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EDUCATORS' AND PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

Shannon L. Howze
University of Southern Mississippi

EDUCATORS' AND PARENTS' ATTITUDES

TOWARD THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND

BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

by

Shannon Latrice Howze

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Approved by:

Lilian Hill, Committee Chair
Noal Cochran
David Lee
K. Alisa Lowrey
Kyna Shelley

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ABSTRACT

Educating students with emotional and behavior disorders (EBD) has historically been a difficult task for educators (McKenna et al., 2021). The general education setting comes with many barriers when attempting to include students with EBD to the equation. Parents are instrumental to the success of their students with EBD regardless to the setting. Educators may lack in the skills needed to communicate, educate, and understand students with EBD. Without educators and parents collectively communicating and collaborating, students with EBD will not have the opportunity to have the positive experiences and outcomes to be successful. Applying the theoretical frameworks of Bandura's social cognitive theory and Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of planned behavior, this mixed methods study aims is to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom.

Phase I was conducted using quantitative methods to explore the attitudes of educators regarding general inclusion, students with emotional and behavioral disorders in inclusion, perceived barriers of inclusion before and during the pandemic and the specific supports educators suggest for overcoming those barriers. After completion of Phase I, the data was analyzed and the overall results indicated that educators have a positive attitude regarding the inclusion of students with EBD; however, the attitudes of educators can greatly affect the effectiveness of inclusion when factors such as lack of collaboration, communication, implementation, and educator knowledge are prevalent.

Phase II of this study, consisted of semi-structured interviews with parents of students with EBD and obtained their view of inclusion based on their past and current

experiences with their child in the elementary education setting. Upon completion of the interviews with each parent participant, the data were transcribed and coded and as a result three major themes emerged from the experiences of the parents of students with emotional and behavior disorders: (a) social stigma; (b) teacher preparedness; and (c) communication.

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I want to thank God for giving me the focus, the inspiration, and the motivation to continue my journey and achieve my goal.

This work is dedicated to my family and my friends whose love and support continued to fuel my determination to succeed. Thank you all for the constant encouragement, always checking on me and my progress, allowing me to use your homes as my library, and the late-night talks when I was feeling depleted. You all have been there for me through every phase of this journey. I appreciate you all for enduring everything with me.

To my son, Gavin, I love you. Thank you for sacrificing "our time" and allowing me to achieve my second greatest accomplishment. You will always be my greatest accomplishment. I am so glad that God chose me for you.

To my mommy, LoLo, thank you for always believing in me when I did not believe in myself. I love you for life.

To my sister, Amy, my brother, Jerome, and my sister-in-love Clouzetta thank you for being my backbone and always holding me up when I did not think I could continue on this journey. You three are truly loved by me.

To my dad, Jerry, whose soul rests in Heaven, I finished!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EBD	Emotional and Behavior Disorders
EHA	Education for all Handicapped Children
EmD/EMD	Emotional Disability
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
REI	Regular Education Initiative
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Educating students with emotional and behavior disorders have proven to be

significantly challenging to educators in the general education classroom environment

(Mitchell et al., 2019). In 2019, 6,472,061 students ages 6 through 21 were served under

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B with students with emotional

and behavior disorders (EBD) representing 5.4% of the *IDEA* student population (U.S.

Department of Education, 2021). Emotional disturbance refers to several different, but

related, social-emotional disabilities. Students who are classified as emotionally disturbed

share common characteristics that include frequent displays of problem behaviors,

academic problems, an inability to build and maintain appropriate relationships and

maladaptive behaviors (Sheaffer et al., 2021). The literature also reported that students

with EBD have various mental health issues and are exposed to situations in school and

in life that can bring forth consequences such as incarceration, unemployment, and social

issues (Owens & Lo, 2021). Students with EBD often experience high rates of academic

failure, grade retention, high suspension and expulsion rates, and increased dropout rates.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2021), during the 2017-2018 school

year, at least 32.4% of students with EBD exited school by means of dropping out which

is considerably larger than any other disability category. Students with EBD were

removed to an alternative setting at a rate of 42 out every 10,000 students; however, the

students in the other disability categories were removed at a rate of 19 or less out of every

10,000 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Students with EBD received out

of school suspension or expelled at a rate of 375 out of every 10,000 students for more

than 10 collective days during school year 2017–18 while students in the other disability

categories were suspended or expelled at a rate of 145 or less per 10,000 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

The trends of the past for students with EBD have been to educate these students in self-contained environments or in separate schools; however, over the last decade the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education environment have become a more acceptable notion (McKenna et al., 2021). Inclusion is defined to mean that students with disabilities attend classes in the general education setting with their non-disabled peers (McKenna et al., 2021). Research suggests that federal mandates and policies such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) along with evidence-based practices that have been identified support the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom environments (McKenna et al., 2019). While most disability categories have shown an increase in the inclusion of their students, students with EBD have had significantly lower rates of inclusion (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Students with EBD have historically been educated in more restrictive settings than students with other disabilities (McKenna et al., 2021). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2021), 49.2% of students with EBD were reported as included inside the general education classroom for at least 80% of the day. The other 50.8% of students with EBD were reported as follows: 17.4% of the students were inside the general classroom for 40%-79% of the day; 17.3% of the students were inside the general classroom for less than 40% of the day; and 16.1% of the students were placed in separate facilities (e.g., residential, hospital, or correctional) (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

The literature suggests that some educators and parents believe that inclusion involves social integration, where the student with disabilities is socially accepted by their peers and is an active participant in peer group activities for social gains; however, the academic content is the sole responsibility of the special education teacher (Kirby, 2017). Students with EBD who exhibit many behavioral, academic, and social challenges in the classroom have difficulty being included, especially in the general education environment (McKenna et al., 2019). The inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavior difficulties has consistently been reported as challenging for teachers and is accompanied by negative teaching attitudes (Kirby, 2017). Regardless of the challenges and attitudes of educators, research has indicated that evidence-based practices designed specifically for the needs of students with EBD have proven to be successful (McKenna et al., 2019). Effective programs require that educators acquire the knowledge and skills needed to develop, implement, and evaluate interventions that will support the needs of students with EBD in the classroom (Hirsch et al., 2021). The literature reports that effective behavior management techniques, classroom procedures, instruction delivery, and structured instructional activities are aligned to positive academic and behavior progress for students with EBD (Mitchell et al., 2019).

Another important factor that contributes to successful programs for students with disabilities is parental involvement (Duppong Hurley et al., 2019). Parents can be the key to appropriate inclusion placements for their child by collaborating with the stakeholders to provide encouragement and support for inclusive educational programs, sharing information about the programs with other parents, and by providing continuous communication with the teachers about their child's abilities and needs to be successful

in the classroom (Duppong Hurley et al., 2019). Parents, just as educators, are instrumental in providing feedback about the programs academic, behavior, and social effectiveness (Duppong Hurley et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

There is growing literature supporting the use of several specific strategies (e.g., group contingencies, effective classroom instruction/management, peer groups, positive teacher-student relationships, and/or academic choice) to effectively reduce problem behaviors in the classroom (McKenna et al., 2019; Skerbetz & Kostewicz, 2013). Although there are many studies exploring the effects of these and other strategies in special education environments, the research is limited regarding the practice and influence of implementing these and other strategies in the general education environment (McKenna et al., 2019). The challenging and complex behaviors students with EBD display in classrooms is a common factor that prevents teachers and parents from supporting the inclusion of these students in the general education environment. Consequently, despite the evidence-based research that is available to be used in schools, educators and parents continue to show resistance to the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education environment.

The literature suggests that general education teachers "saw it as a privilege for students with disabilities to be included with their peers in the general education classroom" (Kirby, 2017, p. 176). Research reported that most educators assume they are not prepared to educate students with EBD and thus do not attempt to take on the experience (Kirby, 2017). The beliefs and attitudes of educators have a strong effect on the success or failure of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education setting

(McKenna et al., 2019). According to the research, parents often have positive attitudes about inclusion but express anxiety about the process and the potential effects it would have on their children (Duppong Hurley et al., 2019). There is limited research and thus limited knowledge about successful experiences for students with EBD in the general education environment. For successful inclusion of students with EBD in the general education environment, districts need a clearer understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of educators and parents. There is a need to identify the barriers as perceived by educators that prevents them from implementing research-based strategies to include students with EBD in the general education classroom. There is also a need to better understand the views of parents regarding their children attending class in general education settings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. For this study, educators included administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers. This study explored the attitudes of educators regarding inclusive education, the attitudes of educators and parents regarding inclusion of students with EBD, perceived barriers of inclusion and the specific factors parents and educators recommend for overcoming those barriers.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What are the attitudes of educators about inclusive education?

RQ 2: What are the attitudes of educators and parents about the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom?

RQ 3: What do educators and parents perceive as barriers of inclusion students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom before and during the pandemic?

RQ 4: What supports do educators and parents perceive as necessary to overcome the barriers of inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom?

Justification

Students with EBD experience fewer successful outcomes in general education environments academically and socially compared to other students with disabilities (Owens & Lo, 2021). This is due partially to the lack of knowledge that districts, administrators, parents, and teachers have about providing appropriate interventions in the general education environment. The inclusion experience for students with EBD depends upon the individuals who make the decisions to place students with EBD in the general education environment. When these decision makers know the factors that impede the implementation of the inclusion of students with EBD into the general education environment, they will be able to overcome those factors and move forward. This study can be potentially significant in breaking barriers of inclusion by exploring the attitudes of the biggest influencers: parents and teachers. Overcoming these barriers can help districts and administrators to provide the needed guidance, support, and training to teachers. Schools can also provide parents with a clearer picture of the inclusion process, so that parents can be an integral part of the successful inclusion of their children with EBD in the general education environment.

Theoretical Framework Overview

The theoretical perspectives that guided the researcher's approach to understanding educators' and parents' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with EBD are social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behavior. Bandura's social cognitive theory is an approach to understanding behavior through observing people's behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors (Paciotti, 2013). According to Paciotti, social cognitive theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavior, and environmental influences (2013, p. 108). The theory of planned behavior falls under the realm of social cognition. Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein (1980) developed the theory of planned behavior (TPB) which is an extension of the theory of reasoned action. The TPB provides a framework for exploring the relationship between attitude and behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The TPB suggests that a person's behavior is determined by his or her intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Methodology Overview

This study employed a mixed methods methodology that aimed to explore the perceived barriers of inclusion and the attitudes educators and parents have about the inclusion of students with EBD into the general education setting. This mixed methods study explored the attitudes of elementary school educators and parents of students with EBD that were enrolled in public school settings. The first phase of the study consisted of a survey instrument that was used to explore the perceived attitudes, barriers, and supports of elementary educators towards the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom. The second phase of the study consisted of interviews of

parents with students with emotional and behavior disorders. The parents were interviewed using semi-structured discussion questions related to the survey administered to the educators. The interviews explored a deeper understanding of attitudes, barriers, and supports of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom from the view of the parent. A demographic questionnaire was administered to each participant before interviews were conducted. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, coded, and organized so that themes regarding overall attitudes of parents could be analyzed and interpreted.

Assumptions

The assumptions related to this study are as follows:

1. It was assumed that the survey questions and the semi-structured discussion questions were clear to the participants, and they understood the terminology of each question.

2. It was assumed the participants would ask for clarification if the terminology of the question was unclear.

3. It was assumed the participants would answer all survey and interview questions completely and honestly.

Delimitations

Delimitations are factors that may affect the study that are controlled by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The delimitations of this study were as follows:

1. This study was limited to elementary public-school settings in the United States.

2. This study only collected data from educators of elementary students in public school settings.

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3. This study only collected data from parents of students with emotional and behavior disorders.

4. Parent participants were chosen at random based on their ability to participate in the survey.

Definitions

Attitudes - Allport (1935) defined an attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 810).

Education for All Handicapped Children Act – According to IDEA**,** Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), also known as the EHA, in 1975 to support states and localities in protecting the rights of, meeting the individual needs of, and improving the results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families. The name changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, in a 1990 reauthorization. The law was last reauthorized in 2004.

Emotional Disturbance - The term emotional disturbance according to IDEA, means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term

emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance. (Section 300.8.c.4)

Free appropriate public education (FAPE) - Special education and related services that: (a) Are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) Meet the standards of the State Education Agency (SEA), including the requirements of this [rule]; (c) Include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and (d) Are provided in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP) that meets the requirements of [the rules and regulations]. (Section 300.101)

Inclusion - Providing special education services to a student with disabilities within the general education classroom in the school they would attend if not disabled. Educating students with disabilities with their peers without disabilities (Osgood, 2005).

