom management because for learning to take place, a positive environment must be established. This is a crucial component of learning and instruction. When students feel loved and accepted by their teachers through daily interactions, they are more likely to feel secure in the classroom (Akdag & Haser, 2016, Yoder & Wilford, 2019). Akdag and Haser (2016) recommended that classroom management should be studied as a social and moral curriculum.

In a study that examined the effect of professional development on preschool teachers' skill level, Epstein and Willhite (2015) identified preschool teachers' ability to participate in decision-making and collaborate with other teachers as the most important predictor of a teacher's success while interacting with students. The research was conducted in a Wisconsin school with 395 children. One hundred and sixty-six of those students received free lunch and 25 received reduced lunch. The school had English

language learners and students with exceptional needs enrolled, and 14 teachers applied

to participate as mentor teachers. Teacher candidates needed at least a 3.0 grade point

average for acceptance in the study. The mentor teachers were assigned a candidate

teacher; all participants had to complete a pre- and post-survey using the teacher self-

efficacy scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). Three

questions were added that addressed teachers' teaching skills and they also participated in

a group discussion.

In this pilot study, Epstein and Willhite (2015) focused on teachers' belief in their

ability to impact student learning based on the type of professional development

provided. They believed that sound learning comes from continuous reflection between

experienced and novice teachers in a collaborative and respectful community. Prior

research has shown positive outcomes for teachers who participate in professional

development programs; the effects are long-lasting and lead to improved practices and

innovative teaching strategies. Epstein and Willhite found that teachers who participated

in traditional campus-based field experience were outperformed by teachers who attended

professional development programs. Staff collaboration, student engagement, and

consistent opportunity to participate in decision making led to an increased feeling of

competency transferred by teachers to the students in their classroom. Teachers'

collaboration and ability to impact decision making correlated significantly with levels of

teacher efficacy. Assisting students with challenging behaviors and communicating with

parents were identified as factors that make teaching difficult. They also viewed working

with challenging students as both rewarding and challenging. After 3 months of

professional development and mentoring, only three participants responded to the postsurvey questionnaire; they recommended further study in comparison to teachers' pre- and postsurvey experience.

**Effective Teacher Professional Development**

Quality professional opportunities support a teacher's professional knowledge, which supports a teacher's self-efficacy. Lauermann and Konig (2016) described professional knowledge as pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills, and an awareness of school systems. These are factors that make teachers successful. They identified a need to study the specific content of a teacher's professional knowledge because teachers' professional knowledge at any point in their career can lead to high or low self-esteem. This aligns with the purpose of the study to understand the professional development provided teachers that aid them as they work with children with challenging behaviors (Lauermann & Konig, 2016).

Badri et al. (2016) noted that preschool teachers should participate in professional development throughout their careers. Professional development can be an effective means of retaining teachers, creating a quality learning environment for students, and cultivating a supportive work environment for teachers. They aimed to better understand teacher perceptions of professional development and its impact on teachers' practice. Professional development is needed to keep teachers up to date with changing practices and student needs. To improve classroom learning, teachers have to be active learners; thus, professional development must be collaborative, long term, and content driven (Badri et al., 2018).

Professional development refers to a high-quality, ongoing training program with intensive follow-up and on-the-job support. It is linked to student achievement. Teachers learn best through professional development that addresses their needs and teaches them to reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of their practice. The expected outcomes of a professional development training must be made clear to ensure its effectiveness. According to Badri et al. (2018), long-term professional development provides teachers an opportunity to reflect, try out new concepts, and obtain feedback on their teaching. Collective participation in professional development contributes to building the culture of the school. Encouragement to attend, such as paid professional development time and availability of collaboration time, leads to long-term commitments. They recommended moving away from professional development that occurs during the workday, after school, or weekends. Instead, reallocating time to create a mental workspace for teachers should be implemented. In their interviews with teachers, they found that teachers in the private school setting attended and paid for professional development themselves to increase their chances of being hired in public schools. Finally, Badri et al. identified a need for more online professional training for teachers due to teachers' concern with time and space for professional development.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) set out to discover the most effective types of professional development through a review of 35 methodological research articles. The authors found a positive link between student outcome and teacher professional development. They postulated that sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop students' competencies, such as critical thinking skills. Teachers need effective

professional development to learn this complex pedagogy. They identified eight widely shared features of effective professional development that research has linked to positive student outcomes. These eight methodologies align with the five assumptions of Knowles's theory of andragogy and the idea that adult learning should meet the adults' immediate needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

1. Supports collaborative learning process: Teachers engage in a job-embedded context and collaborate as part of their workday to improve instruction. Systemically nourishes the growth of educators/leaders (individuals and teams).

2. Adult learner-centered: Coaching and expert support is focused on a teacher's individual needs and involves sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practice. Training is job-embedded and ongoing.

3. Based on research and best practices: Use of effective practice models, such as modeling, observing peers, and watching videos of useful methods.

4. Focuses on educators/leaders: Coaching and expert support is focused on a teacher's individual needs and involves sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practice, attaining the skills, abilities, and understandings needed to improve student achievement.

5. Content-focused professional development that is directed at specific content: This approach provides an opportunity for the immediacy of use.

6. Incorporates active learning: This method moves away from the traditional professional development method and focuses on the teacher's classroom environment. Teachers engage in the learning style they are providing for their students.

7. Offers feedback and reflection: Teachers receive professional development with the opportunity to practice, reflect, and receive quality feedback.

8. Sustained duration: Teachers are provided professional development and provided the time and opportunity to learn, practice, implement, and reflect on strategies learned (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) also identified system-level obstacles to professional development which were discussed by Tooley and Connally (2016). With the passage of No Child Left Behind came an increase in the short-term approach to professional development and a decline in more sustained professional learning approaches. The four areas identified by Tooley and Connally) are:

(a) identifying the professional development needs of teachers – it is essential to note the experience and knowledge a teacher comes to professional development with;

(b) choosing approaches most likely to be effective. "One-off" professional development opportunities are easy to schedule and require less time to plan. Teacher contract and certification requirements tend to emphasize seat time as a metric to measure professional development engagement;

(c) implementing approaches with quality and fidelity – when coaches are provided, other variables affect their effectiveness, which includes the coach's expertise; and

(d) assessing professional development outcomes – they found that there is no system in place to track professional development effectiveness.

Analyzing the impact of a professional is not conducted, which makes it challenging to determine what is working and what is not working. Teachers' ability to transform and implement evidence-based research in the classroom is still an area that needs investigation. An examination of obstacles and challenges to implementation is yet required to create effective professional development.

Gregoriadis et al. (2018) stated that the quality of an early childhood education program is directly associated with the quality of professional development provided to teachers. Emphasis should not just be on preservice training but in-service training as well. Forty-five teachers participated in Gregoriadis et al.'s quantitative and qualitative research. Of the participants, 66.7% (30) had a 4-year degree in early childhood education, 32% (10) had a 2-year college degree plus additional 1-year university training, 8.9% (4) had a 4-year degree and 2-year diploma degree, and 2.2% (1) had a master's degree. Additionally, 48.9% (22) had 6–10 years of teaching experience in education, 35.6% (16) had 11–15 years' experience, and 15.6% (7 kindergarten teachers) had 16 years' experience. Gregoriadis et al. (2018) conducted quantitative research using a 24-item survey and a semistructured interview.

According to Gregoriadis et al. (2018), many practitioners cannot agree on a uniform definition for continued professional development. Still, most agree that it is essential to provide teachers new skills and endless opportunities to improve practice. The context of professional development and the educational setting is important. The context differs in multiple settings and impacts the teacher's view. The teachers contended that the training did not meet their needs; they described it as cooperation with

the academic staff. They viewed distance learning as less time consuming and lack the

opportunity for personal contact and communication. The combined elements of

traditional professional development and distance learning were seen as ideal. Workshops

were viewed as the least effective form of professional development. Teachers'

motivation to attend was based on financial gain and professional progression, which

offered promotion opportunities.

The flexibility of the schedule of professional development is another prominent

feature; training opportunities provided to teachers as part of their work hours and meet

their needs by allowing them to develop their professional identity are preferred

(Gregoriadis et al., 2018). Opportunities to listen to colleagues and hear how they handle

similar classroom issues are features of a professional development preferred by teachers.

The teachers desired an opportunity for self-reflection, self-assessment, and networking.

The teachers still recommend top-down professional development because this is the

training that counts towards professional advancement in the profession (Gregoriadis et

al., 2018). The researchers suggested a discussion on the personal, social, and

occupational dimensions of teacher professional development to inform policymakers in

designing ongoing professional development.

Weber-Mayrer et al. (2015) explored the knowledge and beliefs of teachers who

participated in professional development and its implications for adult learning.

Professional development is described as "activities that increase an educator's

knowledge and advance the effectiveness of instruction, to further educators'

understanding of strategies for supporting children to meet challenging academic content

and achievement of standards" (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2015, p. 44). Data utilized for this study came from Assessing Preschool Professional Learning (APPLE: Ohio), and a total of 263 early childhood educators participated in the study: 98% female, 99% non-Hispanic, 80% White, 19% Black, and 1% other. The average age was 41 years (the age range was 23–73 years). Prior to professional development, a questionnaire was distributed.

Knowing the background of learners might help teacher trainers design better professional development programs (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2015). A better alignment between professional development and learners' need leads to a better outcome for educators and children. One way to ensure that young children have access to high-quality early education is to promote a quality workforce. Evidence has shown that teachers who received web-based professional development, combined with interventions such as coaching, showed the most gain in classroom quality, compared to those that received only web-based professional development.

Professional development can be a useful tool for supporting teaching and learning in early childhood programs. The effectiveness depends on the educator and program characteristics. These are consistent with Knowles's (1977) theory of andragogy, which posits that adult learning is dependent on a variety of factors such as adult's prior knowledge, experience, beliefs, and perception (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2015). It addresses Knowles's notion that the characteristics the adult brings to the learning setting have to be acknowledged. A mismatch of the background and qualification of participants results in less meaningful professional development. An important

consideration is the teacher's experience, the position held, the setting of the program, the teacher's social role, and strategies that might work in their work setting. Adult learners are problem-centered and want strategies that they can implement in their current setting immediately; their knowledge and beliefs is also an essential factor.

According to Weber-Mayrer (2015), teachers agreed that professional development should be student-centered. We need to know what the teachers bring to the learning task; this is often overlooked when offering educators professional development. The research looked at the impact of adult learning theory when planning professional developments. The findings indicated variability in participants' knowledge base and experience.

Utilizing the expertise theory, professional development should provide learners opportunities based on their identified expertise to enhance their learning most effectively. Study groups and peer coaching design were identified as strategies to utilize when providing professional development. These strategies provide teachers opportunities to discuss and learn in peer learning sessions with more experienced peers and knowledgeable colleagues in a safe learning environment. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted that providing coaching and expert support should focus on a teacher's individual needs and involve sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practice. Another important strategy to consider when providing professional development is the format; multiple formats must be utilized to accommodate all learners and their needs. Flexible times and offering job-embedded professional development such as coaching and distance learning should also be options. The content of

professional development is another important consideration. We need to be aware of participants' knowledge and experience when planning a learning experience, similar to planning and meeting each child's individual needs to avoid one-size-fits-all professional development. They recommended collecting pre-professional development surveys and ongoing monitoring of participant learning and need to gauge learning. They also recommend a learning need assessment based on participants' belief, openness to change, approaches, orientation to teaching and learning, and efficacy. The need of the students in their care is also another essential consideration. For future studies, they recommended an understanding of what teachers need and why they participate and choose the professional development that they attend.

Linder et al. (2015) identified a gap in professional development research focused on teachers for students ages 0 to 5. The study was geared toward finding commonalities in the views and perceptions of both providers and recipients of early childhood professional development. The research focused on perception and not on the impact of practice. This mixed-methods study involved 320 providers and 1022 participants; the participants were ECE teachers from the head start, public and private schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 providers and 27 recipients for interviews and follow up analysis. The research was grounded on the post-positivist framework of Moustakas (1994), who argued that reality can be derived from examining perceived truths to identify common themes. The landscape survey was developed to look at types of professional developments offered, how often, and how they are structured.

Linder et al. (2015) affirmed that professional development positively influences early childhood education classrooms. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with professional development when it was not focused on participants' needs, but on a prescribed set of topics, and when follow-ups and evaluations did not occur. Linder et al. have shown that the teachers' level of education impacts the quality of the early education classroom, teachers' instructional practices, and their desire to participate in extended professional development opportunities. They asserted that short-term professional development is not as effective as long-term professional development, which includes coaching, communication of learning objectives, group discussion, and follow-up work.

Teachers who participated in professional development opportunities exhibited more child-centered behaviors and improved their interaction with the students. It is essential to move away from the make and take professional development approach to a transformative approach geared toward improving existing practices. For professional development to be effective and have a long-lasting effect, Linder et al. (2015) stressed a need to understand a teacher's background, needs, and work environment. Training provided for teachers included training on health and safety, nutrition, child development, learning environment, and developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers had identified training needs that support behavior management, curriculum activities, social skill, and development. The professional development providers expressed concern that even when professional development in these areas is provided, they did not attend the professional development experience. The recipients voiced multiple obstacles to attending, such as

distance to training, quality of training, and a limited notice of the available opportunity. The findings show that the recipients preferred on-site sessions conducted as part of their regular daily schedule. Creating an optimal environment for successful professional development entails filling the identified gap in early childhood teachers' knowledge and time provided for training. Addressing the perception of providers and recipients has the potential for effective professional development.