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – According to IDEA the term individualized education program or IEP means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with §§300.320 through 300.324.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – As stated in IDEA**,** to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and

services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Section 1412.a.5)

Mainstreaming - A specialized plan to integrate students with disabilities into the least restrictive setting where all efforts benefit the child (Osgood, 2005).

Regular Education Initiative (REI) - This is the original movement proposed in 1986 by Madeleine Will while serving as the United States Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to help close the gap between general education and special education by providing differentiated instruction to all students (Winzer, 2009).

Summary

The inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom may forever be a topic of conversation for the education world. The inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom room brings additional controversy to the continuously debatable topic. Although the federal mandates of IDEA resulted in more inclusion settings for students with disabilities, students with EBD remain less likely to be included in the general education setting (McKenna et al., 2019). With the ample amount of strategies that have been reported as effective for students with EBD, it is important to understand the factors hindering educators from implementing these strategies in the general education setting.

This study aimed to examine educator and parent attitudes about inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom and the barriers and supports they feel are detrimental for successful implementation.

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. The variables explored in the quantitative portion of this study are attitudes, barriers, and supports. Specifically, this study will explore the attitudes of educators regarding students with EBD, the attitudes of educators and parents regarding inclusion, perceived barriers of inclusion and the specific supports parents and educators suggest for overcoming those barriers. This chapter explores each variable through an historical overview of literature and specific definitions related to inclusion, students with emotional and behavior disorders, attitudes about inclusion, barriers that exist, and the needed supports. Finally, this chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks that will guide the research for this study.

History of Special Education and Inclusion

Inclusion is currently a topic of continuous discussion among educators when attempting to determine the best ways to educate students with disabilities. As more students with an array of emotional, mental, and physical disabilities learn alongside students without disabilities, educators continue to discover how to include these students in their classroom. Challenges, as well as benefits, of inclusion continue to appear for educators, parents, students with disabilities, and their non-disabled peers. However, by examining the history of inclusion, it is noticeably clear the services for educating students with disabilities has improved.

Inclusion started as a "civil rights issue and an issue of social justice" (Leyser & Kirk, 2006, p. 65) for students with disabilities. During the 1960s and early 1970s, over four million students with disabilities were not receiving an appropriate education or appropriate services (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014). Kavale and Forness (2000) reported that special classes were viewed as ideal for avoiding conflicts, contained a low teacher-pupil ratio, and specially trained teachers while providing students instruction in a non-differentiated environment. During the 1960s, Dr. Maynard Reynolds and Dr. Evelyn Deno, pioneers of special education, developed models to ensure students with disabilities were educated in the general education classroom as much as is appropriate (Yell, 2018). Reynolds suggests students with disabilities should have as much normalcy as possible and special education placement "should be no more special than necessary" (Yell, 2018, p. 257). Deno proposed "a cascade system of special education services" which is a systematic structure used for making placement decisions for students with disabilities (Yell, 2018, p. 257). In 1968, ideas shifted with the publication of an article published by Lloyd Dunn which referred to special education as "merely a transfer of disadvantaged children from one segregated setting to another" (p. 81). A major concern for Dunn was the ineffective identification processes that led to the over identification of minority children as either mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed (Osgood, 2005). After publication of Dunn's article, critics of segregation in special education disagreed with his justification for special education classes and deemed them as a "dumping ground" for students not socially accepted in society (Winzer, 2009, p. 114). Dunn's article opened the door for many researchers to begin to examine and reflect on the fundamental of special education practices (Osgood, 2005).

Since the term inclusion is not federally mandated, there are a wide range of definitions that are accessible for researchers and scholars in education. According to DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2013), Katzman defined inclusion as "an educational philosophy that calls for schools to educate all learners – including students with disabilities and other special needs – together in high quality, age-appropriate general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools" (p. 5). According to DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2013), authors Stainback and Stainback described inclusion in a 1990's article as:

> an inclusive school as one that educates students in the mainstream...providing appropriate educational programs that are challenging yet geared to their capabilities and needs as well as any support and assistance they and/or their teachers may need to be successful in the mainstream. (p. 6)

DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2013) reported that inclusion was described by Slee as "not the adaptation or refinement of special education. It is a fundamental rejection of special education's and regular education's claims to be inclusive" (1990, p. 6). Causton-Theoharis (2009) viewed inclusive classrooms as a means for all students to socially interact with each other and learn to successfully work and play together so that they can be more successful in adulthood. Osgood (2005) described inclusion in the 21st century as an ideal that provides each child with a disability the right to be educated with their non-disabled peers in the regular classroom environment where their individual needs can be met thoroughly. Osgood (2005) also reported that schools should continue to strive for "the goal, but practical realities will also continue to frustrate and inhibit these efforts to such an extent that a truly universal 'appropriate, least restrictive environment' located in

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the regular classroom may never come to pass" (p. 200).

Federal Mandates

In the late 1950s, the federal governments involvement with the education of students with disabilities became prevalent with the enactment of the Education of Mentally Retarded Children Act of 1958 and the Training of Professional Personnel Act of 1959 where funds were allocated to support and help train teachers and school leaders to educate students with mental retardation (Yell, 2018). In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act evolved where funding was appropriated to improve educational opportunities for students in poverty to include students with disabilities in the categories of deaf, blind, or mentally retarded (Yell, 2018). The Education of the Handicapped Act of 1970 provided funds to states for expanding, improving, and/or initiating programs for students with disabilities and provided funds to higher institutions for program development to train teachers of students with disabilities (Yell, 2018). In 1973, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112) passed by Congress was the first disability civil rights law prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities from participating in programs that receive federal funds (Yell, 2018). The Education Amendments of 1974 "required states receiving federal special education funding to establish a goal of providing full educational opportunities for all children with disabilities" (Yell, 2018, p. 44). According to Weber, education for students with disabilities was significantly limited and laws were not "sufficiently enforceable" according to advocates for students with disabilities (as cited in Yell, 2018, p. 44). In 1975, the most significant start to the improvement of education for students with disabilities was signed into law by President Gerald Ford (Yell, 2018). The Education for

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All Handicapped Children Act, also known as Public Law 94-142, was enacted and mandated that all children with disabilities be provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Students that were qualified had the right to "nondiscriminatory testing, evaluation and placement procedures; education in the least restrictive environment; procedural due process including parental involvement; a free education; and an appropriate education" as developed by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Yell, 2018, p. 45). In 1986, Public Law 99-457 amended the Education for All Handicapped Children Act by providing services for children from birth to age three that are born with disabilities (Yell, 2018).

The emergence of the Regular Education Initiative (REI) in the mid-1980s by Madeline Will brought forth "a system of education in which children with quite diverse, heterogeneous needs were educated in the same classroom" (Winzer, 2009, p. 205). The REI was the first of several initiatives that attempted to give the responsibility of educating most students with disabilities to the general education teachers (Kauffman et al., 2018). According to Kavale and Forness (2000), the REI was based on the notion that good teachers could teach all students in the same environment using the same format. William and Susan Stainback, two main advocates for more inclusive environments, acknowledged that it was time to increase the "capabilities of the regular environment" to meet the needs of all students and stop finding reason to exclude students from the regular classroom environment (Osgood, 2005, p. 134).

During the 1990s, inclusive education became a more accepted concept. The REI became the "full inclusion" movement of the 1990s which supported all students

regardless of the disability be included in the general education classroom (Kauffman et al., 2018, p. 12). In 1990, the amendments to Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 101-476) were reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in which the focus was maintained on engaging students with disabilities in the general classroom, increasing services for students with disabilities, and increasing the specificity of the disability categories (Osgood, 2005; Yell, 2018). The term inclusion, which became the common term after the reauthorization of IDEA, is not listed or defined in any federal mandate or law; however, it is inferred in the content (Osgood, 2005). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which was reauthorized again in 1997, focused on students with disabilities having access to general education with appropriate supplementary services and aids and ensuring a continuum of placement alternatives be available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services (Winzer, 2009; Yell, 2018). The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in 2002 by President George W. Bush, effectively increased the role of the federal government in education by holding school districts accountable for student achievement in reading and math (Yell, 2018). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandated that all students in public schools be brought up to state standards in reading and math and students with disabilities would be required to be assessed and included in each states' accountability requirements (Yell, 2018). In 2004, President Bush signed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) which focused on the importance of student performance in the public schools (Yell, 2018). Through IDEIA 2004, changes were made to IEPs, the eligibility process to identify students with disabilities, and special educators were required to be highly qualified (Yell, 2018). The

most current federal mandate signed into law by President Barack Obama is Every

Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. Through ESSA, many of the requirements of

NCLB were eliminated, the role of the U.S. Department of Education was decreased, and

the states were given more flexibility with designing and implementing an effective

accountability model (Yell, 2018).

Relevant Court Cases

The inclusion movement can be traced through many landmark cases that were

significant in how educators included students in the general education classroom.

Parents used the federal court system to require that states provide equal educational

opportunities for students with disabilities. These court cases created stepping-stones for

ensuring that the legal rights of students with disabilities were not violated and they were

being provided a free and appropriate education (FAPE), much the same as their non-

disabled peers.

Brown v. Board of Education. Decided in 1954, the landmark decision ruled that

segregation within public schools was illegal and thus ending as a matter of law

segregation based on race (Blankenship et al., 2007). The *Brown* case determined that

separating schools based on race was unequal and violated the equal opportunity and due

process clause of the 14th Amendment (McGovern, 2015). This case has been a major

factor in debates about the rights of students with disabilities having equal access to the

general education classroom (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013).

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania. In

1972, this landmark case was the first case that addressed educating students with

disabilities in a general education classroom as much as feasibly possible (Blankenship et

al., 2007). This case challenged the laws of Pennsylvania that allowed the state the right

to deny students with mental retardation access to general education (McGovern, 2015).

The *PARC* case resulted in a consent decree deeming the former laws unconstitutional

and tasking the State with providing a free sufficient public education to all children with

disabilities at the same level of those given to their peers (McGovern, 2015; Winzer,

2009). In conjunction with these new requirements, the State could no longer deny any

child with disabilities access to any free public program of education and training.

Mills v. Board of Education. The *Mills* case, which was also decided in 1972,

involved the exclusion of students with disabilities from receiving a FAPE because of

their disabilities (McGovern, 2015). The federal court concluded that the school could not

refuse to educate a child, unless alternative education services are provided that will

better address the child's needs and the schools must hold a hearing and periodically

review the child's status and progress (McGovern, 2015). School districts must provide

their students with free and equal educational opportunities regardless of the ability of the

student.

Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley. In

the 1982 *Rowley* case, the Supreme Court resolved a case interpreting portions of what

was then called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act which the legislation

would later rename the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Blankenship et al.,

2007). In this case, the parents fought for additional services for their child that the

school district felt was more than needed for this student. Since the student was receiving

an educational benefit that was in line with FAPE and the student's Individual Education

Plan (IEP), the court ruled with the school stating the school was in compliance and did

provide the student with an appropriate education (Blankenship et al., 2007; McGovern, 2015; Winzer, 2009). The decision of Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. *Rowley* was important to the inclusion movement for students with disabilities attempting to access appropriate supports and placements (Blankenship et al., 2007).

Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District. In the 2017 *Endrew* case, the parents believed their child's public-school education was inadequate. His parents placed him in a private school that catered to students with autism and then sued the school district? for reimbursement of Endrew's private school tuition and related expenses. The court decided that to ensure children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) which is promised under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), school districts must provide an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is specifically designed to for each child to make adequate progress based on their individual situations. Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., delivered the opinion for the unanimous Court, which held that the Court nor the statute could produce considerable evidence that shows if an IEP is "reasonably calculated" to ensure a child makes adequate progress. With this case a higher standard for educational benefit was established. According to the Supreme Court in *Endrew F.*, "The IEP must aim to enable the student to make progress. After all, the essential function of an IEP is to set out a plan for pursuing academic and functional advancement" (Endrew, 2017).