Professional development is especially crucial for improving teaching practice in early childhood and attaining higher classroom quality. Schacter (2015) conducted empirical research on the design and delivery of professional development for early childhood education teachers and reviewed how far professional development for ECE teachers has come, what has been accomplished, and potential next steps. A total of 73 studies was included in Schacter's analysis. Schacter reached a consensus on what professional development should accomplish, but not on how to achieve it. They described professional development as facilitated teaching and learning that are transactional and are designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and disposition as well as the application of the knowledge in practice (Schacter, 2015). Professional development should target the teacher's skill, knowledge, and disposition (Linder et al., 2015; Schacter, 2015). Evidence that professional development results in improved outcomes for students is not clearly defined.

Schacter (2015) have shown that sustained and intensive professional development is effective, but sustained professional development is not clearly defined in the literature. Most studies lack the specificity needed to guide the replication. Therefore,

examining theory and research to identify patterns of effective practice is essential.

Linder et al. (2015) and Schacter identified a gap in research, specifically in

understanding the design of professional development. They identified a need to examine

the various aspects of teaching, such as teacher-child interaction, language and literacy,

socioemotional development, math, and science. Workshops were identified as the most

ineffective format for professional development, but they continue to be used because

they are cost-effective compared to coaching. Coaching practices need to be examined to

determine the frequency and intensity needed for effective teacher development and to

discover what happens after the coach is gone. The focus should be on expanding

professional development content and utilizing better measurement tools. Teachers'

thinking during instruction and how it relates to instructional context needs to be

examined to provide insight into effective professional development (Linder et al., 2015;

Schacter, 2015).

  Nolan and Molla (2018) examined the effectiveness of teacher professional

learning through mentoring and reviewed what and why teachers learn through

mentoring. They also looked at what produces change. Eighty-four mentees and 26

mentors were identified for this research. A prementoring program evaluation and

postmentoring program evaluation was conducted, with a shared learning day reported

and interviews and focused group discussion with 15 early childhood professionals.

Nolan and Molla identified four Cs as essential to active professional learning: context,

collegiality, criticality, and change. Context is an aspiration between an individual's goal

and a systematic requirement. Collegiality addresses the importance of collegiality in

building relationships. Criticality looks at the ability to have critical deliberation in a safe learning environment. Change is learning that takes place in the domain of professional disposition, pedagogical knowledge, and social capital.

Teachers' daily experiences in their everyday context shape their understanding and skills. Professional learning is focused on practice and should be embedded in daily work, enabling teachers to improve their existing pedagogical practice. Teachers need the opportunity to evaluate learning experiences based on context and identified training needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). A transformative approach that involves mentoring should be embedded. This includes practical knowing informed by a theory that provides mutual learning opportunities. Professional learning outcome involves changes in professional learning and change in practice, the internalization of external structures guides actions and interactions in a field of practice.

Social capital in the field is examined by reviewing the practices that are valued in the area as novice teachers transition from theory to practical application. Effective professional learning bridges the isolation gap by building professional collegiality. The conceptualization of learning as a socially situated practice with social participation and interaction is at the core of learning (Nolan & Molla, 2018).

Brion's (2020) case study examined teachers' perspectives of professional development and factors influencing the transfer of skills learned to the classroom. Twenty-two teachers from the same location participated in this study; all had between 5 and 20 years of teaching experience at the same school. The 596 students in the school were 100% economically disadvantaged and received free breakfast and lunches. Of

these students, 50% of them were Black, 15% Asian, 5% Hispanic, and 30% White

(Brion, 2020). Additionally, 34% of the students identified as having a learning disability.

The teachers at the school identified discipline issues as a concern and did not know what

to do.

Brion (2020) described professional development as a lifelong collaborative

learning process that nourishes the growth of educators both as individuals and as team

members to improve their skills and abilities (Speck & Knipe, 2005, p. 4, as cited by

Brion, 2020). They also describe learning transfer as "the effective and continuing

application by learners—to their performance of jobs or other individuals, organizational,

or community responsibilities—of knowledge and skills gained in the learning activities"

(Broad, 1997, p. 2, as cited by Brion, 2020). The teachers in the study complained about

professional development fatigue: too many trainings were being offered and teachers

were required to attend them all, even when the topic did not address their needs. Further,

professional development was not individualized, most sessions used ineffective lecture-

based formats, and teachers were not provided with the necessary tools to implement the

skills they learned.

Brion (2020) asserted that for professional development to be highly effective, it

has to be geared toward meeting the needs of teachers and be implemented to support

student-learning outcomes. To make this happen, the process of providing effective

professional development requires time, resources, support from leadership, an

examination of teachers' needs, and what they require to meet their students' learning

needs. Brion (2020) stated that workshops only have about a 5% impact on student

outcomes. In this multidimensional model of learning transfer approach, the researcher recommended pretraining and front-loading the expectation of the training and finally a follow up to access the outcome of the training. Culture was also an overarching factor in the transfer of learning, when not addressed within the following concepts: pre-training, learner, facilitator, material and content, context and environment, and follow-up. Stereotypes of individuals and groups will persist and affect learning transfer. They identified eight key questions that need to be asked while creating professional development opportunities. These questions will support leaders as they plan effective professional development for teachers.

A rapid evidence review was conducted by Bunting et al. (2019) using a systematic search and screening of 70 papers on trauma-informed care from around the world; American researchers wrote more than 50% of the documents. Bunting et al. established a rapid response team to try out the practices identified. They identified a need for ongoing support to maximize the initial training impact. The second group of participants in the research was incentivized by offering hourly pay rate increase, and internal trainers provided ongoing training and reflective practice group sessions were held.

Bunting et al. (2019) utilized the seminal work of Felitti et al. (1998) as the framework for their research. The goal of the study was to build a strong connection between the child and the important adults in their life to reduce the impact of adversity and help them develop resilience. Resilience is created by a link to a network of support. Early exposure to trauma places young children at increased risk of continued exposure

during the rest of their childhood. Children internalize and externalize behaviors that appear as challenging behaviors in a classroom setting and influence the child's relationship with the teacher. Bunting et al. noted the importance of formal trauma training for preschool teachers because younger children are exposed to trauma at a disproportionate rate compared with older children, and teachers must know how to approach children who have experienced trauma.

The study also explored the students' relationship with the teacher and its influence on a teacher's self-esteem. The benefit of trauma-informed care for teachers includes reducing seclusion practices and workforce development and organizational change. They identified a need for ongoing training for teachers. Qualitative evidence showed that teachers valued both forms of training. They recommended further research on behavior management training for teachers (Bunting et al., 2019).

Elreda et al. (2020) built on a previous study and meta-analysis documenting the needs of novice teachers. It addressed the gap of the effect of evidence-based classroom management and teacher support programs. The study used a randomized sampling of 188 teachers with 1–3 years of experience in kindergarten through third grade. Half of the teachers were provided a 2-day full training on two methods of intervention training by the Good Behavior Game. The control group did not receive any training. A randomized selection of students was used to determine the effect on student outcomes.

Novice and beginning teachers wanted professional development geared towards classroom management to support them with students exhibiting challenging behavior (Elreda et al., 2020.) The teachers surveyed identified the following as areas where they

needed the most support: professional development in classroom behavioral management, how to build a positive relationship between teachers and students, and how to organize classrooms for optimal student behavior. However, they received training on content knowledge and not on classroom management, which was an area they desperately needed support. More experienced teachers were not receptive due to ingrained problematic practices. Elreda et al. (2020) recommended that professional development should be geared toward meeting the needs of teachers because it is easier to provide training that enables effective teaching than trying to undo problematic, ingrained practices of experienced teachers.

Elreda et al. (2020) noted that professional developments should be differentiated based on the experience of the teachers and their classroom needs. They also found that some teachers saw challenging behavior as an opportunity to grow, while others viewed it as stressful. A teacher's perception of challenging behavior impacts how they receive and utilize the information provided. The results showed an increase in student achievement and an increased classroom management strategy. Elreda et al. suggested further research into specific training programs provided to teachers to determine their effectiveness. They also recommended looking for a link between classroom management and providing teachers training as a way of reducing disparity in students' learning and achievement. Their study occurred in school districts that served impoverished and disadvantaged students, and they recommended replicating the study in schools with different demographics because their result cannot be generalized to all populations.

Kourkoutas et al. (2018) reviewed multiple studies on school counseling and the psychodynamic model of intervention by researchers in the United States and the United Kingdom. The authors provided evidence that general education teachers lack training in effective methods and strategies to engage students with challenging behavior and recommended that teachers that work with students with disruptive behavior and get help from professionals in order to gain psychological insight into a student's behavior. Good intention and inadequate training were identified as recipes for failure, but a positive relationship with a supportive teacher, in combination with early specialist intervention, can reduce the risk of a student entering an endless cycle of mutual rejection with peers and teachers, academic and social failure, or possibly dropping out of school.

Negative interaction between a teacher and a student does not solve the problem of challenging behavior in the classroom. Rather, it intensifies the aggressive behavior and becomes a significant source of stress for the teacher (Kourkoutas et al., 2018). The student receives little or no support from the teacher, and they use implicit or explicit punitive techniques to handle challenging behaviors in their classroom. Frequently, teachers have no strategies to refer to when students disrupt learning. The least effective teachers of students with challenging behavior utilize negative strategies such as warnings, punishments, reprimand, and exclusion from the classroom. Students perceive this treatment as unfair treatment, and the behavior intensifies. Teachers internalize this response, and the negative cycle continues without proper training for the teacher.

According to Kourkoutas et al. (2018), teachers often end up labeling students because of their frustration. They view negative student behaviors as personal attacks on

their professional identity and fear that they will be judged based on the way they handle the situation. Many teachers resist the support they are provided because they consider it the responsibility of outside resources or personnel to deal with such behavior. They blame the family and outside factors as responsible for the conduct; as such, the school is not responsible. They fail to provide students clear guidelines on behavior expectations but believe they should already know. They apply the same strategy to every student and encounter resistance; they need to understand the dynamic need of each student to move forward.

Outside professionals often encounter opposition from teachers. Kourkoutas et al. (2018) recommended teachers' input should be sort in the provision of strategies because of their knowledge of the students in their classroom. Their contribution should be respected, and personal comments and judgments should be avoided. Any form of support for teachers should include information about their teaching environment and should not undervalue their experience. The support should be clear and meaningful; the intervention should consist of a framework that recognizes and respects the difficulties they encounter and their need for practical and emotional support. It should also know their significant role in helping students. Teachers need help in understanding the inner workings of their students to stop the negative attitude towards them. Kourkoutas et al. recommended counseling guidance and resilience-based strategies to help teachers work with students with challenging behavior.

Inclusive education requires multiple layers of support to succeed. Klibthong and Aggenyega (2020) applied the concept of boundary spanning from business leadership to

inclusive education; according to them, the interconnectedness of all layers ensures the success of all team members. Klibthong and Agbenyega described inclusive education as an effective school where a child's wellbeing matters, including children that have experienced difficulties and exclusions. Leadership was identified as a critical component in creating the right environment for every student. When teachers have a positive attitude and self-worth, they transfer this feeling to the students. They recommended providing teachers with professional development that enhances their leadership skills and provides them opportunities to make decisions regarding students in their care. They stated that teachers that can act as pedagogical leaders in their class engage the school community to meet the needs of their students. Leadership skills enable teachers to work with, and not over, their school community. When teachers see themselves as leaders, they trust their professionalism and create an effective classroom for students.

Peer coaching is an effective way of providing teachers with feedback and support that is transferable to the classroom. According to Johnson et al. (2017), didactic methods of professional development do not transfer to the classroom. Johnson et al.'s study included 24 participants from four head start programs who were purposively selected. Teachers had experience ranges from 0–35 years, 71% were African American, and they had different educational backgrounds. The participants were divided into two groups: the control group and the group that received coaching. The teachers received seven weeks of afterschool training, the exercise involved three rotations of coaching and observation; each rotation involved a change in partners. The control group received professional development as usual. The Colleague Observation and Coaching was

designed to address a gap in professional development provided to teachers. Coaching

has been used extensively for preservice teachers but not for in-service teachers or as a

tool for ongoing training. The Pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

was used to conduct a study on the "Pre- and post-observation of classroom organization,

instructional support, and emotional support," (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 461); this tool

measures and promotes adult-child interaction.

Students with social-emotional difficulties benefit more from intervention. Many

of these students are enrolled in head start and preschool programs, though these

programs often score low in the social-emotional domain (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 461).

When multiple approaches are used in training teachers such as individual feedback, in-

service training, and consultation, the skills learned are transferred and evident in the

classroom. Teachers were trained to use praise to acknowledge effective practices to

question and understand the strategy used, elicit questions from peers to help explore an

alternate method that might be used, and ask questions that will prompt reflection and

improvement. Teachers were more receptive to feedback coming from peers because they

had established trust and comfort with peers and were more open to learning from them.

Teachers that benefited most from peer coaching were new teachers and those who had

concerns about classroom management. When resources allowed teachers to observe

other teachers' classrooms, they built the trust they needed to express their needs and get

the specific support they want. Peer coaching was identified as an inexpensive way to

provide ongoing and sustainable professional development that meets the needs of

teachers. The teachers rated their effectiveness at 4.25 on a scale of 1–5, with 5 as the highest score.