Inclusion: Advocates and Critics

Although educators, parents, and stakeholders of the school system tend to assume that the value of inclusion is agreed upon by everyone, there are many

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stakeholders within the school system that are not fully accepting of the inclusion
movement. As reported in the literature, "students with disabilities should make progress
academically as well as behaviorally when served in inclusive settings, however, research
suggests that some general education teachers have difficulty adapting core instruction or
have limited expertise to teach students with specialized needs" (McKenna et al., 2019, p.
588-589). According to Osgood (2005), there is a multitude of literature that address
supports for full inclusion programming and implementation. Advocates argue that
inclusion was a necessity because,

> segregated settings have not been shown to be effective [It] is stigmatizing,
>
> degrading, and emotionally devastating to a child; integration creates multiple,
>
> necessary, and effective opportunities for socializing and educating disabled
>
> students with their nondisabled peers and eliminating ignorance and prejudice
>
> among children that separation has caused. (Osgood, 2005, p. 184)

As reported in the literature, advocates of inclusion suggested that outcomes of inclusion
will lead to equal education opportunities for students with disabilities where the teacher
would be ready to educate each student fairly (Mock & Kauffman, 2002). Research has
shown that "inclusion of students with disabilities is socially and academically beneficial
to all students" (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013, p. 6). A literature review conducted
by Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (2004), demonstrated that students with disabilities
included in the general education classroom did not interfere with academic performance
and socialization of their non-disabled peers. Cole et al. (2004) reported that students
without disabilities in inclusive settings made higher academic gains than students in
traditional classrooms (Peck et al., 2004). Other advocates with more "conservative

voices" alleged that students with disabilities right to an appropriate education was more important than any debates about the ethics of segregation and integration (Winzer, 2009).

Critics of inclusion are concerned that general education teachers will not provide a high- quality education to all students due to the stress of educating the numerous diverse students that could potentially be added into the classroom (McGovern, 2015). Another concern is that is the assumption that general education teachers lack the necessary skills needed to educate students with disabilities in the general education classroom (McGovern, 2015). Several publications in the literature called attention to the negative consequences of inclusion that include unprepared teachers and poor teacher attitudes (Osgood, 2005). According to Kauffman and Hallahan (1995) "special education is in danger of riding the bandwagon called "full inclusion" to its own funeral" (p. ix). Some critics agreed with the inclusion of students with disabilities to a certain extent; however, they argued that there are too many obstacles, circumstances, and concerns that need to be managed and thus schools are not appropriately prepared for the change (Osgood, 2005).

The advocates of inclusion assumed that every teacher could educate every child. These advocates argued that special education students with disabilities require minimal accommodations by general education teachers and if general education teachers used more successful teaching strategies and positive behavior strategies, they could educate students with disabilities (Winzer & Mazurek, 2000). Inclusion advocates argued that special education is not as essential because teachers can educate all students, regardless of their differences (Osgood, 2015). Critics; however, argued that students with

disabilities require different methods of instruction to meet their needs compared with students without disabilities (Osgood, 2015). Winzer and Mazurek (2000) observed that special education instruction is more crucial, more intensive, and more structured than general instruction and is individually planned for students whereas general education is planned according to the whole group.

Impact of Inclusion

The inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom will have either a positive or negative outcome for all stakeholders involved. The educators, students, parents, and classroom can all be impacted by the changes that occur when inclusion is in effect in the general education classroom. According to Burstein et al. (2004), "although students with disabilities have increasingly had access to general education classes, reports concerning the effectiveness of practices associated with inclusion have been mixed, leading researchers to question whether and how inclusive practices are actually being implemented" (p. 104). School districts have a lot of flexibility when it comes to the actual policy and implementation of inclusive classrooms; however, due to variations in practice and policy across states, the fidelity of inclusion programs has led to misidentification and unequal outcomes for students with disabilities (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013).

The impact inclusion has on students with disabilities and students without disabilities is another area of concern of educators. According to Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (1999), the National Center for Educational Restructuring and Inclusion reported that students with disabilities placed in appropriately implemented inclusive classrooms improved academically, with increased motivation and positive peer

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interactions (1999). Osgood (2005) reported numerous positive accounts of educator, parent, and student experiences with inclusion that range from having higher social interactions to more challenging and interesting activities. It was also reported that general education teachers reformed their views of inclusion and prompted more effective collaboration with special education teachers (Osgood, 2005). However, there were still people with doubts about the effectiveness of inclusion and their views weighed heavily on the stakeholders in education that continued to resist inclusion (Osgood, 2005). According to Osgood (2005), the major concern reported was that classroom teachers were not equipped to plan instruction for students with disabilities. Due to this lack of knowledge, general classroom teachers may use ineffective instructional practices and students without disabilities would be negatively impacted because of the possible disruptive environment that may be caused by students with disabilities in the classroom (Osgood, 2005).

<center>History of Emotional and Behavior Disorders</center>

Children and youth with emotional and behavior disorders (EBD) have been in our society for as long as society has existed; however, these individuals experience negative interactions with the people they encounter in the community (Brigham & Hott, 2011). According to Brigham and Hott (2011), emotional disorders in children and efforts to educate and intervene in student behavior were not existent before the 18th century. One notable individual during the late 18th century, Philippe Pinel is credited with developments in understanding and treating individuals with emotional and behavior disorders (Brigham & Hott, 2011). The authors reported that Pinel noted that disturbed individual's behavior improved when treated with "kindness and respect" compared to

being treated with "indifference and brutality" (Brigham & Hott, 2011, p. 154).

According to Brigham and Hott (2011), during the 19th century most individuals with

EBD spent time in jail or in asylums. In the early 1900s, physicians' and psychologists

formed the National Committee for Mental Hygiene that promoted early diagnosis,

treatment, and the formation of school-based programs for children with EBD (Brigham

& Hott, 2011). From the 1930s through the mid-1970s educational services for children

with EBD increased, programs and interventions became more prevalent, and the federal

government became involved by encouraging more educational services for individuals

with disabilities with the amendment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of

1966 (Brigham & Hott, 2011). In 1975, the passage of the Education for All Handicapped

Children Act (Public Law 94-142) not only required schools to provide services for

individuals with disabilities but also paved the way for the controversy concerning the

definition and criteria for identifying emotionally disturbed (Brigham & Hott, 2011;

Merrell & Walker, 2004).

Emotional and Behavior Disorders Defined

   According to the literature, there have been conflicts about the definition for the

term "emotional disturbance" under IDEA and thus students with EBD are not always

identified (Forness & Knitzer 1992; Wery & Cullinan 2013). According to Merrell and

Walker (2004), the federal definition adopted in 1975 which was based on Eli Bower's

protocol formed in the 1960s that proposed the following:

   emotionally handicapped students had to exhibit one or more of five major

   characteristics to a marked extent and over an extended period. These five

   characteristics included: (1) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by

intellectual, sensory, or health factors, (2) an inability to build or maintain

satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, (3) inappropriate

types of behavior or feelings under normal conditions, (4) a general, pervasive

mood of unhappiness or depression, and (5) a tendency to develop physical

symptoms, pains, or fears, associated with personal or

school problems. (p. 900)

The federal definition included adjustments in the wording and some statements

regarding types of characteristics or conditions that would be included or excluded from

the eligibility definition (Merrell & Walker, 2004). A statement that included

schizophrenia but excluded children who are socially maladjusted was also added to the

federal definition (Merrell & Walker, 2004).

The federal meaning of emotional disturbance recognizes conditions that must be

met, traits of the disability so an individual can be eligible to receive services for special

education under the emotional disturbance category. According to IDEA (2014), the

federal meaning of emotional disturbance is below:

Emotional disturbance is defined as a condition that demonstrates one or more of

the following traits over a lengthy period and to a significant extent that

negatively affects a child's educational achievement (Code of Federal Regulation,

Title 34, Section 300.7(c)(4)(ii):

(A) An inadequacy to learn that cannot be interpreted by well-being,

psychological, sensory, or health aspects.

(B) An inadequacy to form or cultivate adequate mutual relationships with

associates and teachers.

(C) Inapplicable kinds of conduct or compassion under typical circumstances.

(D) A typical feeling of gloom or melancholy.

(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The label does not appertain to students who are socially disturbed, unless students have been identified as having an emotional disturbance (Code of Federal Regulation, Title 34, Section 300.7(c)(4)(ii). Emotional behavioral disorder falls under the disorder of emotional disturbance.

According to Kauffman (2001) the federal definition indicated that students with emotional and behavior disorders may be excluded from services or not receive the necessary services because they are not academically deficient or because they are considered socially maladjusted. This means that students with emotional and behavior disorders may not receive services if they are making average or above average grades in class or if the students behaviors are determined to be deliberate and within the control of the student. Forness and Knitzer (1992) reported that the IDEA definition was not specific enough to determine if a student qualified in the category of EBD; therefore, the National Mental Health and Special Education Coalition and the Council for Children with Behavior Disorders formulated the following definition for emotional disturbance:

(i) The term emotional or behavior disorder means a disability categorized by emotional or behavior responses in school programs so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms that they adversely affect the educational performance, including academic, social, vocational, or personal skills, and which

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(a) is more than a temporary, expected response to stressful events in the

environment; (b) is consistently exhibited in two different settings, at least one of

which is school related; and (c) persists despite individualized interventions

within the educational program, unless, in the judgment of the team, the child's or

youth's history indicates that such interventions would not be effective. (ii)

Emotional and behavior disorders can co-exist with other disabilities. (iii) This

category may include children and youth with schizophrenic disorders, affective

disorders, anxiety disorders, or other sustained disturbances of conduct or

adjustment when they adversely affect the educational performance in accordance

with section (i). (Kauffman, 2001, p. 32)

Emotional and behavior disorders include a wide variety of behaviors and characteristics

that students often exhibit that can interfere with academic and social success in schools.

Characteristics that students with EBD may display are antisocial behavior, aggression,

limited appropriate communication skills, manipulative behaviors, capable of initiating

extreme conflict, and unstructured home environments (Kennedy & Jolivette, 2008).

Biological factors and/or environmental circumstances endured by some children and

youth such as neglect, and abuse are common factors that can lead to emotional and

behavior problems (Kaufman, 2001). Emotional and behavior problems in children and

youths can be recognized while they are in primary grades or before they enter school;

however, most are not identified for special education services until the behaviors

become extreme and difficult to control (Kauffman, 2001). Emotional and behavior

disorders are multifaceted and thus the category is comprised of several clinical disorders

including Adjustment Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder,

Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, Autistic Disorder, Attention

Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Schizophrenia, and Seriously Emotionally Disturbed,

among others (Kauffman, 2001).

Students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders and Inclusion

The inclusion of students with disabilities has been a controversial topic for many

years. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates that schools provide a

free and appropriate education regardless of a student's disability; however, students with

EBD "experience less school success than any other subgroup of students with or without

disabilities" (Landrum et al., 2003, p. 148). Students with EBD exhibit learning and

behavior deficits that can make it difficult for educators to provide effective instruction

and interventions (Sutherland et al., 2008). According to the literature, "because of the

reciprocal relationship between academic difficulties and inappropriate behaviors of

students with EBD, researchers have suggested the use of effective instructional

strategies that increase the probability of active student engagement" (Cooper et al.,

2018; Simonsen et al., 2008). While the number of research-based approaches for

intervening with the emotional and social behavior of students with EBD has increased,

the education system is continually "plagued" by the lack of application of research to

practice among educators (Cooper et al., 2018; Landrum et al., 2003). According to

Landrum et al. (2003), teachers are more willing to implement interventions that are

"easy to implement, not time-intensive, positive, perceived to be effective by the teacher,

and compatible with the context in which the intervention will be employed" (p. 152).

Interventions proven effective for students with EBD do not meet the level of

effectiveness most teachers desire (Cooper et al., 2018; Landrum et al., 2003). According

to Evans et al. (2012), there is a need to investigate the strategies that teachers use to help educate students with EBD and how those strategies differ according to the environment (general, resource, or self-contained) in which they are implemented.

Placement of Students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires school districts to place students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment and provide these students with the appropriate services that will allow for satisfactory achievement (McGovern, 2015). Students with emotional and behavior disorders are usually assigned to more segregated options rather than being allowed to be educated with their non-disabled peers. According to Sutherland et al. (2008), most general educators believe the general education environment is not appropriate for students with EBD and thus will only provide limited accommodations and modifications to these students. Kauffman and Hallahan (1997) reported that the regular and special classroom settings are only two placements within a continuum of placements that can include options such as intermittent help from itinerant teachers, resource help for parts of the day, and consultative or collaborative teaching. It is the duty of the school to offer alternative placements for students with disabilities when the general education setting is not conducive to the student with disabilities or their non-disabled peers (McGovern, 2015). However, when the least restrictive environment becomes more restrictive, it is the school's responsibility to ensure students with disabilities have opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers at specified times of the day such as lunch, recess, or activity periods (McGovern, 2015).Winzer and Mazurek (2000) concluded that students with emotional disabilities should receive services based on individual need, identified by

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assessments, and these students should be placed in environments conducive to their needs.

<div align="center">Attitudes</div>

The study of attitudes has long been considered a fundamental concept of social psychology that helps explain a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Bordens & Horowitz, 2001). According to Allport (1935), an attitude is defined as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 810). Krech and Crutchfield (1948) defined attitude as "an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of the individual's world" (p. 152). Allport's definition of attitudes is more widely used and can be broken into definitive parts (Bordens & Horowitz, 2001). According to Bordens and Horowitz (2001), an attitude consists of four interconnected parts: cognition, affective responses, behavior intentions, and behaviors. These four components influence each other; thus, if one-part changes it can also change another part in the structure (Bordens & Horowitz, 2001). One of the primary areas of importance regarding attitude is its ability to predict future behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, Bordens & Horowitz, 2001).

Educator and Parent Attitudes

It is essential to consider educator and parent attitudes toward inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders. The planning and implementation of successful inclusive environments is dependent on multiple factors and attitudes of

<div align="center">31</div>

educators and parents can be an extreme influence (Garrick-Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Schlein et al., 2013).

According to McLeskey and Waldron (2000), the attitudes of educators can facilitate successful inclusion; however, if educators do not change or recognize their impact on inclusion, the change toward inclusive education will not be as effective. McLeskey and Waldron (2000) concluded that the most important factor that influences educator attitudes is their personal experience with inclusion. According to Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), most teachers support the concept of inclusion where students with disabilities have the right to be educated in the general setting; however, many educators are not as willing to implement inclusive classrooms (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000).

Parent attitudes can also be very instrumental to the success or failure of inclusion programs for students with disabilities (Duppong Hurley et al., 2019; Garrick-Duhaney & Salend, 2000). According to Garrick-Duhaney and Salend (2000), understanding the attitudes of parents of students with and without disabilities

> is important because by legislation, parents are decision makers in placing their children with disabilities in integrated settings, parents play a central role in their children's developmental and educational activities, parents are the driving force behind many of the services provided to their children, parents are potential initiators and advocates of reform, and parents' reactions are critical in ascertaining the social validity of inclusion. (p. 121)

Parents can not only collaborate with the school district and the community to support or not support inclusion, but they can also provide insight regarding their child's abilities and needs in inclusive environments (Garrick-Duhaney & Salend, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

There are two theories that will guide the focus of this research: social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). When attempting to understand the attitudes of educators and parents regarding inclusion, researchers must also explore the self-efficacy of the educators and how they approach educating students with emotional and behavior disabilities. According to Bandura (1994), "teachers operate collectively within an interactive social system rather than in isolation. The belief systems of staffs create school cultures that can have vitalizing or demoralizing effects on how well schools function as a social system" (p. 78). The attitudes of educators are important to how students with emotional and behavior disorders are viewed in the school system and how these students and their parents in turn view the school system. Bandura (1994) conceived that "teachers with a high sense of efficacy about their teaching abilities can motivate their students and enhance their cognitive development" (p. 78). According to Bandura (2006), people choose "which challenges to undertake, how much effort to invest in the pursuits, and how long to persevere in the face of difficulties" (as cited by Paciotti, 2013, p. 108). According to Paciotti (2013), self-efficacy beliefs determine the choices people make. Thus, educators lacking in efficacy may find it difficult to educate students with emotional disabilities and may have a negative attitude when approached with the concept.

The theory of planned behavior was formulated after Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen developed and introduced the theory of reasoned action which theorizes that a person's behavior will be affected by their attitude or perceptions, and by their expectations, or the expected outcomes that the behavior may cause (Ajzen & Fishbein,

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1980). Ajzen argued that control beliefs should be considered in predicting behavior and thus revised the theory into the theory of planned behavior (Campbell, 2010). The formulation of the theory of planned behavior include:

> beliefs about a behavior's likely consequences (behavior beliefs) are assumed to determine attitudes toward the behavior; beliefs about the expectations and behaviors of others (normative beliefs) are assumed to determine subjective norms; and beliefs about potential facilitating or inhibiting factors (control beliefs) are assumed to determine perceived behavior control. Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of control in turn combine to produce intentions that, together with actual control, determine performance of the behavior. (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013, p. 155)

Essentially a person's intent to act out a behavior is the basis that connects a person's attitude with their actions (Campbell, 2010). This theory is an important portion of the theoretical framework because the attitudes of educators towards students with emotional disabilities can affect the actions of educators towards these students' placement, provided services, and overall educational and social success. Simultaneously, parents' attitudes towards the inclusion of their children with EBD can be negatively or positively affected depending on the actions taken by educators.

The foundation of this theory was that educators and parents' attitudes about inclusion are influenced by observations, experiences, and previously acquired knowledge about students with emotional and behavior disabilities. Educators may have been influenced by observation, previous work experience with students with emotional and behavior disabilities or by previously acquired knowledge through training in special

education. Parents may have been influenced by their observation of the school and educators' actions toward their child with EBD. In addition, the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) provided the framework to understand the relationship between attitudes and numerous factors, such as behaviors, beliefs, and intentions. Because of the availability of self-contained environments and alternative placements for students with EBD, many educators have limited interactions with these students and thus training in this area is not significant and inclusion is minimal. It was important to understand the present attitudes of educators and parents toward inclusion of students with EBD and identify the issues that must be addressed so that successful inclusion is possible.

These two theories align with the idea that including children with emotional and behavior disorders in the regular education classroom is highly influenced by the attitudes educators and parents have towards the inclusion of these students. Bandura's social cognitive theory explores the notion that educators with a higher sense of efficacy are more resilient and willing to educate and motivate children with emotional and behavior disorders to succeed in the general education setting (Bandura, 1994). Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior examines attitudes and the actions that follow the attitude. Thus, educators' attitudes regarding inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom determines if these students are given successful inclusion opportunities with effective interventions and strategies. Depending on the actions and attitudes of educators, parents may also be more willing to allow their children with EBD to venture in more inclusive settings.

Barriers and Supports

  The following sections describe barriers and supports of inclusive education identified as key factors experienced by students with EBD in the classroom.

Barriers

  Barriers and supports of inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom have been identified throughout the literature. The previous literature focused on the perspectives of general education teachers and students with disabilities in general. According to Fuchs (2010), a lack of administrative support, a lack of support from special education teachers, and a lack of adequate preparation in pre-service programs were identified as barriers by general education teachers. The five teachers in Fuchs's study also felt that they were solely responsible for academic planning, accommodations and modifications, and grading for the students with disabilities without any assistance from the special education teachers (2010). In Andreasen's study, eight administrators' identified money, time, teacher personalities, teacher perspectives, parent misperceptions, and lack of training as perceived barriers of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (2014a). In a study conducted by O'Dear, five elementary teachers that had experience with students with EBD in inclusive settings identified safety, student behaviors, time, and information as the barriers to inclusion (2016). The participants specifically discussed the safety for students with EBD and the safety of others and student defiance, behavior management, and its impact on the class (O'Dear, 2016). The participants in Fuchs's (2010) study and O'Dear's (2016) study both discussed time with planning and implementing necessary strategies for inclusion of students with disabilities. According to O'Dear, the lack of information regarding barriers

for inclusion of students with EBD is due to parents not communicating necessary information to teachers concerning their student's EBD diagnosis (2016).

In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused schools to quickly reinvent the way teachers educate students while keeping all students protected from this epidemic that flowed through the entire world. Many schools had the technological measures to be proactive while others were left in limbo attempting to figure a way out. The Covid-19 pandemic is a barrier to all students; however, understanding the services that students with EBD received during this time is imperative to understanding the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of the students (Hirsch et al., 2021). According to the Hirsch et al. (2021), access to technology and Internet to make remote learning possible varied worldwide and had a significant impact on the type of services students with EBD received. According to the literature, there are very few studies related to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and students with emotional and behavior disorders (Hirsch et al., 2021). There is a need for research to address the attitudes of all educators and parents to further understand the barriers of inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders.

Supports

According to the review of literature, several supports were identified as necessary for the inclusion of students with disabilities. For students with EBD, O'Dear identified three themes: crisis planning, professional development and training, and staff in the area of support. According to the participants in O'Dear's study there is a need for behavior plans and crisis planning for students with EBD when the behavior becomes unmanageable (2016). Professional development and training for educators regarding

disability characteristics, individual education program, special education law, and

classroom management to handle specific situations with students with disabilities is a

necessity (Andreasen, 2014a; Andreasen, 2014b; Fuchs, 2010; O'Dear, 2016). The

literature also suggests there is a need for collaboration between general educators and

special educators and more support from administration (Fuchs, 2010; O'Dear, 2016).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), introduced in the 1997

amendments of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, is another way some

school districts support students with EBD (George, 2018). According to Benner et al.

(2013), PBIS

> uses a continuum of behavior interventions to understand and meet youth social,
>
> emotional, and behavioral needs. PBIS is a MTSS framework for behavior,
>
> establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for schools to be
>
> effective learning environments for all youth. A positive facility or school culture
>
> means one that is predictable (i.e., common language, common understanding of
>
> expectations, common experience), positive (i.e., regular recognition for positive
>
> behavior), safe (i.e., violent and disruptive behavior is not tolerated), and
>
> consistent (adults are "on the same page" with behavioral expectations). PBIS
>
> holds particular promise for students with or at-risk for E/BD as a unified
>
> structure to (a) prevent the development of E/BD and (b) address existing
>
> instances. (p. 19)

The literature does not thoroughly address the need for support from parents, guardians,

and other potential stakeholders such as counselors or behavior therapists.

Summary

Students with disabilities have the right to be educated in their least restrictive environment which is usually in the general education setting amongst their non-disabled peers (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014). However, students with emotional and behavior disorders are usually limited to more restrictive environments mainly due to student behavior (Sutherland et al., 2008). According to the literature review, inclusion is a historically controversial topic in the realm of education for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities were being place in more restrictive environments to avoid conflicts and confusion in the general education settings (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Mitchell et al., 2019). Efforts to include students in general education settings evolved from integration to mainstreaming to inclusion and many students with disabilities received opportunities to be include in environments with their non-disabled peers (Osgood, 2005). Students with EBD continue to have difficulties with inclusion in the general education environment. According to the literature, educators experience difficulty instructing and accommodating students with EBD in the general education setting due to the behaviors and learning deficits student may display (Kirby, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2008). Although there are many suggested effective interventions and strategies for students with EBD, there are reported barriers that prevent educators from implementing these strategies in the general education setting (McKenna et al., 2019).

Chapter II included a review of literature that explores the historical overview of inclusion, several landmark court cases that are significant to inclusion, a historical overview of emotional and behavior disorders, and overview of attitudes, and an overview of barriers and supports to inclusion. The methods, procedures, and participants

for this study will be described in Chapter III. The results of this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV, and the implications of this study and future research will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. This mixed methods study employed quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the attitudes of educators regarding students with EBD, the attitudes of educators and parents regarding inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom, perceived barriers of inclusion of students with EBD, and the specific factors educators and parents recommend for overcoming those barriers.

This study addressed the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the attitudes of educators about inclusive education?

RQ 2: What are the attitudes of educators and parents about the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom?

RQ 3: What do educators and parents perceive as barriers of inclusion students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom before and during the pandemic?

RQ 4: What supports do educators and parents perceive as necessary to overcome the barriers of inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom?

This chapter explains the process used to analyze the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders and the perceived barriers and supports of inclusion. This chapter outlines the research design,

participants in the study, the research instrument used in the study, and how data will be collected and analyzed.