The results indicated an insignificant difference from the pre- and post-observation of a 0.03 to 0.28 change in student-teacher interaction for the controlled group. The coaching group showed a significant increase from 0.19–0.93 increase in teacher-student interaction. Johnson et al. (2017) recommended continued use of this training method focusing on rotations to make teachers more comfortable with working with all peers to increase collective efficacy.

Mindfulness-based intervention reduces teacher stress and increases their efficacy at work, according to Taylor et al.'s (2016) research. It provides a strategy to cope with stress at work. It also leads to efficiency for working with students and colleagues after a conflict and greater compassion for students with challenging behavior. A total of 59 public school teachers were selected and randomly waitlisted or placed in a control group in this mixed study. This includes 53 women and six men; the median age was 47 years; participants range in age from 28–63 years, multiple ethnicities, and educational levels. A total of 39 elementary school teachers and 21 secondary teachers with 3–5 years of teaching experience were selected to participate in the study. Twenty-six participants were placed in the treatment group, and 30 were placed in a randomized group. The randomized trial of a mindfulness-based intervention program was utilized by Taylor et al. to examine four primary areas of regulating teachers' emotional wellbeing at work: how teachers managed stress at work, teacher efficacy at forgiving colleagues and

students after a conflict and increasing teacher efficacy for compassion toward a student who might be experiencing challenging behavior.

Teachers need professional development that focuses on developing skills focused on mental flexibility, resilience, empathy, compassion, and forgiveness. These characteristics, which are embedded in the mindfulness-based intervention, help teachers develop coping skills. Coping skills are cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal challenges that may seem to exceed an individual's capacity. The skills may be adaptive or maladaptive, and the more the teacher utilizes adaptive skills, the more they can grow and learn. Coping strategies provide the teacher with a chance to reflect on their practices. Taylor et al. (2016) identified compassion and forgiveness as skills that can be learned. These qualities are not inherent, and teachers who are taught these skills respond differently to students displaying challenging behavior because teachers are more focused on self-awareness and the needs of others. At the end of a nine-week training with 11 treatment sessions, the treatment group teachers reported that they felt less negativity toward work and were able to meet stressful demands. They used more self-regulatory problem-solving strategies, were less reactive, and became more positive in their interactions with students. They were more forgiving of students' negative behavior. Based on the results, Taylor et al. (2016) recommended behavioral measures and observation to capture these skills in a classroom setting.

## Teacher Perspectives on Professional Development

The teaching profession is incredibly stressful, and the preschool teacher's emotional wellbeing impacts their classroom performance. Healthy emotional

intelligence is essential for a successful and healthy relationship with students. In a quantitative study, Anastasiou (2020), distributed questionnaires using a randomized sampling of 65 preschool teachers across 25 preschools in a pilot study in Greece. Sixty-one questionnaires were returned (93.84%) and included in the study. The emotional intelligence questionnaire had self-report inventory; teachers answered questions about themselves on a 7-point scale. Participants ranged in age from 24–64 years and had 4–30 years' teaching experience.

Anastasiou (2020) found that emotional intelligence was a significant factor in effective job performance, especially in an emotionally demanding job such as teaching preschoolers. Teachers with a positive outlook on life were more likely to view students' behavior in a positive light and be more receptive to professional support. A teacher's social-emotional skills influence how they support students' social-emotional intelligence. Anastasiou identified the preschool years as a crucial point in a child's life when the child is acquiring lifelong skills such as social and emotional competence. The presence of a positive teacher makes a difference in the student outcomes.

Improving teachers' emotional intelligence should be included in professional development trainings, as emotional intelligence is essential for teachers to motivate students and communicate effectively with parents. Hubela et al. (2020) and Anastasiou (2020) noted that teachers should be able to address their own emotional and professional needs. Scoring high in the social-emotional area is associated with providing a quality classroom environment. Anastasiou found a teacher's emotional intelligence varied by demographics and age was not a significant factor. Teachers' social competence enables

them to support children as they engage with their peers and manage challenging

behavior that might hinder students' cognitive development. The ability to interact

physically and emotionally with children in a positive way is a desirable trait. It leads to

beneficial outcomes such as professional satisfaction, student emotional development,

and student acquisition of lifelong skills. They recommended direct resources toward

monitoring, safeguarding, and increasing preschool teachers' emotional intelligence at

every stage of their career.

Brock and Beaman-Diglia (2018) found 18 studies that focused on challenging

student behavior, but only two of the studies focused on teacher implementation

strategies. Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) and Snyder et al. (2012) were cited as part

of the literature that grounded their research on using coaching and modeling strategy for

teacher support. Two teachers volunteered for their study. They were offered three

implementation strategies based on the idea that if teachers had a choice, they would be

more motivated to implement a plan. The teachers were provided instruction and

coaching support, along with feedback after implementation.

Along with many other scholars, Brock and Beaman-Diglia (2018) identified

training for challenging student behavior as a top professional development need for

teachers. The need for training and skills is well-known; the main concern, according to

Brock and Beaman-Diglia, is getting teachers to implement, with fidelity, strategies they

are taught in trainings. The authors examined how teachers were trained in programs that

emphasized a constructivist child-centered philosophy of teaching and exclude behavioral

approaches. Consequently, teachers find it extremely difficult to meet the needs of students with challenging behavior.

The implementation of evidence-based practices has been identified as the most appropriate way to reduce challenging behavior. They shared many research-based interventions strategies that teachers can utilize, such as explicit teacher expectations, behavior-specific feedback, and differential reinforcement. However, translating research and theory into practice remains a challenge for many teachers. Barriers to implementing new skills include a lack of training for teachers in behavior management and one-time, lecture-based workshops.

The study of implementation science offers a more practical approach to bridging the gap. This includes one-to-one coaching, modeling in person or remotely, and performance feedback, which are powerful models of professional development. The strategies offered to teachers only led to a change in teacher practice, which did not lead to a change in student behavior. This was a disappointment to the teachers. When Brock and Beaman-Diglia (2018) added strategies for the students, student behavior showed significant improvement. Thus, Brock and Beaman-Diglia concluded that managing student and teacher behavior creates a link between teacher training implementation and student outcomes.

The results revealed that the teacher's implementation increased; teachers liked direct feedback because it was geared toward them and supported them as they worked with an identified student. Visual support was not enough to support the student, adding strategies for student self-monitoring and self-management lead to an improvement in

student behavior. They recommend studying teachers from diverse backgrounds and identified a need to collect data from teachers in another area and research what happens after they are trained and provided strategies to work with students (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). They acknowledge that this is a small study; it is one of the first to focus on coaching, and more research is needed before a conclusion can be drawn. This research had no variable for student behavior; that is an area that needs further study.

Kuhn et al. (2017), in a qualitative analysis of the experiences of students and their parents, preschool teachers, and coaches, provided information regarding the quantity and quality of training that adults working with this population of students are exposed to. They conducted an in-depth examination of the Getting Ready intervention for a vulnerable population of young children. In this multiyear project, a phenomenological approach was used to bracket the voices of the researcher to ensure researcher bias is not apparent. The study included 45 children—26 boys and 19 girls—with an average age of 3.8 years. The intervention was implemented on 19 students—13 boys and six girls with an average age of 3.9 years. Participating teachers received 2 days of training on the Getting Ready strategy, ongoing professional development, and coaching support. Coaches received an intensive 5-day training and continued training on the Getting Ready strategy. Kuhn et al. found that teachers benefitted from utilizing data to guide their work. The authors also found that the six training sessions provided throughout the study were not enough: teachers needed regular, consistent support. They recommend a comparative study to get obtain detailed data that looks at teachers' perspectives of training related to students with challenging behavior.

Beaudoin et al. (2017) examined teacher preparation programs through an exploratory survey that measured the frequency of challenging behavior and teacher perception of the type of challenging behavior displayed. Beaudoin et al. recruited 300 preschool teachers for this exploratory survey; only 204 teachers completed the survey. Of the participants, 196 were female and one was male. The majority (64.5%) of their sample reported no prior specialized training in classroom management, and only 12% specified they had received some form of training in challenging behavior. A sum of 74% had prior experience with challenging behavior while 16% had no previous experience with challenging behavior. Items measured include difficulty maintaining attention to tasks, problems in shared play, physical and verbal aggression towards peers, blaming others, and disturbing their work. In the United States, approximately 30% of teacher preparation programs include coursework that specifically identified classroom management in their titles (Beaudoin et al., 2017).

Beaudoin et al. (2017) identified classroom management as an area of concern for new teachers. However, experienced teachers also said that managing challenging student behavior and classroom management was an area in which they needed support. Teachers are evaluated based on how well they can manage challenging classroom behavior; administrators often label a lack of skill in this area as evidence of teacher's ineffectiveness. They concluded that they do not provide strategies to support teachers in the classroom with children who exhibit challenging behaviors.

Ten to 25% of children enter a preschool classroom with behavioral problems; as such, teachers require training to handle classroom challenging behavior. Teachers are

organizers of the physical environment, planners of instructional activities, and managers

of classroom relations and behaviors (Beaudoin et al., 2017). Beaudoin et al. evaluated

teachers' confidence and skills and teachers' perspectives on the support they received.

They identified two types of preferred teacher support: support from other adults within

the school setting and school-based in-service course and support from a specialist.

However, Beaudoin et al. determined that teachers' preferences did not translate to the

actual use of the skills and knowledge provided. Beaudoin et al. recommended further

study on the impact of student gender and challenging behavior and teachers' confidence

in handling difficult situations. They also recommended long-term professional goals for

teachers (Beaudoin et al., 2017).

## Summary and Conclusions

Preschool expulsions and suspensions are adult decisions made because of the

teacher's feelings about whether the resources and supports available to them are

adequate to meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Because preschool attendance is positively correlated to future academic success, there

are important social implications of ensuring preschool teachers are prepared to manage

challenging student behaviors and reduce suspensions (Ehrlich et al., 2018). One of the

teacher's many roles is to support students displaying behaviors they have identified as

challenging. The use of suspension as a consequence of challenging behavior leads to

absenteeism which has a negative impact on a student's future outcome (Adamu &

Hogan, 2015). Absenteeism impacts a student's behavior because the child misses the

opportunity to interact with peers and learn and develop skills that support their social

and emotional development (Gilliam et al., 2016). Preschool is a period of optimal

development, and that students need more than cognitive skills to succeed in school and

beyond. Social-emotional skills are essential to student success (Murano et al., 2020;

Zinsser et al., 2016). Preschool students are still learning and have not acquired the

necessary skills to support their social-emotional development.

Murano et al. (2020) agreed that teachers should be trained, and training should

target specific areas, but they differ in the specific areas in which teachers need training.

Teacher perceptions of student behavior determines teacher response, and this can be

affected by multiple factors (Zinsser et al., 2016). Training for teachers needs to include

professional development in diversity (Hooper & Schweiker, 2020; Yoder & Williford,

2019). In addition to ethnic identity, teachers' descriptions, and response strategies

toward challenging behavior are influenced by their gender and age (Divsar, 2018).

Teachers' personal experiences also affect how they interact and respond to students and

how receptive they are to trainings. Knowles (1977) andragogy postulated that adults'

needs are problem-centered and focused on immediate and direct application, and adults'

motivation to learn is based on internal motivation. Teachers' perception influences their

performance (Knowles, 1977).

Bouberbane (2020) identified a need not only to provide training but also to

provide specific feedback to teachers when they implement practices learned in their

classrooms. Sibanda (2018) stated that a paradigm shift needs to occur to ensure that

learning continues to occur in the preschool classroom by ensuring a proactive response

to managing student behavior. These changes include providing observation and pointers

(Turner 2016); coaching, which provides for one-one coaching and peer-coaching, this is

provided by a colleague (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Johnson et al. 2017; Linder et

al., 2015); modeling (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018); and identifying teachers' needs

based on gender and age (Bosacki, 2015). According to Herman et al. (2020), much

research has been done on students, but none on teachers as they attain the desired goal

and why they utilize a specific strategy. What affects the implementation of strategy

learned, according to Brock and Beaman-Diglia (2018), is still a gray area. To prevent "a

train and hope strategy" in teacher training, direct support should be provided to teachers

and must be effective in enhancing their classroom practice (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2017).

Teachers are provided training not geared towards their identified need, with the hope

that somehow it will support them as they work in the classroom with students. Teachers'

thinking during instruction and how it relates to instructional context needs to be

examined to provide insight into effective professional development (Linder et al., 2015;

Schacter, 2015). This study aims to answer this question by looking at teachers'

perception of what they need and what has been provided.

Teachers' perspective of trainings has a major effect on implementation (Brock &

Beaman-Diglia, 2018). There is minimal information about the specifics of effective

trainings for teachers, and how those trainings equip teachers to deal with challenging

behaviors (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2017), This study explored private preschool teachers'

perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to

children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed

to support students with challenging behaviors. The conceptual framework I utilized for

this study is Knowles' theory of andragogy (1977), which is grounded in the idea that teachers need professional development that is targeted to meet their specific need based on their daily experiences.

This study can lead to social change by drawing attention to the strengths as well as gaps in professional development designed and provided at the state level for local school districts, different early education programs, and also private preschool teachers. This can lead to training that might better equip teachers to prepare preschool students academically for kindergarten and avoid expulsion or suspension from preschool.

In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology used to explore teacher perspectives of professional development related to challenging student behaviors. I also present the research design and research question as well as discuss the role of the researcher. The procedures for data collection and analysis are also addressed. The chapter includes information on trustworthiness, ethical procedure, conformity, and dependability. A qualitative methodology was used to ensure that the researcher's biases did not influence the results and the focus is on the participants' perspectives and not those of the researcher. Open-ended questions were used to provide the participants with an opportunity to share their experiences in their own voice. This also ensured that my perspective did not influence the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Due to exhibiting challenging behaviors, many preschool students who need help are instead suspended or expelled from preschool (Stegelin, 2018). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore private school teachers' perspectives of professional development related to students with challenging behaviors and what resources/professional development they need to support these students. Private schools receive California Department of Education funds as reimbursement for students enrolled in their care through agencies, such as Crystal Stairs, and are subject to all California Department of Education guidelines and the Community Care Licensing Division of the California Department of Social Services.

In this chapter, I outline the methodology used to explore teacher perspectives of professional development related to challenging student behaviors. I also present the research design and research question as well as discuss the role of the researcher. The procedures for data collection and analysis are also addressed. Finally, this chapter includes information on trustworthiness, ethical procedure, conformity, and dependability before concluding with a summary.

**Research Design and Rationale**

Qualitative methodologies are used to understand how people construct meaning and make sense of the world around them by studying the participants in their natural environment (Buckhloder et al, 2016). A qualitative methodology is used to ensure that the researcher's biases do not influence the results and that the focus is on the participants' perspectives and not those of the researcher. For this study, a quantitative or

mixed methodology would not have provided evidence on teacher perspectives because human perspectives are not quantifiable. Surveys and questionnaires would not have provided adequate qualitative data; qualitative experiences are better gathered in a narrative form (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, I used interviews with open-ended questions to provide participants with an opportunity to share their experiences in their own voice. This also ensured that my perspective did not influence the study. Data were analyzed inductively and deductively to establish patterns and themes from the responses collected (see Burkholder et al., 2016).

A research design helps the researcher decide what information they need, how to collect data, and how to analyze data based on a study's research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The research questions for this study were aligned to the setting and used to collect relevant qualitative data in a private preschool setting (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to students with challenging behaviors?

RQ2: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors?

The validity of the research is authenticated by the response of the participants; the results helped answer the epistemological view of how humans form knowledge. Qualitative research seeks to understand everyday life of individuals and share this

information through a narrative in the voices of the people involved (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

## Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is to gather data, present, and analyze collected data as accurately as possible. Data presentation should incorporate the voices of all participants (Buckholder et al., 2016). My role as researcher in this study was to collect data through interviews, interacting positively with the participants in an unbiased way. Maintaining an open mind is an essential component of the research (Buckholder et al., 2016). I currently work in a state-funded preschool program, so to avoid a conflict of interest or bias, I conducted my interviews in a private preschool setting where I do not have any supervisorial relationship with the participants or the school. A summary of final data analysis was shared with participants for review.

## Methodology

I collected data for this study via individual, semistructured interviews with teachers that work in a private preschool school setting in a poor section of a major city in California. Interview questions were open ended and allowed participants to provide experiences, examples, and detailed information. A semistructured interview format provides the opportunity for follow-up questions, which might generate more ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Before the interviews took place, I had colleagues, who are child development professionals, peer review the interview questions to make sure they were unbiased and sufficient to answer the research questions. The interview questions moved from general to specific. Follow-up probes were used for clarification as needed to ensure

accurate representation of teachers' perspectives of the training and support provided and made available to them as well as what they need to support children with challenging behaviors.

Sampling in a qualitative study is smaller than in a quantitative study. The scope and nature of the study determine saturation (Mason, 2010). In a study with homogeneity between participants, saturation can be reached with six participant interviews; this number of data sources can provide enough data to develop themes and interpret results (Mason, 2010). For this study, I used purposive sampling to select seven preschool teachers from six private preschools; however, my original intent was to interview 10 to 15 participants. Data were collected until saturation was reached; the timeframe provided for sample collection was 2 months to ensure participants took part until the end of the research.

**Participant Selection**

In a qualitative study, participant selection is focused on choosing participants who meet a certain criterion (Buckholder et al., 2016). I used purposive sampling to select seven preschool teachers from six private preschools. The criteria for inclusion included working in economically disadvantaged area of a major city in California, an area identified as low income based on the federal income guidelines; being 18 years or older; and having experience working in a classroom with students with challenging behavior. Years of experience working in a preschool setting with students that display challenging behavior years of experience was not a criterion for selection. I wanted

variability of experience because variant levels of experience could have provided variance in responses.

I targeted teachers from surrounding private preschools with similar demographics as potential participants for the study. Preschool center directors were identified and sent letters of invitation via email to request the contact information of potential teacher participants, specifically their email addresses and phone numbers. Identified teachers were contacted via email or phone and were sent an invitation and the consent form with a request to email back a response of "I consent" if they agreed to take part in the study. I also asked identified participants to refer colleagues or friends that might be interested in participating. In this way, snowballing was used to find several participants who met the criteria.

**Instrumentation**

I collected data for this study through individual interviews with participants. Butin (2009) described interview questions as the researcher's one chance to gather data to answer research questions. Twelve semistructured interview questions were developed to address the two research questions; probing questions were also used to clarify the responses of some participants. The interview questions were focused on professional development opportunities the school has offered, provides, or can be accessed by the teachers, teachers' classroom experiences working with challenging behaviors, and their perspectives on professional development specifically related to behavior management. All interviews were recorded using a phone application, tape recorder, or digital recorder. I transcribed all the interviews. For safety reasons and due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

face-to-face interviews were not conducted; instead, interviews were conducted via phone based on the participants' needs.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis involves reflecting on what information is essential to answer the research question in order to draw meaningful conclusions (Saldana, 2016). Grounding my analysis in answering the two research questions helped minimize the influence of my assumptions, positionality, and personal beliefs. I audio recorded and then transcribed the participant interviews. The transcripts were coded based on thematic analysis of the responses using Knowles's andragogy as a framework with which to understand teachers' responses as adult learners. Open coding was based on data collected from responses generated from participants as they answered the interview questions. I reviewed the participants' responses and coded for identified training and teachers' perceptions of what they need to support students with challenging behaviors, identifying commonalities and differences in the data collected. Emerging concepts were coded and categorized, and significant words were coded based on the keywords in the research questions (see Saldana, 2016). Knowledge is generated through the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Buckholder et al., 2016). The results were shared with an expert reviewer to ensure accuracy of reporting and that no bias was present. The findings were also shared with participants (i.e., member checking). This ensured the validity of the analysis and eliminated researcher bias.

**Trustworthiness**

The purpose of the study and its design support the method of data collection the researcher chooses, which lends itself to trustworthiness of the result (Buckholder et al., 2016). Trustworthiness is based on dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the research; these elements form the foundation for the reliability of a study (Buckholder et al., 2016). Validity and reliability are essential components of good qualitative research, and any researcher's main concern is designing a study, analyzing results, and judging the quality of the study (Patton, 2015).

I took steps to ensure internal validity of the results of this study. Qualitative research is subjective, but consistency of data can be achieved by an examination of relevant data (Patton, 2015). To ensure quality and reliability in this study, appropriate strategies was applied to make sure the process was aligned with the research method by utilizing a consistent data collection method. This involved asking the same interview questions of each participant. The questions were reviewed by a peer for clarity before any of the interviews took place. The ethical recruiting of participants entailed recruiting only individuals who met the recruitment criteria. The sample size included seven participants 18 years old and older who had worked or were currently working in a private school setting in a classroom with a student or students with challenging behavior.

I ensured credibility by asking 12 interview questions that had been peer reviewed for clarity before the interviews took place to make sure the participants' responses would answer the research questions. An expert reviewer, a peer with academic knowledge and experience in early childhood education, reviewed the final findings and

checked for bias. Qualitative research is open to researcher bias because no two individuals are the same and, thus, cannot describe an observation in the same way. I conducted member checking through sending a summary of data analysis to participants for accuracy.

Transferability ensures that the findings are applicable to other contexts, situations, and times (Buckholder et al., 2016). I achieved transferability in this study through providing a thick description of participant responses and settings with quotes. It is up to the reader to determine transferability of information presented and decide on how to utilize the data.

Confirmability ensures that another researcher utilizing the same procedures will arrive at the same conclusion (Buckholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2012). This was achieved in the current study by addressing my bias as the researcher, verifying all interview responses with the participants, and removing myself from the findings. I used an audit trail during data collection, analysis, and interpretation to remove any researcher bias and reveal my thinking process. Reflexivity was evident through a transparent presentation of data and declaration of researcher bias as it may apply during the reporting of findings. I also used a reflective journal to document my reflections during interviews and data analyses and reflect participant responses and my views and observations.

Dependability refers to the use of uniform procedures to reduce researcher bias (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The data collection process in the current study was uniform, and interviews were supplemented with follow-up probes when needed to clarify participant

responses. A expert reviewer reviewed the findings, checked for bias and expectations, and ensured that responses were genuine and not influenced by what I expected to hear and that the data matches the findings. Participant interviews were used to validate findings.

## Ethical Procedures

Ethical decisions are context related; they guide the work and protect participants (Buckholder et al., 2016). I received Walden University Institutional Review Board approval before any data were collected. Vulnerable populations were not a part of this study, and pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities. The study was conducted at school settings different from my work location, and I had no connection to the staff at the schools.

When first contacting participating school administrators and teachers, I presented each participant with an informed consent form that provided a brief review of the scope and purpose of the study. The informed consent form also provided information on rights of participants. Participation was voluntary and individuals had a right to stop participating at any time. Furthermore, I kept participants' information confidential and treated them with respect (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To maintain confidentiality of the data, I am the only person with access to the data (in the form of the audio recorded and transcribed responses). Data collected are stored in a locked, filing cabinet and will be destroyed after 5 years by shredding or deleting them from my computer. Digital data are stored in a personal computer that is password protected.

**Summary**

As challenging behavior and student suspension continues to be an issue at preschools across the United States, it is becoming increasingly important for scholars, educators, and school administrators to understand the kinds of professional development that can effectively support teachers by determining teachers' perspectives of professional development and their need for support as they work with students with challenging behavior. In this chapter, I reviewed the research design, methodology, role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. The detailed procedures outlined in this chapter guided my collection of data to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 focuses on the presentation of the results: I describe the setting, the data collection process, data analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of private school teachers related to students with challenging behaviors and what resources or professional development approaches are needed to support these students. It is important to consider teachers' perspectives of professional development because these perspectives influence the way they address challenging behaviors in the classroom. Well-designed professional development opportunities create a foundation on which teachers can effectively work with students with challenging behaviors (Lauermann & Konig, 2016). The classroom experiences of teachers must be understood to effectively describe this phenomenon. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to students with challenging behaviors?

RQ2: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors?

This chapter includes a review of the setting, data collection process, data analysis, a presentation of the results, and evidence of the trustworthiness of the process. The chapter ends with a summary and transition to Chapter 5.

**Setting**

I purposively collected data from seven participants who currently worked or had worked in a private school setting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face contact

with participants was not possible. All contact with the research participants was made via telephone and email. The inclusion criteria for participants were (a) be 18 years old or older, (b) be preschool teachers who have had experience teaching students with challenging behaviors, and (c) have worked or currently work in a private preschool setting. I originally identified snowballing as an alternate data collection method, but due to school closures and the inability to get directors' participation, snowballing became the major form of data collection and was used to identify all participants. The schools contacted were closed, so communication with preschool directors was not possible.

All participants have worked or currently worked at six different preschool programs. I sent potential participants a letter of invitation via text or email. After the participants who were contacted via text responded with their email information, they were then emailed the consent forms. Once participants gave their participation consent, a date and time was set for a telephone interview. I initially scheduled interviews with 10 participants; however, three participants declined at the last minute and did not answer the scheduled phone call.

I began the interview by asking participants about their years of experience and how many students with challenging behavior they were working with currently or had in the past. The question established their length of experience and how that might influence their response regarding RQ1. The experiences ranged from 5–21 years. Each participant had worked with two to 24 students with challenging behavior during their career (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics and Number of Students With Challenging Behavior*

| Participant | Years of experience | Number of students with challenging behavior encountered |
| --- | --- | --- |
| P1 | 20 years | "…10 or like 10+" (during career) |
| P2 | 9 years | "…three or four in the school year brings it to 23/24 students" (during career) |
| P3 | 21 years | "…about two to three students at a time. About 15" (during career) |
| P4 | 20 years | "…Over, the course of five years. I've had two" |
| P5 | 13 years | "… I've had about three students" (per year) |
| P6 | 5 years | "…about two or more in a classroom" (per year) |
| P7 | 11 years | "…We have three children with challenging behavior" (this year) |

## Data Collection

I started data collection after receiving Walden University Institutional Review

Board approval (Approval No. 11-25-20-0981629**)** in November 2020. Data were

collected between November and December 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic as of

the writing of this dissertation, many schools were closed and those partially open were

shutting back down for the winter break. The original plan was to work with directors of

three to four preschools by sending letters informing them of the study to obtain 10–15

participants. The directors that the letters were sent to were not able to share this information with their teachers due to the current health pandemic and the closure of schools. Snowballing was supposed to be an alternate data collection method, but it became the major form of data collection. Through snowballing, I was able to identify seven participants from six different private schools. Two participants were from the same private school. Data saturation was reached as the responses from the participants started to reveal repetition and redundancy (see Thomas, 2017, p. 324).