Research Design

The research study was explored using a mixed methods study design that incorporated quantitative and qualitative research methods. Mixed methods research is defined as "an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks" (Creswell, 2014, p. 32). According to Creswell (2014), it is assumed that by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, researchers will have a more thorough understanding of a research problem than by only using a single approach. The specific approach utilized for this study is the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. According to Creswell (2014), this design "involves a two-phase project in which the researcher collects quantitative data in the first phase, analyzes the results, and then uses the results to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase" (p. 274). The research method used for phase I was survey research which "provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2014, pp. 41-42). The research method used for phase II was phenomenological research which is a type of inquiry involving interviews in which the researcher describes the participants' real-life experiences regarding a real-world topic (Creswell, 2014). This research design allowed the parents in this study to discuss their views regarding inclusion and to express their feelings regarding the educator survey results. This provided for a better understanding of educators and parents attitudes,

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potential barriers, and needed supports regarding the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

Participants for each phase of this study were selected according to the population researched. The participants for Phase I were initially going to be solicited via various school districts in the southern region; however, each district denied requests to participate. The following specific reasons for the denial to conduct research were given by most districts: the pandemic, restructuring, and the controversial nature of the topic. After careful consideration, phase I participants in the quantitative phase were selected using probability-based sampling and non-probability sampling methods. The probability-based sampling method used was stratified random sampling. This technique involves sampling the entire population; however, specific criteria were used to narrow the search (Davies et al., 2008). In this case, the researcher set the criteria to elementary educators in specified educator groups on the Facebook social media outlet. Those educator groups were, Teachers Ask Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Educator.FYI Group, and The Done Dissertation. This method allowed the researcher to obtain an adequate sample in the population based on the participants position. The non-probability sampling method used was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a type of non-random sampling method where data is collected from participants that are easily accessible in-person or online, in close proximity, and willing to participate in the study (Davies et al., 2008). The researcher used the easily accessible Facebook network and educator groups to distribute the survey for this study. The participants were selected from educators currently working in a school in the United States. Educators consisted of

any administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers working in a public-school system in an elementary school setting.

This study was open to participants from all regions of the United States to have a better representation of the population on a national level. Participants for phase I were selected from elementary educators in school districts across the United States. The researcher used social media timeline, messenger, and educator groups on Facebook to recruit elementary educators from the United States. Based on Facebook and the groups' policies and procedures, posting an announcement to recruit survey participants was not a violation of the groups' terms of use policy. The Facebook groups are Teachers Ask Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Educator.FYI Group, and The Done Dissertation. Each educator's response was voluntary, and incentives were not offered upon completion. Based on *G*Power* calculations a minimum sample size of 160 participants was recommended for a medium effect size (f = .25), standard power (β = .80), and 3 groups. The three groups, administrators, general educators, and special educators would need approximately 53 participants. Although there were more than enough participants for the general educators group, the number of participants possible for the administrators and special educators group did cause this study to have unequal sample sizes and variances if the number of needed participants is not obtained. Having both unequal sample sizes and variances can affect statistical power and increase Type I errors (Rusticus & Lovato, 2014).Questionnaires were distributed a second time electronically to attempt to obtain the needed participants.

Participants in phase II, the qualitative phase, were selected using convenience sampling. Five parent participants of children with emotional and behavior disorders in

the elementary setting were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate in the interview. The participants were selected from parents of students with emotional disabilities in Mississippi. Parents were recruited with the assistance of educators via Facebook timeline posting, messenger, and educator groups. Parents were invited by e-mail, mail, or social media correspondence to participate in the interview. Once selected, each participant was sent the parent consent form via e-mail, mail, or social media. The researcher asked each participant to return the consent form within one week after they receive the form. Participants returned the signed form via picture message, e-mail, social media message attachment, or by mail. Some of the interview questions were based on the data received from the educator survey. The researcher conducted the interviews at the convenience of the parent via the Google Meet and Zoom conference applications. The researcher contacted the parent participants 1 week prior to confirm the interview and 2 days prior to give parents the login information for the interview medium of their choice. The parent participants also received a digital reminder 1 hour prior to the meeting. Parents were not offered any incentives for their participation in this study.

<p style="text-align:center">Positionality</p>

As a special education educator, I have instructed students with EBD for over 16 years in self-contained environments. I currently have students with EBD in my self-contained classroom that are facing a very discouraging future because they have been in a self-contained classroom their entire school career. Many educators are not willing to allow these students in their academic settings although there is support available to assist

them in any way necessary. Their parents are not knowledgeable of inclusion and prefer that their child stay in a self-contained classroom setting.

The goal for this research study was to understand other educators' attitudes regarding inclusion and how they feel about students with EBD being educated in the general education classroom. I desired to understand the barriers that hinder students with EBD from being educated in the general education classroom and the supports needed to keep them in general education settings. Parents are fundamental to the process of inclusion of their child with EBD in the general education classroom and thus I desired to understand their feelings towards inclusion and get their ideas about how to make this process successful. By gaining an understanding of educators and parents attitudes regarding inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom, educators can work together to provide more positive outcomes, a better quality of education, and a brighter future for our students with emotional and behavior disorders.

<div align="center">Instruments</div>

The instrument for phase I (see Appendix B) is a questionnaire adapted by the researcher that was used to collect data regarding educator attitudes of students with emotional and behavior disorders as well as possible barriers and needed supports for inclusion of this population of students. With permission from the authors, related sections from the Inclusion Inventory (Becker et al., 2000) were modified and used in this research study. The authors developed this instrument for Inclusion Works, A Project of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities (Becker et al., 2000). The Inclusion Inventory consists of 90 items arranged into eight sections and is intended to evaluate school-wide inclusive education practices. The sections of the inventory are: The

Background Information Section (22 items), Planning for Inclusive Practices (17 items),

Support for Inclusive Practices (5 items), Use of Inclusive Practices (10 items),

Implementation of Inclusive Practices (14 items), Beliefs about Inclusive Practices (11

items), Effects of Inclusive Practices (4 items), and Classroom Teaching Practices (7

items) (Becker et al., 2000).

Cronbach's alpha values range from 0 to 1, with a minimum score of .7 as the

recommended value for reliability (Fowler, 2014). Becker et al. (2000) reported that the

internal consistency reliability coefficients were .72 or above for all scales in the

Inclusion Inventory. Table 1 illustrates the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the sections

in the original version of the Inclusion Inventory. Therefore, The Inclusion Inventory has

acceptable levels of reliability across all sections.

Table 1 *Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the Inclusion Inventory (Becker et
al., 2000)*

Subscale	# of Items	Mean	SD	N	Alpha Value
Planning for Inclusive Practices	16	2.43	.71	2,435	.96
Support for Inclusive Practices	5	2.82	.64	2,672	.85
Use of Inclusive Practices	10	1.94	.64	2,715	.89
Implementation of Practices	14	2.90	.45	2,597	.86
Beliefs About Inclusive Practices	11	2.33	.39	2,714	.72
Effects of Inclusive Practices	4	2.78	.68	2,689	.82
Classroom Teaching Practices	7	2.52	.55	2,657	.81

Note. Adapted from "The inclusion inventory: A tool to assess perceptions of the implementation of inclusive educational practices,"
by H. Becker, G. Roberts, and S. Dumas, 2000, Special Services in the Schools, 16(1-2), p. 65

After modifications were made by the researcher to the Inclusion Inventory, the questions were based on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree , 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, and 7 = Strongly Agree. Qualtrics software was used to create and distribute the questionnaire. Questions in the barriers to inclusion section, 43-52, were negatively phrased thus the items were recoded and reverse scored in SPSS so that all variables were consistent.

Since the original questionnaire was adapted, a pretest was administered to ensure content validity where each item is clear, concise, and adequately measures the research questions. Using Cronbach's alpha, the modified questionnaire was used in a pilot test for internal consistency to ensure scores are reliable.

The instrument for phase II (see Appendix C) was a semi-structured interview protocol which was based on the survey results of phase I. An interview protocol was used to guide the interviews of parents of students with EBD in seeking meaningful insight regarding the educator survey results and the possible barriers and supports of inclusion of their children in the general education classroom. The researcher created the script and prompts to ensure that all research questions would be addressed. Each interview session was conducted via video conference. Interview participants were notified of the video conference date 2 weeks prior to the interview session and 1 week prior to confirm the interview session. Each interview session was recorded, and the transcripts were keyed and coded to find the major themes of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom from the view of the parents.

Procedures

Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi (see Appendix A), the researcher followed the sequence of events described below.

Phase I – Quantitative

1. The researcher pretested the modified questionnaire with approximately 10 random educators who did not participate in the actual study to ensure the survey is clear, concise, and valid.

2. The researcher determined the pool of approximately 30 random educators who were not used in the actual study to participate in the pilot study of the questionnaire.

3. The researcher conducted a pilot study of the questionnaire with the selected participants by emailing them the link with a brief introduction and words of appreciation for their participation.

4. The researcher evaluated the results of the pilot study for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability to ensure the instrument in reliable as a whole and within each section. The questionnaire was revised based on the test results.

5. After the questionnaire was finalized, the Qualtrics survey link was posted via Facebook timeline, Messenger, and in the following groups: Teachers Ask Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Educator.FYI Group, and The Done Dissertation. The web-based survey has six sections which includes demographics for participants to complete. Participants responded to the survey by clicking on

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the items that best described their attitudes toward EBD students. The survey took

approximately 15 minutes for participants to complete.

6. Once a participant consented to participate, they were directed to the beginning of

    the survey. If a participant chose not to consent, they were directed to the end of

    the survey and thanked for their time and consideration.

7. After collecting the completed responses, the researcher performed data analysis

    by entering the information into SPSS and running descriptive statistical analysis.

8. Participants were allotted 2 weeks to complete the survey. After the initial 2-week

    period passes, the researcher posted a second message via Facebook timeline,

    Messenger and in the following groups: Teachers Ask Teachers, Special

    Education Teachers, Educator.FYI Group, and The Done Dissertation. After 4

    weeks, the survey closed.

Phase II – Qualitative

9. Upon completion of the educator survey, the researcher constructed additional

    questions for the parent participants based on the results of the educator survey.

    The researcher used a semi-structured interview technique (Appendix C).

10. Parents were invited by e-mail, mail, or social media correspondence to

    participate in the interview. Once selected, each participant was sent the

    parent consent form via e-mail, mail, or social media. The researcher asked each

    participant to return the consent form within one week after they receive the

    form. Participants returned the signed form via picture message, e-mail, or social

    media message attachment, or by mail.

11. Each interview session occurred at the convenience of the parent via Google Meet or Zoom video conferencing. The researcher contacted the parent participants 1 week prior to confirm the interview and 2 days prior to give parents the login information for the interview medium of their choice. The parent participant also received a digital reminder 1 hour prior to the meeting.

12. Prior to the online interview, the researcher asked the participant for verbal consent to interview and to audio record the interview. The researcher reminded the participant that the signed consent form was received and informed the participants that they may withdraw from the interview at any time during the process.

13. Before the interview, the researcher asked the participants to create a pseudonym of their choice to assist with maintaining the confidentiality of the interview session. Data resulting from the interview sessions (phase II) was recorded, the transcript was keyed and coded to find the major themes of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom from the view of the parents.

14. Due to the topic, some parents became emotional or upset when discussing their child's educational experiences. The researcher allowed participants to collect themselves and then reiterated that participation is completely voluntary, and they were able to discontinue the interview at any time during the process.

15. The researcher reminded parents that participation was voluntary and informed them of their right to withdraw from research or limit their participation if they become uncomfortable.

16. The researcher informed the parent participants that all data was kept confidential and only the researcher was allowed access to any information divulged by the participant.

Data Storage

Upon completion of Phase I, the data was used to prepare the data analysis portion of the researcher's dissertation. All electronic data was stored on the researcher's primary computer which is password protected. All hard copy data was stored in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher has access. Final disposition of electronic data used for this dissertation study was deleted and hard copy data was shredded in a paper shredder and subsequently thrown into the trash.

During Phase II of this study, the parent interview participants were assigned a pseudonym of their choice and the researcher is the only person with access to the information of which person was associated with which pseudonym. After receiving feedback from the participants on the transcription of the interviews, any association with the participant's name and pseudonym was erased to protect anonymity. Data were presented in the form of themes. The audio data was disposed of after the analysis for ethical reasons.

Data Analysis

To analyze the survey data, demographic data and descriptive statistics were used to organize and summarize the educator responses. This summarized data allowed the researcher to determine the educators' attitudes toward students with EBD and the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom. Data resulting from the interview sessions (phase II) was recorded, a transcript was transcribed and coded to

find the major themes of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom from the view of the parents. Data was analyzed using the Constant Comparative Analysis Method. The constant comparative method was developed by Glaser and Strauss and used in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method allows the researcher to sort raw data into groups based on similar characteristics and those groups are structured to as emergent themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

The researcher listened to the recordings consistently and precisely in order to check for errors and clarify unclear responses. During the reading of each transcript, the researcher conducted open coding where the transcripts were broken down into excepts, the excepts of the parent participants were compared, and labels/codes were developed. The researcher listened to each recording again and conducted axial coding to enhance the labeling process and determine definitive themes in the data analysis process (Saldãna, 2016). Consistent themes were identified through the horizontalization process where the researcher lists significant statements that were relevant to the participants' experiences and allow each theme to be treated equally (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, member checking was utilized by inviting study participants to review their own interview transcripts for errors and provide feedback to the researcher.