I used 12 semistructured interview questions (see Appendix B) to collect data from the participants and answer both research questions. For a semistructured interview to be successful, an interview protocol is required to ensure consistency and allow for predesigned follow-up questions and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The probes help to manage the conversation and elicit details (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Thomas, 2017). The participants were informed of their rights as participants, the confidentiality of their responses, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Following the interviews, I sent a thank you note to each participant for taking part in the study.

**Data Analysis**

Open coding was based on the responses gathered from participants as they answered the interview questions. I grouped together all responses for each interview question and then sorted them based on the two research questions. The core aspect of analyzing the data was to identify concepts, themes, and examples (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The data analysis involved reflecting on the information essential to answering the

research questions and drawing meaningful conclusions (see Saldana, 2016). I reviewed

and coded the responses for teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional

development related to children with challenging behaviors. Commonalities and

differences in the data collected were identified through this process. The data were

coded and categorized, with significant words being coded based on the keywords in the

research questions, the conceptual framework, and the teachers' perspectives on past or

existing professional development opportunities related to students with challenging

behaviors (see Saldana, 2016).

For RQ1, teachers began by describing the challenges faced when working with

students with challenging behavior. They further described their perception of

professional development they attended and why they attended those professional

development. To answer RQ1, two themes emerged.

**Theme 1 RQ1**

Concerning RQ1, the following (see Appendix E for examples of codes) codes

emerged: (a) teachers' lack of information on children's medical and psychological

diagnoses, (b) teachers' feeling of helplessness when dealing with challenging behaviors,

(c) parents and therapists as resource providers, (d) students' inability to communicate

caused challenging behaviors, and (e) students' challenging behavior disrupt the

classroom environment. These were merged to form Category 1: Teachers' experiences

and descriptions of challenging behaviors.

Codes for the second category were focused specifically on professional

development opportunities: (a) limited or no professional development provided by the

school, (b) available professional development opportunities at the school disconnected to the teacher and classroom needs, (c) teachers search outside of school for professional development due to challenging behavior, and (d) lack of administrator support affects application of learning/feeling unsupported. These were merged to form Category 2: Why teachers seek professional development and resources.

The two categories above combined to form Theme 1 for RQ1: Teachers' lack of knowledge and information on how to manage challenging behavior is a motivation to seek help.

## Theme 2 RQ1

The second theme related to the teacher perspectives of the professional development they found outside the school setting. The challenges in the classroom described in the results caused teachers to look for specific training directly related to the issues they were having. These codes are (a) the results of professional development teachers sought and engaged in outside the school and (b) the benefits they believed these trainings gave them. These codes were combined to form Category 1: Types of professional development.

The participants believed the professional development they engaged in provided: (a) strategies for immediate use in their classrooms, (b) strategies for planning and engaging students in activities, (c) opportunity for self-reflection, and (d) useful information on changing classroom environment. These codes combined for Category 2: Application of new learning based on need. The above categories combined to form Theme 2 for RQ1: Adult learners attend professional development based on their needs.

**Theme 1 RQ2**

RQ2 focused on professional development and resources teachers felt that they needed and believed were important to support teachers and students with challenging behaviors in the classroom. It should be noted that despite an interview question regarding resources, the results show teachers desired professional development. The codes related to this theme were that teachers: (a) wanted observable outcomes of training in classroom, (b) desired ongoing training by specialists, (c) wanted experiences that lead to positive change in teacher practices and changes in behavior, and (d) desired opportunities to reflect and rethink on training. These were merged for Category 1: Teachers' perspectives of professional development experiences that support teachers in the classroom.

The following codes emerged for the second category and specifically related to what resources and training the participants believed were needed to help them support students with challenging behavior: (a) desire for professional development on positive communication methods when discussing challenging behaviors with parents; (b) desire for psychologist/specialist to work with teachers to support students; (c) desire for hands-on opportunity during training; (d) desire to gain knowledge of students' culture(s); (e) desire for focused training on behavior management, social-emotional learning, sensitivity training, and classroom management; and (f) desired opportunities to observe and work with other teachers. These combined for Category 2: Types of professional development that would benefit teachers.

The two categories above combined for RQ2 Theme 1: Teachers desire professional development directly related to and focused on students with challenging behaviors.

The themes emerged based on thematic analysis of the responses using Knowles's andragogy as a conceptual lens with which to understand teachers' responses as adult learners. The results were shared with an expert reviewer to ensure the accuracy of reporting devoid of bias. A summary of final findings was also shared with participants (i.e., member checking) to ensure the validity of the analysis and eliminate researcher bias.

Participant responses were consistent, but I found a few outliers. These discrepant data were included to identify the variance from other participants' responses. According to Saldana (2016), discrepant cases motivate researchers to rethink codes and categories and help to make a more thorough argument, which leads to a closer examination of the data, making the findings more trustworthy.

## Results

In the section below, I utilize the categories and themes in presenting the results for research questions 1 and 2 based on responses from interviews conducted.

### RQ1 Findings

To answer the first research question that addresses teachers' perception of professional developments they have been provided in the present or past, it is important to note why teachers reach out for help and what they hope to accomplish when they reach out for support. These two themes were revealed which answered RQ1: What are

private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to students with challenging behaviors?

***Theme 1: Teacher Lack of Knowledge and Information on How to Manage Challenging Behavior as a Motivation to Seek Help***

In response to the interview question dealing with challenging behaviors, all the teachers described challenging behaviors as behaviors that hinder students learning and can be disruptive to the classroom environment. They included behaviors such as aggression, impulsivity, and behaviors that interfere with a student's full play experience. They also were quick to point out that it is not a student being bad. P3 said:

Challenging behavior could be something different for each professional. Some teachers might say a behavior is challenging when they are bad. Well, that is not true. Challenging behaviors are not that, we have to pay attention to the language we're using.

P1 described it as "behaviors that interrupt student learning and the playtime. So it detours their learning time and also cut the full play experience" and P5 described it as behaviors that "interferes with a child's learning." Only P7 mentioned a student with diagnosed medical needs can be labeled as a student with challenging behavior, and her definition was different from the definition provided by other teachers:

For me, a preschooler with challenging behavior is a child with a condition such as mild autism or other medical conditions. For me, children that have no known conditions are not children with challenging behaviors, they are simply children that require consistency and guidance.

Teachers described their experience working with students with challenging behaviors and the support they received from their different schools and stakeholders. Due to limited information about students from parents and school due to privacy concerns and teachers' lack information on children's medical and psychological diagnoses, they made assumptions regarding the cause of student behavior. This added to their apprehension of how to handle student behavior. P4 stated, "I believe he was on some medication which affected his behavior, so that was a very challenging time for me." P3 stated, "Disclosure on the child's behavioral patterns depended on the parents and they would most likely opt for private therapy or private services."

As new teachers, participants related they had a hard time getting used to the experience and coming up with a plan to work with students that display challenging behaviors; the teachers felt helpless. P5 stated, "When I first started teaching preschool, I have to admit, it was a bit overwhelming. Not having the proper training made it very difficult when it came down to dealing with challenging behavior." They described their experience with children with challenging behavior as hard and overwhelming and had to learn how to adjust to the situation and seek out help. All participants shared their experience as new teachers and discussed encountering challenging behaviors. They described aggressive and disruptive behaviors in their classroom and feeling unprepared to handle such behaviors, P4 stated, "I didn't have somebody, you know, telling me what to look for." P6 stated that the student behaviors were "...making my teaching harder. It was always a challenge to be able to teach and take care of the behavior of the other child." They also identified challenging student behaviors from younger students who

sometimes are unable to verbalize their needs. P2 stated, "I would have students who would have violent tantrums because they do not feel comfortable using their words." P1 stated, "The most challenging one was a child a little over three years old with limited speech. Others were behavioral problems like spitting, hitting, biting." They were also concerned with being held responsible for the safety of other students in the class, as described by P5, who witnessed a student stab another preschooler with a pencil, stated, "One time, he had just sharpened his pencil; he sat down. Just when we were about to start to do work, he stabbed the child sitting next to him with the sharpened pencil."

Teachers sought support from within the school to handle challenging behavior. They found limited or no professional development within their school setting to support them. According to Knowles (1977), adults' needs are problem centered. Five of the seven teacher participants, P1, P3, P4, P5, and P6, stated that they did not get any form of training from their schools on challenging behavior. P1 stated:

As a private school teacher, it's like we are left alone without support. I mean, dealing with those children with behavioral problems was not part of my training. Whatever I did to help me deal with all those situations challenging was out of my own volition. So, I did some research and networked with other teachers and attended a few personal development programs (outside the school).

P5 shared that:

The students did have therapists that would come in and work with them and after they would work with them, they would also coach the teacher on things that we

can do to encourage them, to become or to participate more or certain strategies

and techniques depending on the child.

P3 further stated, "The only thing was that they would receive private therapy or private

services, um, paid for by the parent." This occurred only for students whose parents were

paying for the services and was geared towards meeting the need of that particular

student. P7 reported that even though professional development was not provided by the

school, they had access to an optional professional development provided by an outside

agency.

One participant reported getting professional development that was offered twice

a month. P2 stated:

We would have meetings at the beginning and end of the month, and we would be

asked and offered help where we needed it the most. One of our biggest concerns

was behavior or classroom management. They (participant unsure of who

sponsored the training) showed videos or go over scenarios that could possibly

have been in the childcare school.

The training provided, according to P2, also involved acting out the scenario and coming

up with strategies that might be utilized in the classroom. She felt this training was not

directly related to her needs and was ineffective, overall. Five of the participants sought

outside professional development for multiple reasons such as a need to support the

students and families, as well as for their own professional growth. According to P3, she

did not want to be the teacher "…always crying out for help." Other participants echoed

this sentiment as well. Professional development programs outside the school they

attended included ones that addressed behavior management, classroom management, nurturing children's self-esteem, working with parents, and childcare. This professional development came from external organizations that supported families and children, early childhood organizations such as the NAEYC and online resources; all these were sought out by the teachers, themselves. P3 indicated she had to join NAEYC and started taking classes because she felt she was left alone. P3 stated:

> When I was working there, it was more on your own, so it was a more do it yourself. Try to see, ways to find professional development. So what I did is I seeked (sic) out membership with NAEYC. So, basically, being a member of the National Childhood Education for Young Children, I was able to receive, like, free resources, which are article, I also receive, like, you know, for conferences.

P1 stated, "I did research and networked with other teachers and attended professional development, offered by (Names Company)."

The teachers reported that administrator and parent support is crucial for a teacher's success in the classroom. P4 stated:

> You need the support of the administration. You need to have a, uh, like I stated professional development workshops, uh, where you can, uh, learn different techniques…the parents need to be aware of the child's behavior. So, you need to have a parent interaction and feedback as well.

P4 did not get any professional development from the school and did not go out to seek outside support:

> Well, I think we should have some type of workshops or training for behavioral
>
> issues within the classroom and how to deal with them, but nothing was offered. I
>
> do not know if they were trying to minimize costs. As a new teacher for a private
>
> school, I basically just did everything hands-on.

The students that were disruptive were removed from the classroom; according to P4, "I

spoke with the parents. I brought it up to the attention of the principal, the student would

have to be taken out of the classroom because I could not manage it. That's the only

measures they took."

### *Theme 2: Adult Learners Attend Professional Development Based on Their Need*

The theme adult learners attend professional development based on their needs

resulted from data collect to answer RQ1. This theme focuses on teachers' perceptions of

professional development they have engaged in outside the school setting in the present

or past. The interview questions and responses focused on the types of professional

development the teachers participated in, its application, and the effectiveness of the new

and applied strategies.

Teachers were asked directly about their perspectives of effective professional

development and their personal experience with professional development. P6 declared,

"I believe in getting more help and learning from others." The teachers reported the

following benefits from the professional development and training they attended outside

their school setting; according to P3, P4, P5, P7, P6, and P1 they found the professional

development they found themselves helpful. P3 stated, "It was very helpful because I was

able to learn how to focus on my classroom setting and how to make it better for my situation."

P1 described professional development as "…an opportunity to learn and acquire new skills" that should have a "…trickle-down effect from the facilitator to the participants and to the students." P1 stated, "The new skills learned must be reflected in the classroom, students' learning and achievement will increase because teachers apply the skills they have learned." P6 stated, "They have provided some strategies that I can use in my classroom. Such as redirecting, having a plan, daily routines, and how to check the environment." P5 stated, "I continue my professional development growth because there is always something new to learn. Professional development for teachers in dealing with children and challenging behaviors should be a recurring practice." P5 and P3 both emphasized that professional development should be recurring.

The participants believed they learned strategies they could utilize right away such as redirecting, having a plan, daily routines, checking the environment, making modifications as a teacher, and how to self-reflect. They shared different examples of how they utilized these strategies in their classrooms. The key point from the teachers was the importance of application of the strategies they learned. P6 shared the following:

If a child is crying because another child has taken their toy, I would return the toy to the child and show another toy to the child explaining how they can play with that. Now they will think that their toy is better and cooler.