The questions from the questionnaire and interview sessions were analyzed to answer each of the research questions as follows:

RQ 1: Results from questions 12-22 on the questionnaire address educators' attitudes about inclusive education. Item 5 on the parent interview address parents' attitudes about the inclusion of all students with disabilities.

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RQ 2: Results from questions 23-34 on the questionnaire address educators' attitudes about the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. Items 6, 7, 8, and 9 on the parent interview address parents' attitudes about the inclusion of their child with EBD. This also includes parents' attitudes towards select questions in this section on the educator survey.

RQ 3: Results from questions 35-42 and 43-52 on the questionnaire address what educators' perceive as barriers of inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom before and during the pandemic. Items 10, 11, and 12 on the parent interview address what parents' perceive as barriers of inclusion of students with EBD into the general education classroom before and during the pandemic. This also includes parents' attitudes towards select questions in this section on the educator survey.

RQ 4: Results from questions 53-63 on the questionnaire address the supports educators deemed as necessary to overcome the barriers of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom. Items 13, 14, and 15 on the parent interview address the supports parents deem necessary to overcome the barriers of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom. This also includes parents' attitudes towards select questions in this section on the educator survey.

Summary

Detailed in this chapter the researcher provided a clear and precise description of the specific steps to be followed to conduct this research study. This study used a mixed method design to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general

education classroom. The next chapter, Chapter IV, will provide an in-depth

presentation of the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis process.

CHAPTER IV – ANALYSIS OF DATA

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. This study used a mixed methods research design to examine the views of educators and parents. Specifically, in phase I, the researcher used quantitative methods to explore the attitudes of educators regarding general inclusion, students with emotional and behavioral disorders in inclusion, perceived barriers of inclusion before and during the pandemic, and the specific supports educators suggest for overcoming those barriers. During phase II of the study, the researcher interviewed parents and obtained their view of inclusion based on their experiences with their child and/or children with EBD and their reflections of the educator survey results.

Phase I

The sections that examined phase I of this research study are the following: the instrument, the demographics of the participants, the research questions, and the summary. The quantitative survey results were analyzed through using SPSS, Version 27. Demographic information was used to describe the phase I participants. Descriptive statistics were used to explore the attitudes of educators, determine any perceived barriers, and explore the supports needed to overcome those barriers.

Instrumentation

The Inclusion Inventory, used in this research study was adapted by the researcher. The adapted inventory contains 63 questions arranged into 6 sections: demographics, general inclusion, inclusions and emotional and behavior disorders, barriers of inclusion, barriers of inclusion (pandemic), and supports of inclusion. The

section, barriers of inclusion, contains questions related to the covid pandemic because it was a major factor for our students with EBD during the time period of this study. To evaluate the readability of the instrument used, a pilot study was conducted with a group of 30 random participants ranging from people with 1 to 30 years of teaching experience at various school districts across the United States. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the questionnaire was clear, concise, valid, and reliable. The pilot study participants were asked to read everything thoroughly and to make a note of any concerns they had regarding clarity, wording, or any other issue they believed to be confusing when viewing the questionnaire. The completed pilot study questionnaire consisted of 63 items. Eleven of these items collected demographic data from the respondents and 52 items collected data (using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) regarding the attitudes of educators and parents about the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. The data collected from the pilot study were entered into SPSS to determine the reliability of the adapted questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha was used to verify internal consistency and yielded a score of .816 which indicates good internal consistency.

Demographics

The survey was distributed through the Facebook social media timeline, messenger, and educator groups on Facebook to recruit elementary educators from the United States. The Facebook groups are Teachers Ask Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Educator.FYI Group, and The Done Dissertation. There were 135 educators who completed the questionnaire. Thirty-five participants were administrators, 45 were general education teachers, and 43 were special education teachers. Twelve educators

chose 'other' to specify their current position. The 12 other positions included counselors, speech teachers, and academic interventionists.

Participants answered questions pertaining to their age, years' teaching experience, highest degree received, and current location. Responses from participants indicated that the majority of the educators ranged from 31-50 years in age. Only 9 participants were 25 and younger. The highest percentage of educators, 58.5%, had 10 or more years of experience as educators. Ten of the participants did not disclose years of experience information resulting in 7.4% of missing data. Participant responses indicated the highest degree level of the majority of the educators is master's level. Ten of the participants did not disclose a response to their highest degree level thus resulting in a small percentage of missing data. Also, all of the participants are currently teaching in the southern region of the United States. Specifically, 58.8% of the participants were in the state of Mississippi. In Table 2 and Table 3, the participant demographic data is displayed.

Table 2 *Educator Demographics*

Characteristic	Participant (n)	%
Current position		
Administrator	35	25.9%
General education teacher	45	33.3%
Special education teacher	43	31.9%
Other	12	8.9%

Table 2 Continued

Characteristic	Participant (n)	%
Age range		
25 or less	9	6.7%
26-30	13	9.6%
31-40	46	34.1%
41-50	49	36.3%
51-above	18	13.3%
Years of experience		
1-3 years	14	10.4%
4-6 years	17	12.6%
7-9 years	15	11.1%
10 or more years	79	58.5%
Missing	10	7.4%
Highest degree received		
Bachelor's	22	16.3%
Master's	58	43.0%
Specialist	26	19.3%
Doctorate	19	14.1%
Missing	10	7.4%

Table 3 *Educators' Location*

Location	Frequency	Percent
Alabama	6	4.4%
Arkansas	7	5.2%
Florida	5	3.7%
Georgia	11	8.1%
Louisiana	6	4.4%
Maryland	3	2.2%

Table 3 Continued

Location	Frequency	Percent
Mississippi	79	58.8%
North Carolina	3	2.2%
South Carolina	3	2.2%
Tennessee	5	3.7%
Texas	6	4.4%
Virginia	1	.7%
Total	135	100.0%

Research Questions Results

Research Question 1

What are the attitudes of educators about inclusive education?

The first research question was constructed to determine K-12 educators' attitudes about inclusive education in the elementary setting. Questions 12 – 22 of the survey instrument were designed to answer the first research question. According to the results, 46.6% of the educators agreed that they were prepared to teach in an inclusive environment, 45.9% of the participants disagreed, and 7.4% were neutral with their answers. Of the 135 educators surveyed, 56.2% agreed that students with disabilities would perform better in an inclusive setting while 26.7% disagreed and 17% of educators were neutral on the topic. The results report that 70.5% of the participants agreed that general education teachers are responsible for educating students with disabilities while 67.5% agreed that special education teacher are responsible for educating students with disabilities.

When asked about their willingness to collaborate and modify curriculum, 84.5% of the educators reported they could collaborate with other teachers in an inclusive setting and 85.9% were also willing to make instructional modifications for students with disabilities. Educators results showed that 57.8% believed that students with disabilities are not disruptive to the general education environment. The results also showed that 72.6% of the educators agreed they have sufficient support with educating students with disabilities in their classrooms and schools.

Table 4 provides the mean and standard deviations for each item answered by educational professionals regarding their perspective toward inclusion. If the mean response was closer to 1 or 2, it meant that the educational professional had more of a negative attitude toward inclusion. If the mean response was above 3, it meant that the educational professional had a more positive perspective toward inclusion. The overall results indicated that majority of the participants had a positive attitude towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting

Table 4 *Mean and Standard Deviations for Educators' Attitudes Toward Inclusion*

Statements	N	M	SD
I am willing to make instructional modifications for students with disabilities.	135	5.90	1.351
I can collaborate with other teachers in inclusive classrooms.	135	5.70	1.378
General education teachers are responsible for educating students with disabilities.	135	5.07	1.497
I have sufficient support for educating students with disabilities in my school or classroom.	135	4.90	1.513
Special education teachers are responsible for educating students with disabilities.	135	4.89	1.615
Students with disabilities will likely perform better in inclusive classrooms.	135	4.46	1.359

Table 4 Continued

Statements	N	M	SD
I was prepared to teach in an inclusion classroom environment.	135	3.86	1.829
Students with disabilities should be educated in resource classrooms.	135	3.84	1.381
Students with disabilities should be educated in self-contained classroom environments.	135	3.21	1.411
Students with disabilities should receive all academic instruction from a special education teacher.	135	3.04	1.540
Educating students with disabilities is disruptive to the classroom environment.	135	3.02	1.549
I was prepared to teach in an inclusion classroom environment.	135	3.86	1.829

Research Question 2

What are the attitudes of educators and parents about the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom?

The second research question was constructed to ascertain the attitudes of educators and parents as it relates to the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom. The data collected in this section contains the survey results of the educator participants. According to the data, 63% of the educators reported that they were not adequately prepared to educate students with emotional and behavior disorders. When asked if "students with EBD will likely perform better in inclusive settings," 38.1% disagreed, 38.8% agreed, and 23.1% were neutral regarding the topic. The data showed that 54.1% of the educators agreed that students with EBD will likely form positive relationships with other students in the general education setting. The educators data also showed that 50.4% agreed that the presence of students with EBD would be a good experience for the other students, but over half of the educators, 51.9%, agreed that

students with EBD are disruptive to the general education classroom environment.

Sixty percent of educators agreed that their district and/or school provides sufficient support for educating students with EBD in their classrooms, but 58.5% of the educators do not look forward to the challenge of educating students with EBD at their school. When questioned about the effects of the general education classroom on students with EBD, 51.8% of educators agreed that students with EBD would develop a more positive attitude in the general education environment. The data also showed that 58.5% of the educators agreed that being in the general education environment would increase the chances for students with EBD to have more positive outcomes. Less than half of the educators, 41.5%, reported that students with EBD would not negatively affect the other students in the general education classroom. Of the educators surveyed, 30.3% reported that students with EBD would negatively affect the other students while 28.1% were neutral regarding the topic.

When questioned if students should receive the majority of their academic instruction from a special education teacher or a general education teacher, the educators responses were almost equal with 41.5% of the educator agreeing that students with EBD should be taught by special education teachers and 42.2% of educators agreeing that students with EBD should be taught by general education teachers. Table 5 depicts the full results of the two statements with the reported cumulative percentages broken down into their individual Likert scale category.

Table 5 *Questions 31 and 32 Frequencies and Precents*

Question	Scale	Frequency	Percent
Q31 Students with EBD should receive all academic instruction from a special education teacher.	Strongly disagree	11	8.1%
	Disagree	41	30.4%
	Somewhat disagree	6	4.4%
	Neither agree/disagree	21	15.6%
	Somewhat agree	25	18.5%
	Agree	24	17.8%
	Strongly agree	7	5.2%
	Total	135	100.0%
Q32 Students with EBD should be educated in the general education classroom for most of the day.	Strongly disagree	2	1.5%
	Disagree	26	19.3%
	Somewhat disagree	28	20.7%
	Neither agree/disagree	22	16.3%
	Somewhat agree	30	22.2%
	Agree	18	13.3%
	Strongly agree	9	6.7%
	Total	135	100.0%

Note: The cumulative percentages for the agree and disagree categories of the Likert scale are the numbers being reported in the researchers results. The table depicts the percentages for each category of the Likert scale.

Research Question 3

What do educators and parents perceive as barriers of inclusion students with

emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom before and

during the pandemic?

The third research question focused on educators identifying barriers of inclusion for students with emotional and behavior disorders. The researcher also explored potential barriers during the Coronavirus pandemic. Cumulative percentages were reported according to the survey results of the educator participants. According to the results reported, 55.6% of educators disagreed with the statement "administrators do not provide classroom support for teachers of students with EBD." When questioned about district funding, 42.2% of educators agreed that districts do not have adequate funding to support students with EBD in the general education classroom. Forty-seven percent of the educators surveyed disagreed with the statement that "students with EBD cannot receive adequate support in a general education classroom." The data showed that 46.3% of educators do not adequately collaborate to plan and implement strategies for students with EBD, while 57% of the educators surveyed reported that teachers do not have enough time to adequately implement strategies for students with EBD. Educators also reported that 67.5% of teachers are not prepared to implement strategies for students with EBD in a general education classroom. When questioned about parents communication and support of their children with EBD, 52.6% of the educators surveyed reported that parents do not communicate necessary information with teachers regarding their child and 60.8% of the parents do not provide the school with adequate support. Table 6 depicts the full results of the two statements with the reported cumulative percentages broken down into their individual Likert scale category.