P3 learned how to provide leadership opportunities for all students without singling out the students with challenging behavior by creating a leader chart. P3 said:

So, every week I would choose the leader and I let him know that he was going to

be the first leader I was going to choose. So, in that way, the other students didn't

feel like oh, well, why does he get to do it?

P3's assigned tasks included line leader, costume helper, and classroom leader. P3

shared that during Storytime, "He (disruptive child) was able to sit next to me, turn the

pages, and then when his week was over, he picked the next leader, and he was assigned

a new task." P5 took it a step further by adding, "We also need to be aware of our own

triggers." They also learned how to reflect on their own behaviors in the classroom. P1

stated, "So I think professional development helped me realize my triggers and I apply it

when I'm teaching."

The participants shared strategies that worked for them such as engaging activities

and learning how to plan for interventions for their classroom. P1 described how she

learned to plan "…on a weekly basis, we sit down and work out plans, and activities and

strategies on how to engage this child, to meet him where he was and also to intervene

before it escalates." P5, P4, P6, and P1 reported that participating in professional

development away from their school setting gave them strategies and techniques to

support children with challenging behavior. They learned how to better understand why a

child behaves in a certain way and how to help these children when they are in school. At

the core of all these strategies is support for student learning. According to P6,

"Children's attention span is short. I try to do new activities as much as possible and keep

them busy." P3 shared, "I just want him to listen to me or her to listen to me. It's about

them building those relationships and that bond with other peers."

The success of these strategies was based on application that started with the teacher's abilities to reflect on their practice. According to P1, professional development should provide teachers the opportunity to "…help me to look at my classroom a second time to see if there are changes that I need to make. This leads to change in practice for teachers." P1 stated, "For anything to be successful, it has to be thought out." P1 compared the application of professional development strategies to troubleshooting by looking at the classroom environment. P1 stated, "Troubleshoot first to see if we have the same behavior that the child is exhibiting." P2, P3, P5, and P1 learned how to reexamine the classroom environment. P2shared that, "Behavior wise, it's the environment or the classroom set up that sometimes does not look like a learning environment. Teachers have to be ready to deescalate negative behavior." The teachers learned this by studying what happens before, during, and after a negative behavior. They emphasized that it should not be about punishment for students.

Supporting students included changing the classroom environment to meet the students' needs and anticipating behaviors that might occur due to the classroom environment not being set up with the goal of student success at the core. P1 stated, "We have to expect some changes in our classroom environment to help accommodate him (student)." According to P2, a "warm environment" is safe for students. This includes teachers' tone and modeling of appropriate behaviors, which leads to creating a positive environment and positive behavior.

P5 echoed the same point about looking at "…our classroom environment and schedule. I have learned that these areas should be planned so that they meet the

developmental needs of the children in the classroom." The teachers also noted the need

to see if the play period is long enough, and if there are enough materials in the centers

and if the materials match the needs and interests of children. In addition, stated P5,

placing a picture schedule in the classroom was recommended "…because not only will

children know what happens throughout the day, but it gives the children an idea of what

happens next in a visual format." According to the teachers, the physical environment can

make or break the behavior of your children. Many of the strategies learned were from

attending professional development outside of work.

Another issue that the teachers talked about was the cost of professional

development. Some were reimbursed for part of the cost they incurred. P7 described the

professional development from the county:

> The state mentor program that I am a member of pays for the training. There are
>
> other trainings that I have attended that I have had to bear the cost. I attended
>
> some workshops at the NAEYC Convention 2 years ago, then I attended some
>
> workshops at the CAEYC Convention last year.

P3 also reported attending NAEYC trainings and conferences paying out of pocket and

being partially reimbursed by the school,

> So, basically, being a member of the national childhood education for young
>
> children, I was able to receive, like, free resources like articles and was also able
>
> to attend national conferences which I would have to pay for but would be later
>
> reimbursed.

P1 stated, "This school I'm working for I didn't get help from them," implying that she did not get reimbursed for any training or professional development she attended.

**RQ2 Findings**

To answer RQ2, the following categories were identified; (a) Teacher perspectives of professional development experiences that support teachers and (b) types of professional development opportunities that benefit teachers These combined for the theme professional development desired by teachers directly related to and focused on students with challenging behaviors. This section starts with looking at the professional experiences' teachers have had and moves on to identify what they need to support them in the classroom.

RQ2: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on the professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors?

RQ2 addresses teachers' perspectives on what they need to support them as they work with students with challenging behaviors. They identified experiences that support them in the classroom based on their experiences and the ease of application as an important consideration. In response to the question, "Please describe your own professional development experience concerning working with children with challenging behaviors?" the following description was provided regarding professional development sessions that teachers attended outside of work to support them with students with challenging behavior.

The teachers described taking classes as well as attending professional development and behavioral courses to help them learn how to work with challenging

behaviors. It also involved applying experiences and having observable outcomes in the classroom, Professional development focused on developing observational skills to help identify triggers for students. According to P7, looking at the bigger picture involves:

…modifying my lessons and other areas in the classroom. It also involves paying attention to the triggers in the classroom. Even how the toys are set up is also important. Determining the materials to have that supports both students with or without challenging behaviors is also vital.

The teachers also desired ongoing training by a specialist with experience working with students with challenging behavior, P3 shared, "More contact with an actual specialist like behavioral specialists/professionals would be an advantage in supporting students with special abilities or disabilities." P3 pointed to strategies that they found ineffective such as the suggestion, "Get to the child's level or try to calm them down. You do that in the classroom and the kid might hit you or something, sometimes it works and other times it does not work." The teachers P3, P4, and P6 shared skepticism with the support that does not come from experience.

They also identified that a change in teacher practices and improvements in students' learning outcomes should be the goal of all resources and support provided. P4 insisted that support should come from experience, and "...would need to come from someone who has actually gotten results from trial and error and not from someone's theory."

The teachers identified a need for an opportunity to reflect, rethink, and act on new practices. According to P1, "When I reflect rethink, and act on my own practices, it

gives me a sense of accomplishment." P6 sums up the feeling she thinks teachers should have after professional development, "…reassuring me that I am not alone and that they will provide any kind of help or answers I may need is satisfying."

The teachers identified the types of professional development that would benefit them. Due to their experience in working with students with challenging behaviors, the participants identified different strategies that will better support them as they continue to work with students with challenging behaviors. P1 identified a need for professional development for both teachers and parents by sharing:

> More professional development workshops, both for me and then maybe parent
> class for parents, parent education. So that's when we as teachers work with them.
> We will be on the same page and help reinforce the same strategies at home.

Support from outside professionals such as psychologists and therapists are also identified as a helpful resource that will support teachers, P2 stated,

> We need psychologists, we need maybe one on one in the classrooms, to shadow
> the children, even someone who can shadow the teacher as well in the classroom,
> even help guide us when we are dealing with certain students or certain situations
> a lot of hands-on.

P3 and P2 referenced understanding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) document, P3 stated "...becoming more familiar with the IEPs because they do come into your classroom." The participants also mentioned desiring collaborative professional development for general education teachers and teachers who work with students that have disabilities or have behavioral concerns. P4 and P5 identified a need to provide

training regarding behavioral issues within the classroom. Professional development that taught them strategies on how to deal with challenging behaviors, P5 recommended strategies such as, "...effective leadership, age-appropriate curriculum, and physical environment." P6 identified a need to include training on how to address challenging behavior with the other students in the classroom, such as "…how to properly deal with children with challenging behavior and not have any influence on the other children."

P2 and P3 emphasized a need for hands on opportunities when it comes to trainings and professional development for teachers. P2 stated, "We need psychologists…to help guide us in when we are dealing with certain students or certain situation. A lot of hands on." P3 emphasized, "...not so much materials, but in terms of more hands on with actual like [sic] scenarios."

P6 identified parents as helpers. P3 emphasized the importance of understanding the parents and knowing their culture to ensure effective communication with them by adding:

> The support from parents includes an awareness of their unique culture to ensure effective communication. Becoming familiar with the culture of students with challenging behavior and becoming familiar with the vocabularies to address the parents. And how do we speak? You know, professional resources. How do we identify what professional resources we're going to recommend for parents?

Teachers also identified the following as types of professional development categories that will benefit them and why they feel these will benefit them. These are behavior management and social-emotional support professional development where they can

learn strategies that they can apply to their classroom. The teachers identified the need for the provision of this training at the beginning of their teaching career before they encounter challenging behavior. P1 identified, "…behavioral management techniques and how to de-escalate behavior problems in a classroom and strategies on how to help children get adjusted in a classroom."

Classroom management and sensitivity training was another professional development identified by teachers. P2 described it this way:

> …classroom management…classes and how to have a positive environment sensitivity training…teachers need a sensitivity course to either refresh or to have a little bit of experience dealing with students with different behavior needs because again every child is different so maybe a course about sensitivity. This includes using the right vocabulary when working with students.

Having resources such as social-emotional stories to support both teachers and student was also identified. P2 suggested that:

> Programs that promote social and emotional competency, like social-emotional support in the classroom…like the second step program or Sanford harmony program, Programs that promote you know positive behavior, promotes talking to the children, not talking at them but talking to them. More literature, more books in the classroom or in the program that talks about hands are not for hitting, teeth are not for biting. Literature that is encouraging positive behavior and what else? There's a lot of other stuff.

P5 reiterated learning how to use developmentally appropriate books with updated

textbooks with new strategies and introducing technology that would help students with

challenging behavior.

Peer coaching is also identified as a resource. This included the opportunity to

observe other teachers and learn different communication skills needed to support

students P6 states, "Any resources from teachers with many years of experience can

help." All the participants affirmed that peer coaching is a key form of support that

teachers need as they work with challenging behavior. P3 pointed to:

> Any resources that have to do with communication and then also resources in
>
> terms of like educational resources, not so many materials, but in terms of more
>
> hands-on with actual like scenarios and actually going to, doing. Much like
>
> fieldwork…Going to real-life settings, visiting other schools, sharing, discussing
>
> with colleagues, collaborating with other professionals.

P2 suggested that, "Instead of oh textbooks stuff, this is what you are going to see or this

is what might happen. We need someone in the field that is in the classroom as well."

Discrepant data identified were related to unorthodox methods not found in the

literature.  These came out when the interview question related to influence of

professional development on practices when dealing with challenging behavior. P7

stated:

> An example of an unorthodox method that I experienced in a workshop was,
>
> when a child was falling out on the floor being disruptive. The experience was, I
>
> got on the floor and started rolling around being noisy with the child; the child

stopped and was looking at me in disbelief. The behavior stopped. My

professional development experience has helped me create a different classroom

environment. I have calming essential oils burning along with soft concert music

playing. This makes a difference in all the children's behavior.

P3 described the recommendation of a therapist of getting down to the child's level,

which leads to teachers being hit by students.

I would say 50-50 but sometimes they would give us a realistic scenarios so every

time was different, if we had a child that was hitting are biting and sometimes the

people who were giving the presentation will give us a scenario that we couldn't

relate to or we would say oh that doesn't relate to me and my students in my

classroom it would be better if they were in the classroom and they can observe

the child and then they can give us feedback on how we can help the child versus

like oh a general strategy everything doesn't always work with certain students,

So sometimes they would say or do this or like get to the child's level try to calm

them down and you do that in the classroom and the kid might hit you or

something, sometimes it works sometimes it didn't work

P2 described what she calls a "silent tantrum"

…yeah, I had students that would hit or bite kick again like some students would

just throw a silent tantrum…so like if you tell a child to do something, they won't

say no but they will just be stiff with their body or sit on the floor or sit in the

chair and they won't say no they will ignore you so they wouldn't cooperate

physically or verbally.

None of these practices, nor the term "silent tantrum," were found in the literature reviewed. This is important to note because it draws attention to the quality of professional development the teachers received to support them with students with challenging behaviors. The teachers identified a need to have professionals experienced in handling challenging behaviors support them in the classroom.

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study the following criteria guided my work, dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. The credibility of the data is evidenced by using 12 interview questions that were reviewed by my peers for clarity to ensure it answered the research questions and accurately depict the experiences of the participants through thick description and member checking (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study purpose and design supported the method of data collection the researcher choose which lends itself to the trustworthiness of the result (see Buckholder et al., 2016). Internal validity and credibility were ensured by utilizing the same questions with each participant and analyzing responses based on all collected data. Collected data were sent to an expert reviewer to review and ensure accurate documentation of data collected. Ethical recruiting of participants entailed recruiting only individuals who met the recruitment criteria, seven participants who have worked or are currently working in a private school setting in a classroom with a student with challenging behavior and 18 years and above were interviewed.

Transferability ensures that the findings apply to other contexts, situations, and time. This is achieved through a thick description of participant responses and settings

with quotes. The reader is able to determine the transferability of information presented

and decide on how to utilize the data. The participants were from six different private

preschool programs, with different experiences. The years of teaching experience were

also varied providing a unique perspective in their responses to the questions. The seven

participants were all female from the same socioeconomic background, middle-income

families.

Dependability refers to the use of uniform procedures to reduce researcher bias

(see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure dependability, semistructured interview questions

were used, and probing questions were asked for clarification. The first set of questions

were to find out how they describe challenging behavior to gain insight into their

experiences. The other questions focused on their perspectives of professional

development they have attended and the types of professional development that might

support them as they continue to work with students with challenging behavior. Interview

findings were shared with an expert reviewer. This is to ensure that responses are genuine

and not influenced by what I expect to hear, and that the data matches the findings.

Member checking was used to validate the findings.

To ensure confirmability that another researcher utilizing the same procedures

will arrive at the same conclusion (see Buckholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2012), I

addressed my bias by verifying all responses with participants and removing myself from

the findings by using a reflective journal, a two-page draft of the findings was sent to

participants. A reflective journal was used to document my thoughts and information

regarding the data collection, or the interview process, and it documented participant

responses and my views and observation. Probing questions were asked to fully document the participants' views. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Each participant's words were used to document results, codes were generated and used to create an outline. From the codes, categories were generated, and finally themes. The research questions and the conceptual framework were a guide in identifying the codes in the responses. Commonalities and differences were also noted, discrepant data were included to provide opposing views.

## Summary

Teachers' perspective of training has a major effect on implementation (see Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). This study draws attention to the strengths as well as gaps in professional development designed and provided to teachers related to students with challenging behaviors and what resources/professional development they need to support these students. These three themes were utilized to answer the two research questions: (a) teacher lack of knowledge and information on how to manage challenging behavior is a motivation to seek help, (b) adult learners attend professional development based on their need, and (c) teachers desire professional development directly related to and focused on students with challenging behaviors. The research questions: what are private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to students with challenging behaviors, and what are private preschool teachers' perspectives on the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. There were aimed at identifying the teacher's perspective of professional development they have received and what type of professional development

will support them as they work with students with challenging behavior. The teacher responses revealed their experiences as beginning teachers, factors that motivated them to seek professional development, the skills they learned that they perceived effectively supported them in the classroom and they also identified the types of professional development that will support them in the classroom.

The purpose of this study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. The results shed light on the teacher's perspective on the professional development experiences available to them. They also provided information on the types of professional development that will benefit them as they work with students with challenging behavior. Data were collected and analyzed based on the described methodology in chapter three.

Chapter 5 focuses on an in-depth discussion of the results; I interpret the findings based on the conceptual framework and peer-reviewed articles from the literature. This is followed by a review and description of the limitation of the study. I also provide a recommendation for further research, and implication of the study and social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. The findings provide insight into the types of professional development teachers receive and what they need to support them as they work with students with challenging behaviors. With appropriate teacher support, students can receive the help they need without being suspended or pushed out of the preschool classroom (Malik, 2016).

I identified three themes in answering the two research questions: (a) teacher lack of knowledge and information on how to manage challenging behavior is a motivation to seek help, (b) adult learners attend professional development based on their needs, and (c) teachers desire professional development directly related to and focused on students with challenging behaviors.

In answering RQ1, I identified teachers' definition of challenging behavior and having a common understanding of the behavior being addressed ensures that teachers are looking at the same behaviors. The results showed that (a) teacher experiences with challenging behavior in the classroom, (b) teachers' lack of experience, (c) teachers' feeling of helplessness, (d) limited or no professional development provided at the school site, and (e) available professional development opportunities at the school were disconnected to the teacher and classroom needs were motivation for them to go out and

seek professional development outside their schools. For five of the participants, no professional development or training was provided at their school.

Concerning the second theme, the results revealed the professional development sought outside the school by teachers as well as the benefits they believed these trainings gave them. The benefits they identified included having the ability to use strategies immediately in the classroom, providing them with engaging activities to use in their classroom, and providing information to change their classroom environment. These benefits were visible to the teachers in their classroom.

Pertaining to the third theme, the results revealed the professional development teachers felt they needed and believed were important to support them with challenging behavior in the classroom. They shared their professional development experiences and what they perceived as professional development that will help them in the classroom. They desired observable outcomes of training in the classroom, ongoing training from a specialist, experiences that lead to positive change in teacher practices, and an opportunity to reflect and rethink trainings. They also identified the following trainings as professional development opportunities they would desire: (a) professional development that provides positive communication methods when discussing challenging behaviors with parents; (b) a psychologist/specialist to work with teachers to support students; (c) hands-on opportunity during training; (d) to gain knowledge of students' culture(s); (e) focused training on behavior management, social-emotional learning, sensitivity training, and classroom management; and (f) opportunities to observe and work with other teachers.

**Interpretation of the Findings**

I interpreted the findings based on the conceptual framework and peer-reviewed articles from the literature review. A thematic review of the literature was conducted based on identified themes in the review of the results from data collected.

**Conceptual Framework**

I used Knowles's (1977) theory of andragogy as the conceptual framework for this study. Andragogy is described as an adult learning style and the art and science of teaching adults. Adult learning is focused on five assumptions: (a) adults are independent and can direct their knowledge, (b) adults' motivation to learn is based on internal motivation, (c) an adult has experiences that are a source of learning, (d) adults' needs are problem centered and focused on immediate and direct application, and (e) adults have changing needs based on their current role in society.

Regarding Knowles's (1977) first assumption, the teacher participants were not forced to take any professional development. Two teachers had options to participate in professional development made available to them. Many of the teachers went out and found professional development to meet their needs. One teacher opted not to seek any professional development if the school did not offer it. RQ1 Theme 1 identified teacher experiences and why they seek professional development. Their need to learn based on their current situation was a motivation to go out and seek professional development that met their needs. The teachers reported a feeling of helplessness when dealing with challenging behaviors and students' challenging behavior disrupting the classroom

environment. The teachers also reported seeking professional development because they love their job and want to help the students in their care.

The second assumption comes from a need for adults to change their quality of life and job satisfaction. All the teachers except for one went out to seek help to support them as they worked with students with challenging behavior. The support was not always from their school; it also involved spending their own money to get the training that would support them in the classroom. In RQ1 Theme 1, the teachers reported little or no professional development provided by the school and that available professional development opportunities at the school were disconnected to them and their classroom needs. Teachers searched outside of their schools for professional development due to the challenging behaviors some of their students were exhibiting. Some of the teachers started taking college classes that enhanced their understanding of students' challenging behavior and learned how to identify triggers and respond before things escalated.

The third assumption deals with adults having previous experiences that guide their learning. The teachers drew on their classroom experiences with students' challenging behavior when attending the professional development. They were able to pick up strategies that directly aligned to their needs and were able to apply it to their situation. In RQ1 Theme 2, teachers' prior experience also added to their perceptions of effective professional development and the type of professional development they felt supported them as they worked with students. The challenges in the classroom they described caused teachers to look for specific training directly related to the issues they were having. Some of the teachers sought and engaged in professional development

outside the school based on the benefits they believed these trainings gave them. The teachers viewed effective professional development as training that provides them with strategies that they can apply in their classroom, and they are willing to apply this knowledge in their current situation. They described a need for hands-on learning and training geared toward their specific classroom needs.

The fourth assumption touches on teachers' need to know being task oriented and life focused. The teachers identified a need in their classroom setting and had a need to find solutions to it, which encouraged an application of the strategies learned during the professional development. In RQ 1 Theme 2, teachers reported learning and applying new strategies in their classrooms. These strategies were for immediate use in their classrooms, including strategies for planning and engaging students in activities, opportunity for self-reflection, and useful information on changing classroom environment. Their learning also included new observational skills to identify problems before they occurred and reviewing their classroom environment to identify and remove factors that lead to challenging behavior. Additionally, participants learned how to reflect on their practices and utilize that experience in changing their classroom environment.

The fifth assumption is adults are willing to learn things that they need to know. This is evident in the description of an "unorthodox" way one of the teacher participants responded to challenging behavior. Teachers are willing to try out new strategies if they have evidence that it works. The participants described a need to learn from people that have real-life experience and not "textbook stuff." In RQ2 Theme 1, they described the following desires related to their work: professional development on positive

communication methods when discussing challenging behaviors with parents; a psychologist/specialist to work with teachers to support students; hands-on opportunities during training, to gain knowledge of students' culture(s); focused training on behavior management, social-emotional learning, sensitivity training, and classroom management; and opportunities to observe and work with other teachers. The teacher participants identified peer coaching and observation of other teachers that have succeeded in supporting challenging behavior in their classroom as a strategy to support their learning.

**Review of Literature**

In this review of the literature, I focused on the emergent themes from data analysis.

*RQ1 Theme 1*

To RQ1, I reviewed each teacher's definition of challenging behavior and the factors that influence their decision to seek help. The teachers' definitions and descriptions of challenging behavior align with behaviors identified by Hooper and Schweiker (2020), Kuhn et al. (2017), and Yoder and Williford (2019). These researchers also identified these behaviors as language used by students due to inability to communicate and limited language skills (Turner, 2016). According to Yoder and Williford, a teacher's perception of children is formed at the beginning of the year. The teachers in the current study described coming into the classroom without the appropriate training and knowledge to respond to challenging behavior. Bullock et al. (2015) described handling challenging behavior as the most stressful part of a teacher's job and the fear of being held responsible for injury to the child harming themselves or harming

others increased teachers' stress level (Kuhn et al., 2017). This sentiment was echoed by the study participants. These circumstances lead to teachers making the decision to remove the students from the program (Kuhn et al., 2017; Sibanda, 2018). Only one participant stated that she had a student removed due to challenging behavior and did not seek any form of training to help support the students; she reached out to her administrator, who contacted the student's parents to remove the child. The participants in the current study shared that they had limited or no professional development at their schools and the professional development opportunities that were available at their schools were disconnected to teachers and their classroom needs. These were motivations to seek outside help to support them as they worked with the students with challenging behavior.

### RQ1 Theme 2

The second theme that emerged was adult learners attend professional development based on their need, which also answers RQ1. Arthur-Kelly et al. (2017), questions whether direct support has been provided and how effective has it been in enhancing classroom practice and have appropriate methods to handle behavior problems been provided to teachers (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, as cited by Divsar, 2018) this includes effective discipline strategies (Sibanda, 2018). In reviewing the participants' perceptions of the professional development they found outside of their school sites, the teachers reported taking part in professional development opportunities where they learned and acquired new skills, strategies, and techniques on how to support children with challenging behavior, which they used in the classroom to support student learning.

This new learning came to some of the teachers at a financial cost that was not always covered by the school. Only one school provided professional development on site to teachers. Two other teachers reported having access to training provided by an outside contractor, and this was an optional training. The teachers could opt to attend this professional development activities or find other sources of training. Outside service providers for students were focused on the students they were servicing and their progress. The strategies they offered were geared towards supporting their students and the teachers described this as "textbook stuff."

**RQ2 Theme 1**

The third theme is teachers desire professional development directly related to and focused on students with challenging behaviors; this answered RQ2. According to Murano et al. (2020), teachers need to be explicitly provided social-emotional training to enhance the development of preschool students' social skills. The findings show that teachers benefited from training that was focused on changing the classroom environment by helping them identify and remove triggers in the physical environment. This is an extension of the type of professional development required by teachers as identified in the literature review. Broekhuizen et al. (2016) identified a link between emotional support and well-managed classrooms, children's social skills, and behavior problems. The teachers from their training were able to make this association and identify it as an essential factor in creating a positive classroom environment.

The teacher participants identified a need to provide professional development on how to work with parents and with families from different cultures. According to Chai

and Lieberman-Betz (2016), parents' view of challenging behavior is culturally based, and their perception is shaped by their social and cultural context. To support teachers in meeting their needs they need to understand the cultural context the parents are coming from and understand their needs, concerns, and priorities, this will aid them as they provide support and resources.

The trainings that the teachers identified align with the trainings identified in chapter two as needed for teachers to be successful, these included peer coaching, an awareness of needs of students in their classroom, classroom management strategies, and differentiated support. The results did not specifically identify training that focused on a teacher's social-emotional competence or an examination of how a teacher's ACEs can affect their interaction with students. The teachers in the study did mention knowing teacher behavior that triggers students. Vijayan et al. (2016) revealed that "teacher's behavior whether unconscious or conscious can affect the student's behavior" (p. 208). They also addressed the language used by teachers in the classroom and how it impacts students' behavior in the classroom. This is also echoed by the teachers interviewed. A resource identified by the teachers in this study as needed is the use of social stories. According to Wahman et al. (2019), the effectiveness of social story interventions is uncertain because, the use of social stories as a strategy to support challenging behavior is still being investigated.

Regarding discrepant data, during the review of the results unorthodox practices utilized by teachers were discussed but were not found in the literature. The description of a silent tantrum, as described by one participant, was a term not found. One participant

described an ineffective strategy which involved going to the child's level, which had

been ineffective. This strategy was described in her professional development as a

strategy of staying at arm's length and maintaining eye contact with the child.

## Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include the location; all the participants are from the

inner city. Another limitation includes the sample size, which had seven female teachers

that were purposively selected; no males were represented. The teachers met the three

main criteria for selection: 18 years old or older, preschool teachers who have had

experience teaching students with challenging behaviors, worked or currently work in a

private preschool setting. The interviews were conducted via telephone. Contacts with

participants were conducted via email and phone; no face-to-face contact was made. The

ability to observe participants' body language and utilize this as part of documentation to

gauge responses was not possible. The use of a reflective journal helped with

documenting my thoughts; this ensured any bias is noted and not included in the data. I

could only judge what they were saying and ask follow-up questions as needed because

the interview was conducted over the phone. I was not familiar with the participants and

they had not met me; due to the current pandemic we had not built the rapport that will

lead to familiarity. The participants came from six different preschool programs. This

provided an insight into the practices of more private preschool settings. I could not judge

the information because I have no knowledge of the way the programs the teachers are

from is being operated. The final data were analyzed by an expert reviewer to check for

bias and ensure trustworthiness.