Table 6 *Questions 36 and 38 Frequencies and Percentages*

Question	Scale	Frequency	Percent
Q36 Parents do not communicate with educators necessary information concerning their child with EBD.	Strongly disagree	4	3.0%
	Disagree	13	9.6%
	Somewhat disagree	29	21.5%
	Neither agree/disagree	18	13.3%
	Somewhat agree	55	40.7%
	Agree	14	10.4%
	Strongly agree	2	1.5%
	Total	135	100.0%
Q38 Parents of students with EBD do not provide the school with adequate support.	Strongly disagree	5	3.7%
	Disagree	9	6.7%
	Somewhat disagree	16	11.9%
	Neither agree/disagree	23	17.0%
	Somewhat agree	59	43.7%
	Agree	16	11.9%
	Strongly agree	7	5.2%
	Total	135	100.0%

Research Question 3 - Pandemic

When questioned about the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on students with EBD, 63% of 135 educators surveyed agreed overall that students with EBD did not have adequate support in the general education classroom setting. Of the 85 educators that

agreed that students with EBD did not have adequate support, 39% were general

education teachers and 34 % were special education teachers. Over half of the educators

surveyed (54.1%) reported that teachers were not provided with the necessary resources

to educate the students with EBD during the pandemic.

According to the data, educators agreed that students with EBD willingness to

participate in the general education environment decreased. Over half agreed that

participation decreased with in-person learning (59.3%), hybrid learning (52.6%), and

virtual learning (60.8%).

When questioned about students with EBD having adequate access to the general

education environment during the pandemic, 55.6% of educators reported the students

did not have adequate access with in-person learning, 52.6% reported the students did not

have adequate access with hybrid learning, and 52.7% reported the students did not have

adequate access with virtual learning.

Forty-five percent of educators reported that the inappropriate behaviors of

students with EBD increased during the pandemic. Sixty-three percent of the educators

surveyed also reported that parents did not provide their child with EBD adequate support

during the pandemic. Table 7 depicts the full results of the ten statements related to the

pandemic with the reported cumulative percentages broken down by the educators

position and the individual Likert scale category.

Table 7 *Educators' Responses to Pandemic Questions*

Question	Response	Current Position				Totals	%
		Administrator	General Ed. Teacher	Special Ed. Teacher	Other		
Since the pandemic, students with EBD did not have adequate support in the general education classroom.	Strongly Agree	2	4	3	1	10	7.4%
	Agree	6	8	6	1	21	15.6%
	Somewhat Agree	9	21	20	4	54	40.0%
	Neither	2	0	2	1	5	3.7%
	Somewhat Disagree	6	10	8	3	27	20.0%
	Disagree	10	2	4	2	18	13.3%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Teachers were not provided with the necessary resources to educate students with EBD during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	1	1	0	0	2	1.5%
	Agree	7	6	4	3	20	14.8%
	Somewhat Agree	11	15	22	3	51	37.8%
	Neither	1	2	2	1	6	4.4%
	Somewhat Disagree	9	15	11	2	37	27.4%
	Disagree[	6	6	4	3	19	14.1%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Students with EBD willingness to participate in the general classroom environment (in-person) decreased during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	0	3	0	1	4	3.0%
	Agree	3	1	1	0	5	3.7%
	Somewhat Agree	21	20	27	3	71	52.6%
	Neither	0	1	2	2	5	3.7%
	Somewhat Disagree	7	17	11	4	39	28.9%
	Disagree	4	3	2	2	11	8.1%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Students with EBD willingness to participate in the general classroom environment (hybrid) decreased during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	0	2	4	0	6	4.4%
	Agree	4	5	6	2	17	12.6%
	Somewhat Agree	12	13	20	3	48	35.6%
	Neither	0	2	3	1	6	4.4%
	Somewhat Disagree	16	17	6	3	42	31.0%
	Disagree	3	6	4	3	16	12.0%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Students with EBD willingness to participate in the general classroom environment (virtual) decreased during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	0	2	2	0	4	3.0%
	Agree	2	9	14	1	26	19.3%
	Somewhat Agree	18	13	19	2	52	38.5%
	Neither	1	2	0	1	4	3.0%
	Somewhat Disagree	10	13	5	6	34	25.2%
	Disagree	4	6	3	2	15	11.0%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%

Table 7 Continued

Question	Response	Current Position				Totals	%
		Administrator	General Ed. Teacher	Special Ed. Teacher	Other		
Students with EBD did not have adequate access to the general education environment (in-person) during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	1	2	1	0	4	3.0%
	Agree	6	11	11	0	28	20.7%
	Somewhat Agree	10	12	15	6	43	31.8%
	Neither	7	6	6	0	19	14.1%
	Somewhat Disagree	8	10	8	4	30	22.2%
	Disagree	3	4	2	2	11	8.2%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Students with EBD did not have adequate access to the general education environment (hybrid) during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	1	1	3	0	5	3.7%
	Agree	6	8	10	2	26	19.3%
	Somewhat Agree	8	15	14	3	40	29.6%
	Neither	7	9	4	1	21	15.6%
	Somewhat Disagree	5	8	7	5	25	18.5%
	Disagree	5	4	5	1	15	11.1%
	Strongly Disagree	3	0	0	0	3	2.2%
Students with EBD did not have adequate access to the general education environment (virtual) during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	1	0	6	2	9	6.7%
	Agree	3	9	13	0	25	18.5%
	Somewhat Agree	8	18	15	0	41	30.3%
	Neither	3	6	4	3	16	12%
	Somewhat Disagree	8	6	3	1	18	13.3%
	Disagree	6	6	2	4	18	13.3%
	Strongly Disagree	6	0	0	2	8	5.9%
Students with EBD inappropriate behaviors increased during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	2	0	0	0	2	1.5%
	Agree	1	6	6	1	14	10.4%
	Somewhat Agree	9	15	17	4	45	33.3%
	Neither	6	9	8	4	27	20%
	Somewhat Disagree	13	13	11	2	39	28.9%
	Disagree	4	2	1	1	8	5.9%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Parents did not provide their student with EBD adequate support during the pandemic.	Strongly Agree	2	4	3	2	11	8.2%
	Agree	8	4	10	3	25	18.5%
	Somewhat Agree	8	16	21	4	49	36.3%
	Neither	7	5	5	1	18	13.3%
	Somewhat Disagree	17	10	3	2	22	16.3%
	Disagree	1	5	1	0	7	5.2%
	Strongly Disagree	2	1	0	0	3	2.2%

Research Question 4

What supports do educators and parents perceive as necessary to overcome the barriers of inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom?

The fourth research question focused on the perceived supports of inclusion as identified by educators in the survey results. Two of the questions in this section had one missing response which did not affect the outcome of the results. According to the data, 65% of the educators surveyed reported that building administrators are responsive to the daily concerns teachers have regarding students with EBD and 55.5% of the educators reported that district administrators are committed to the inclusion of these students in the general education classroom. Fifty-three percent of the educators reported that the teachers support inclusive education for students with EBD, 48.9% reported there is a positive rapport amongst educators in their district, and 54% reported they have sufficient support to implement inclusive practices for students with EBD. However, the data showed that 54% of the educators reported their district did not adequately prepare them to work with students with EBD, 57% of the educators reported they did not have sufficient access to professional developments to implement strategies, and 51% reported they did not have sufficient opportunities to collaborate regarding inclusive practices. Sixty-two percent of educators also reported that college did not adequately prepare them to educate students with EBD. When question about parental support, 53.3% of the educators reported that parents were not very supportive concerning their student with EBD.

Phase II

Phase II of this research used a basic qualitative design with a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach allowed for a deeper examination into the lived experiences of the participants and provided a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of these parents of students with emotional and behavior disorders (Creswell,

2013; Moustakas, 1994). The method of inquiry for the qualitative portion of this study were semi-structured interviews, video recordings, transcriptions, and field notes. The researcher used the transcribed video recordings and field notes to determine themes and patterns that emerged during the interviews. In order to protect the confidentiality and identities of each participant, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant.

Phase II Instrumentation

Based on a review of the literature, there is very little information regarding parents' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with EBD in the general classroom environment. Thus, in-depth interviews was the best data collection method for this phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013). The researcher developed an interview protocol guided by the research questions and the educator survey. The researcher conducted interviews with 5 parents of children with EBD via Google Meet video conferencing platform. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Additionally, personal notes were made for data collection and analysis.

Demographics

The target population for this qualitative phenomenological study included parents of children with emotional and behavior disorders. The parents were selected using convenience sampling based on their willingness to participate in this study and snowball sampling through referrals and recommendation of others to ensure that the participants had experienced the phenomena being explored. The Interview Protocol included questions that asked basic demographic data to inquire about the participant's age, relationship to the child, the child's grade level, and the child's current classroom setting. Table 8 provides a snapshot of the five participants and includes the demographic

information previously mentioned. Participants in the study have been assigned

pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity.

Table 8 *Demographic Information*

Pseudonyms	Relationship	Age	Child's Grade	Child's Gender	Child's Placement
William	Father	41-50	5th	Male	Self-contained
Tina	Mother	26-30	2nd	Female	Resource
Dena	Mother	31-40	4th	Male	Self-contained
Kelly	Grandmother	51-60	5th	Male	Resource
Joan	Mother	41-50	3rd	Male	General Education

All participants were located in Mississippi; however, the specific locations and school

district information were not disclosed in this study to protect the participants' identities.

Each of the participants stated that their child had an IEP with a ruling of emotional

disability (EmD or EMD). According to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)

state board policy manual, *Procedures For State Board Policy 74.19 Volume I: Child

Find Evaluation and Eligibility*, the acronym used on a student's IEP for emotional

disability in the state of Mississippi is EmD or EMD.

Participant Overview

The following section presents a brief overview of the five participants included

in the study.

Participant 1. William is a married, African American male who is self-employed and is

the primary caregiver for his 11-year-old son in 5th grade. William's wife, is the

stepmother to his son. Williams son and wife have a decent relationship. William has one

other child, a daughter, with his wife. William's son has had behavior difficulties since he was around age four. William stated that he believes that his son's aggressive behaviors started after his son's biological mother decided to leave him in his care. William stated that his son's biological mother does contact him occasionally on the phone and he visits her during the summer months and some holidays when school is out. William stated that at home his son would show aggression mostly when he could not have something he desired. He would also be disrespectful to his stepmother when he was asked to do a task. At school, his son has exhibited very aggressive behaviors from yelling, hitting, and throwing items. The 11-year-old does have an emotional disability (EMD) ruling on his IEP and is currently being served in a self-contained classroom due to the behavior difficulties he has displayed in the general classroom setting.

Participant 2. Tina is a single, African American mother to a 7-year-old female child in 2nd grade diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders that includes attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Tina's daughter was born premature at 27 weeks. Her daughter had many other health complications which she did not go into detail about; however, she believes that all of this is a major contributing factor for her daughter's current behavior difficulties. Tina stated that her daughter has had some outbursts in the classroom that included excessive crying and screaming. Tina feels that her daughter does have a supported environment with her school and teachers because they have provided her with many resources that have been helpful to her child. Her daughter is currently being served in a general education environment; however, the resource classroom environment is also accessible to her child. Tina stated, "this gives my child

access to a smaller class size for her academics due to the extreme frustration she displays in the general education classroom."

Participant 3. Dena is an African American, single mother of a 10-year-old, 4th grade male child with an emotional and behavior disorder. He does have an IEP with a ruling of EMD listed in the disability category. Her son's father is present on a part-time basis and does not have the best relationship with his son. Dena's son exhibited behavior issues at a young age. Dena states that he has shown extreme aggressive behaviors such as hitting or throwing items; however, he is mostly very oppositional. He will easily lose his temper, argue with adults in authority, annoys others, and blames others for his mistakes. He has trouble at home with being argumentative with his mother, but most often he has trouble at school being very argumentative with his teachers. Her son is currently being served in a self-contained environment due to several aggressive situations he had over the last year of school. Dena stated that the school her son attends "does not have the appropriate resources to educate him in the general education classroom." She feels that her son is regressing with his learning because he is not receiving the best possible instruction. Dena's son was retained in the 2nd grade and she fears that retention may happen again in the future.