## Recommendations

In this study, the purpose was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. While conducting the interviews with the teachers some information generated needs further research as a way of supporting teachers. The teachers identified the classroom environment as a learning tool to support the students. The literature identifies classroom management as an essential component of managing student behavior. I recommend that more research is needed in how combining classroom management and classroom environment can support students' social-emotional development. Broekhuizen et al. (2016) saw a link between emotional support and classroom environment, establishing the link will help teachers connect these strategies and view them as one and not separate strategies.

Seven female teachers were interviewed for this research; another recommendation is to interview more participants including male teachers, teachers with diverse backgrounds, and also different schools. The data can be compared to get a wider perspective of multiple teachers from different backgrounds.

Vijayan et al. (2016) stated that the language teachers use will affect the relationship they have with students; teachers often label students with the language they use. The teachers interviewed wanted training in using the right language, to effectively accomplish that, more research is needed to determine the impact of teachers' language use among this population.

The literature review identified looking at teachers' ACEs as a way to support teachers; the participants talked about looking at the teacher's behavior as triggers in the classroom. The population I interviewed has been exposed to multiple ACEs. More research is needed to identify how ACEs impact this population and its implication for the classroom.

**Implications**

The results of this study draw attention to private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. The strengths, as well as the gaps, in professional development provided to private preschool teachers is revealed and it offers insights on the best ways to equip teachers to prepare preschool students academically for kindergarten. Preschool teachers provide a child's first educational experience and can impact development and later outcomes in life (Hubela et al., 2020). The teacher-student relationship developed during this period has a lifetime effect on the students' academic outcome, as such it is important to support teachers in working with all students, including students with challenging behaviors.

The study results show that of the seven teacher participants, only two had professional development provided by their school. Five teachers had to go outside their school setting to find professional development to support them as they work with students with challenging behavior. The trainings provided by the schools through specialists failed to meet the needs of the teachers due to what was described as "book

stuff" by teachers. Based on information from teachers on their perception of professional development they attended they identified the types of professional development that they would find helpful as they work with students with challenging behavior in their classroom. The teachers had to travel to different locations outside of work and enroll in programs to acquire the skills to support the students; sometimes they had to pay for trainings that they were not always reimbursed for at work. The results have implications for social change.

The study findings show that teachers found professional developments where they learned hands-on strategies that they could apply in the classroom and they found the professional developments effective, helpful and needed. Wahman (2019) identified a need to provide early childhood teachers evidence-based intervention strategies to support them in the classroom as they work with students with challenging behaviors. The unorthodox strategy learned by the teacher and the way the teacher described the strategy of coming to the child's eye level, draw attention to the quality and who is providing the professional development. It also draws attention to the fact that there was no follow up or monitoring of the implementation of the strategies learned by the teachers in the professional development they attended outside the school setting.

The theoretical framework utilized was Knowles's (1977) theory of andragogy, which postulates that adult learners attend to learning based on their needs. The study shows that teachers attend professional development to meet an identified need in their classroom and to find an answer to help them respond effectively to the experience they

are going through. The teachers in the study are also willing to pay for and travel to the professional development location to get the support they need.

Providing teachers an opportunity to interact with other teachers is a very helpful and inexpensive tool to utilize in supporting new teachers that are coming into the field. The collaborative experience supports all teachers and opens an opportunity to seek help. According to Akdag and Haser (2016), the first year is the most challenging for new teachers due to the "limited empowerment within the profession, the lack of support, classroom management problems, and job dissatisfaction (p. 2)." Providing them that support makes them feel supported and not alone.

This knowledge will help school administrators as they prepare professional development for the teachers to address challenging behavior to ensure that whatever is provided mirrors the need in the classroom and is targeted at meeting the identified need at the school level. Secondly, school administrators will also have plans in place to monitor the strategies the teachers are implementing in the classroom. Agencies that support private schools at the local and state levels can also benefit from this information as they prepare professional development opportunities for teachers, not only in private schools but also in the public schools. Another recommendation is having a system in place to reimburse teachers for cost and travel to professional development locations. The findings will lead to change in policies that guide the way that teachers are trained, the type of professional development they are provided and also making it relevant to support student learning.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors. This study was aimed at increasing awareness of private preschool teachers' perspectives on professional development and what they need to support students with challenging behaviors in their classrooms. This study identified the type of training and support private preschool teachers received from their school.

The findings revealed that one school had trainers that came to the school twice a month to provide training for teachers. Two schools provided employees information on where to get training from the county agency. The agency also paid for one teacher to attend training offered by NAEYC and other child development groups. The other teachers had to find their own professional development and resources based on their needs.

The teachers were self-motivated and were able to go out and find the support that helps them meet the needs of students in their care. These findings point to a need for private schools to invest in and partner with agencies to provide ongoing professional development that meets the needs of teachers and geared towards creating opportunities for students to succeed. Vijayan et al. (2016) declared that the "teacher is an integral figure in the overall running and management of the classroom. When teachers do not want to learn, it is obvious that the students are not going to learn either" (p. 208). In this

study, all the teachers, except for one, were willing to learn and went out to find resources that supported them in the classroom.

Going into this research, I went in thinking about the impact of challenging behavior on teachers' self-esteem due to student behavior in the classroom. I interviewed seven participants, the teachers that did not receive professional development from their schools, went out and found professional development to support them as they work with students with challenging behaviors. Some even paid out of their pocket to attend professional developments and they were not fully reimbursed. Private school teachers are sometimes not highly paid, but the teachers loved working with the students, they were highly motivated and were willing to sacrifice to get the necessary skill to support the students. This experience has changed my perception of private preschool teachers and what they do to support the students in their classroom.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Title of Study: Preschool Teachers' Perspectives of Professional Development Related to Management of Challenging Behaviors.

Time of Interview:

Date:

Phone, Skype or Zoom

Interviewee:

Position/Title of Interviewee:

Introductory Protocol — Thank you for agreeing to share your experiences with me regarding professional development you have participated in. The purpose is to explore private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to children with challenging behaviors and the resources/professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors.

You have been invited to participate in this study because of your response to the Letter to Early Childhood Teachers. This shows you have useful information and insight to contribute to my study. To facilitate accurate notetaking, I would like your permission to audiotape our conversation and take notes to document items of importance. As indicated in the Informed Consent Form, information recorded is confidential and will only be available to researchers and individuals directly associated with the study. Your participation is voluntary, you may withdraw from this study at any time without repercussion to you or your center. This interview will last approximately one hour. You

may choose not to answer any question you are not comfortable with and there is no risk

or harm associated with participating in this study. At the end of the study, I will provide

you with a summary of the data analysis and ask you to review. Please feel free to ask

any questions you may have at any time.

Thank you for your cooperation. Do you have any questions? Shall we begin?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching preschool? Briefly describe your teaching experiences.

2. Approximately how many children with challenging behaviors have been in your classroom?

3. What is your definition of preschool challenging behavior?

4. Tell me about your experiences teaching children with challenging behavior?

Probes:

Can you give me an example? Tell me more about…

5. For the purpose of this study, professional development discussed include trainings you have received on the job or sponsored by your school, that has supported you as you work with students that display challenging behavior. Please describe your own professional development experience concerning working with children with challenging behaviors.

Probes:

Who provided this training? Were there any more recent (or past)?

Response:

6. Tell me your perspective of how these trainings were or were not effective professional development.

Probes:

Can you give me an example? Tell me more.

7. Have you looked for or attended professional development elsewhere? If so, why? Why not?

8. How has your professional development experience influenced your teaching strategies when working with preschool children with challenging behavior?

Probes:

Can you give me an example? Tell me more about…

9. How has your professional development experience supported you in creating a classroom environment that support children that display challenging behavior in the classroom?

Probes:

Can you give me an example? Tell me more about….

10. What types of professional development do you feel you need or are needed to be successful in regard to teaching children who have experienced challenging behaviors?

11. What resources do you feel you need or are needed to be successful in regard to teaching children who have challenging behaviors?

12. Do you have any other experiences or information you would like to share with me?

Appendix C: Research Question and Alignment With Interview Questions

**Table C1**

*Research Question and Alignment With Interview Questions*

| Research Questions | Questions |
| --- | --- |
| **RQ1**: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on past or existing professional development opportunities related to students with challenging behaviors? | How long have you been teaching preschool? |
| | Approximately how many children with challenging behaviors have been in your classroom? |
| | What is your definition of preschool challenging behavior? |
| | Tell me about your experiences teaching children with challenging behavior. |
| | Tell me your perspective on effective professional development. |
| | Have you looked for or attended professional development elsewhere? If so, why? |
| | Can you describe your own professional development experience? |
| **RQ2**: What are private preschool teachers' perspectives on the professional development needed to support students with challenging behaviors? | For this study, professional development discussed include the training you have received on the job or sponsored by your school, that has supported you as you work with students that display challenging behavior. Please describe your own professional development experience concerning working with children with challenging behaviors. |
| | How has your professional development experience influenced your teaching strategies when working with preschool children with challenging behavior? |
| | How has your professional development experience supported you in creating a classroom environment that supports children that display challenging behavior in the classroom? |

| | |
|---|---|
| | What resources do you feel you need or are needed to be successful in regard to teaching children who have challenging behaviors? |
| | What types of professional development do you need to be successful concerning teaching children who display challenging behavior in the classroom? |
| | Do you have any other experiences or information you would like to share with me? |

Appendix D: Categories to Themes

The following codes were combined to form categories and themes to answer RQ1 and RQ2.

| Codes | Categories | Themes | RQ1/RQ2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students' inability to communicate caused challenging behaviors.<br><br>Teachers sought out their own training due to challenging behavior.<br><br>Parent and therapist as resource providers.<br><br>Teachers lack information on child's medical and psychological diagnoses.<br><br>Teacher feeling of helplessness.<br><br>Students' challenging behavior disrupt the classroom environment.<br><br>Teachers sought out their own training due to challenging behavior.<br><br>Parents and therapists as resource providers. | Teacher experiences and descriptions of challenging behavior. | Teacher lack of knowledge and information on how to manage challenging behavior as a motivation to seek help | RQ1 |
| Teachers search outside of school for professional development.<br><br>Available professional development opportunities disconnected to the teacher and classroom need.<br><br>Limited or no professional development provided by school. | Why teachers seek professional development and resources. | | |
| Benefit of professional development attended by teachers.<br><br>Teacher perception of professional they attend. | Type of professional development needed. | Adult learners attend professional development based on their needs and view professional | RQ1 |

| | | development based on how they can apply the new strategies. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strategies that work — Engaging activities & planning.<br><br>Strategies that support student engagement.<br><br>Provides opportunity for self-reflection.<br><br>Support changing classroom environment.<br><br>Lack of admin support affects application of learning/ Feeling unsupported. | Application of new learning based on use. | | |
| Wanted observable outcomes of training in classroom.<br><br>Desired ongoing training by specialist.<br><br>Wanted experiences that lead to positive change in teacher practices and changes in behavior.<br><br>Desired opportunities to reflect and rethink on training. | Teacher perspective of professional development experiences that support teachers. | Teachers desire professional development directly related to and focused on students with challenging behaviors. | RQ2 |
| Desire for professional development on positive communication methods when discussing challenging behaviors with parents.<br><br>Desire for psychologist/specialist to work with teachers and support students.<br><br>Desire for hands on opportunity during training.<br><br>Want to gain knowledge of students' culture.<br><br>Desire for focused training on Behavior management, social-emotional learning, sensitivity training, and classroom management.<br><br>Desired opportunity to observe and work with other teachers. | Types of professional developments that benefit teachers. | | |

## Appendix E: Sample of Initial Codes

| | |
|---|---|
| Want to gain knowledge of students' culture | Desire for hands-on opportunity during training |
| Aggression | Teachers lack information on child's medical and psychological |
| Training on behavior management/social-emotional | Benefit of PD |
| Available professional development opportunities disconnected to the teacher and classroom need | Students' inability to communicate caused challenging behaviors |
| Wanted experiences that lead to positive change in teacher practices and changes in behavior | Changing the classroom environment |
| Students' challenging behavior disrupts the classroom environment | Training on Classroom management |
| Definition | Description of PD provided by the school |
| Descriptions of challenging behavior | Disrupts learning and a child's day |
| Engaging activities & planning | Importance of definitions |
| Lack of admin support affects the application of learning/ Feeling unsupported | Limited resources |
| Medical condition of students | Observational skills/communicating observation |
| Desired ongoing training by specialist | Opportunity for self-reflection |
| Desire for professional development on positive communication methods when discussing challenging behaviors with parents | Desire for psychologist/specialist to work with teachers and support students |
| Desired opportunities to reflect and rethink on training | Desire for focused training on behavior management, social-emotional learning, sensitivity training, and classroom management |
| Support for students | Teacher definition of effective PD |
| Teacher experience | Teachers' feeling of helplessness |

| | |
|---|---|
| Teachers search outside of school for professional development | Teacher perception of PD |
| Teacher perception of PD provided | Teachers sought out their own training due to challenging behavior |
| Wanted observable outcomes of training in classroom | Parents and therapists as resource providers |
| Opportunity to observe peers | Desired opportunity to observe and work with other teachers |