Participant 4. Kelly is a Caucasian, grandmother of a 10-year-old male child in the 5th grade that is currently being served in a resource classroom setting for academics and he attends activities such as physical education and music with his general education class. Although Kelly is the legal guardian of the child, the child's birth mother does live in the home. Kelly obtained custody of her grandson when he was 5 years old due to his birth mother's habitual behaviors that caused an unsafe environment for the child. Kelly's

grandson is diagnosed with an emotional and behavior disorder and has an EMD ruling on his IEP. The child exhibits extreme anxiety in the classroom and most situations for him are very stressful. He is very withdrawn from his family and his classmates along with his constant feelings of sadness. At home, Kelly stated that her grandson would mainly stay to himself; however, he would become oppositional with his birth mother if she asked him to do a task he did not want to do or if she tried to discipline him in any manner. During the child's 3rd grade school year, his grandmother stated that he was sent to a behavioral health facility for a mental health assessment and treatment because of a psychotic episode at the school where the child believed that he was being threatened, became very irate and belligerent, and stated he was going to harm his class. The child is currently on medication for his anxiety and depression.

Participant 5. Joan is an African American mother of an 8-year-old child medically diagnosed with an emotional disability and has an IEP with an EMD ruling. Joan's son also tested and was accepted into the gifted studies program. Joan is an educator in the same school district where her son attends school. She has been in the school district for 12 years and has in-depth knowledge of special education policies and procedures. According to Joan, her son's father does have an active role in his life and they have a good co-parenting relationship. Joan stated that her son has had behavior issues since he was about 3 years old. He has a high intelligence level; however, he can become bored at home or at school which will cause him to become very disruptive. Joan states that her son can be easily distracted, he will refuse to complete tasks at home or at school, and he will engage in temper tantrums that can include use of profanity, extreme yelling,

screaming, and hitting. Joan's son's behavior incidents do not occur frequently, and thus he is currently educated in a general education setting.

<div align="center">Social Stigma, Teacher Preparedness, and Communication</div>

The purpose of the qualitative portion of this study was to explore parents' experiences and perspectives regarding their child with emotional and behavioral disorders and the inclusion classroom setting. Parents were given the opportunity to discuss barriers faced and supports needed for students with emotional disabilities to be successful in an inclusive classroom environment. The five parent participants' responses were analyzed and categorized into emergent themes represented within the context of the research questions. To develop and describe themes from the participants responses, the four research questions had to be answered to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through thematic analysis (Creswell, 2013). Upon completion of the video conference interviews with each of the parent participants, data were analyzed, a transcript was transcribed and coded using the constant comparative analysis method, and as a result, three major themes emerged: social stigma, teacher preparedness, and communication.

Social Stigma

The first theme that emerged was social stigma. This theme surfaced as a result of exploring the parents' attitudes towards inclusion of all students with disabilities and specifically the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders. The parent participants spoke of the negative stereotypes and prejudice that result from the educators' misconceptions about students with emotional and behavior disorders. According to Erving Goffman, stigma is "the situation of the individual who is

disqualified from full social acceptance" (1963, preface). Goffman (1963), using a more traditional concept, stated that stigma is "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" that reduces someone "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (p. 3). Those that are stigmatized, as a result, are perceived as having a "spoiled identity" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). The stigma placed on students with emotional and behavior disorders can be seen as a way of categorizing students in a discriminatory manner that can lead to negative views because their behaviors are view as different or socially unacceptable (Dudley, 2000).

Joan reflected on the multiple times that she had to advocate for her son to be included in the general education setting. Joan stated that at her annual IEP meetings, teachers would always suggest the self-contained classroom as a better environment for her son due to previous behaviors and the upcoming teachers predetermined notion that the self-contained environment is his least restrictive environment. Joan stated:

> my child is also in gifted but teachers disregard his positives and only focus on his negatives. I would love for the school to provide better programing so my son can be successful regardless to the emotional breaks he may experience. Sometimes I feel that he would be safer in a self-contained classroom.

Tina expressed that she has always had to begin the school year with a parent meeting to discuss her daughter's behaviors. Tina stated:

> my daughter has always been prejudged for her past behaviors. I know my child has difficulties but they do not need to assume she will be a problem before a problem happens. I wish that teachers would get to know my child and build a

relationship with my child before they make a decision about my child's abilities in the classroom.

Likewise, Dena stated:

> sometimes educators are not knowledgeable about students and their situations and they rely on the views of previous educators. Sometimes those views can give the upcoming teacher a negative picture in their mind of the student before the student is given a chance to be known.

Kelly stated that she never wanted to get the school involved with her grandson because she feared he would be "severely judged, labeled, and put in a special class." Kelly indicated that she pursued help outside of the school system because she did not want her grandson to constantly be judged for behaviors, she knew he would "grow out of when he got older." Kelly stated:

> I saw that he was becoming more uncontrollable at home and the incidents at school continued to increase. When he finally had a big mental break during his third-grade year, I knew that he needed more help and support than we could provide. We had to turn to the school for help.

> William, stated that his son was fortunate to have a better school year this year compared to the previous years. William stated:

> at my son's previous school, he started each school year with negativity hanging over his head from any inappropriate behaviors he had throughout the previous school years. My son was excluded from school activities and opportunities because of what others assumed he might do if a situation became too stressful.

The teachers did not understand that by excluding my child he felt isolated and

ostracized which caused more behavior problems.

William stated that his son was in a new school environment for the 2021-2022 school

year and it has been a better experience. He did say "my son did begin this school year

being prejudged because the teachers saw the ruling before they attempted to understand

him." However, the team this year chose to build a relationship with his son and provide

him with opportunities to be successful in the general education classroom. William

stated, "my son started in the self-contained classroom this year but because the teachers

were willing to give my son a chance, he has had more time in the regular classroom than

he has had since he was in Kindergarten."

The parent participants all expressed that their children have missed out on

opportunities to succeed in the general education setting because of the predetermined

thoughts of educators that influenced their decisions and actions towards students with

emotional and behavior disorders.

Teacher Preparedness

The significant challenges that students with EBD face when engaging in the

general education classroom can be overwhelming when appropriate services and

supports are not implemented (McKenna et al., 2021). The theme of teacher preparedness

emerged as participants described barriers and supports of inclusion for students with

EBD in the general education classroom. Joan stated that school districts are more

"focused on academics than providing support for students with emotional disabilities."

Joan continued to state that "teachers leave college with the idea that they have the major

tools they need to succeed until they meet that one student that cannot be redirected with

basic classroom management skills." Joan is very aware of the disconnect between a

teacher's college courses and the realities of the actual classroom setting. Joan stated:

> colleges cannot prepare a teacher for the real-life dynamics of the classroom.
>
> They [colleges] cannot prepare you on how to address a child with emotional and
>
> behavior disorders. Teachers have to experience it, work through it, and learn
>
> from it.

Joan also expressed that she feels that school districts and administrators are responsible

for providing teachers with mentors and professional development to assist them with

learning more about how to educate students with emotional and behavior disorders.

Dena feels her son is getting "further and further behind because he is missing

valuable instruction in the general education classroom because teachers are not ready to

teach a kid with behavior problems." Dena expressed that "educators need to work

together so they can know what works well and what does not work so children like my

son can have a chance to succeed in the general education classroom." William stated,

"teachers who are not prepared to educate kids with challenging behaviors are less

willing to apply strategies or follow behavior plans that can help the child be successful

in school." William believes that more "professional trainings are needed for teachers to

be comfortable" with implementing strategies in the general education setting. Kelly

stated, "they [educators] have no idea how to teach my grandson. They do not understand

him or how to deal with his aggression, depression, or anxiety." Tina agrees that teachers

are not prepared. She stated:

> college classes and books will not get you ready to teach a child with
>
> unpredictable behaviors. I feel that everyone should take the time to learn more

about emotional and behavior disorders. Teachers can learn from each other. They

[teachers] can learn from the parents. They can even learn from the student. It

takes a village.

Communication

Communication, the third theme, emerged while the participants discussed

barriers and supports of inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders.

According to Schlein et al. (2013), an educators' classroom decisions can affect a

student's outcomes in the future. The more positive communication a student has with

teachers, the more the student will trust and improve in the general education setting

(Schlein et al., 2013). According to Tina, "communication is absolutely necessary for my

child to be successful in school." Tina stated, "my daughter needs a strong compassionate

teacher with the ability to clearly communicate and purposely build a positive

relationship with her and with me. My child has a chance to have more positive results in

school the more we [parents and teachers] communicate." Dena stated that "there should

be an open line of communication between teacher and parents. Teachers need the best

information to be able to provide the best services and supports for a student." Dena

further stated:

> I make an effort to inform the school and the teachers of any changes that may
>
> affect my son at school. I keep them in the loop if he has any major breakdowns at
>
> home that may have him off track at school.

Dena continued to say that she would welcome more communication from the school

regarding opportunities for parental involvement, collaboration, technology training, or

anything that can assist her with helping her child at home. Kelly stated that negative

school experience hinders good communication between the parents and the teachers. According to Kelly, she did not communicate enough with the school and teachers because she lacked trust in the system.

> As a parent you get frustrated with all of the bad phone calls. For a while, I got a call about my grandson every day. It was so tiresome. I began to have a negative attitude because there was no support for him.

Although it has not always been the best, William stated "this year we had much better communication with my son's teacher and the school." According to William, communication has been tough throughout the years especially during the pandemic because of all of the adjustments. "I literally had to help my child learn everything because the communication piece was minimal and he needed more one-on-one support." Joan; however, has had a great experience with communication with her son's teachers. She said:

> communication has never been the issue for us but the lack of action after the communication. I want to see that teachers are going to do what was said in the meetings. The interventions and strategies will be implemented consistently and not only when a problem occurs. If I cannot see the action, then the communication is pointless and my trust levels decrease.

Although all of the parents had many different experiences with communication between the school and the family, the one thing that is certain is that all parents agree that proper communication is essential to positive interactions for students and parents and is needed for students with EBD to achieve success in the general education setting.

Summary

Detailed in this chapter were the results of this mixed methods study that aimed to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. Quantitative and qualitative data were then provided in order to answer to the study's four research questions. Qualitative data analysis identified three emerging themes: social stigma, teacher preparedness, and communication. Although these themes emerged from all of the parent participants, their individual stories along with the data collected from educators were necessary for understanding the overall attitudes of both groups.

CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

Employing the theoretical frameworks of Bandura's social cognitive theory and Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of planned behavior, this mixed methods study aimed to examine the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders into the general education classroom. One hundred thirty-five educators completed a 63-question questionnaire that contained questions regarding their attitudes towards inclusion, inclusion of students with EBD, perceived barriers of inclusion, and supports needed for successful inclusion. Five parent participants, identified using pseudonyms, completed a semi-structured interview which consisted of 16-questions that addressed their views of inclusion, inclusion of students with EBD, barriers of inclusion of students with EBD, and needed supports. The parent interview sessions uncovered three emergent themes for the discussions: social stigma, teacher preparedness, and communication. This chapter provides a summary of a discussion of findings related to research questions, limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The summative findings of this study are discussed in the sections below of this chapter. A descriptive analysis of the educator survey data (Phase I) was used to answer each research question. The results of Phase II of this study are expressed using three themes that were derived based on the experiences of the parents of students with emotional and behavior disorders: (a) social stigma; (b) teacher preparedness; and (c) communication.

Phase I Overview

The Research Questions

       The first research question asked educators their attitudes regarding inclusive education. The overall data revealed that educators have a favorable attitude towards inclusion. According to the data, educators felt that students with disabilities would perform better in an inclusive setting and educators were in agreeance that sufficient support would be provided to assist with educating students with disabilities in their classrooms. The data concluded that educators are willing to collaborate and make any instructional modifications for students with disabilities; however, the researcher can infer any hesitation or resistance is related to over half of the educators in this study agreeing that they were not prepared to teach in an inclusion setting.

       The second research question asked educators to express their attitudes regarding students with emotional and behavior disorders in an inclusion setting. According to the data, educators reported they were not prepared to educate students with emotional and behavior disorders. Although educators reported that they believe students with EBD would benefit and have positive outcomes they also felt that students with EBD would be disruptive to the general education environment. With almost an equal number of responses, educators in this study believe that it is the responsibility of both the general education teacher and the special education teacher to educate students with EBD. The researcher can conclude that educators believe that students with EBD would benefit from participation in the general education classroom; however, because of lack of preparation and possibly predetermined notions of disruptive behavior would cause an educator to be reluctant to educate these students in the general education classroom.

The third research question asked educators to identify potential barriers of inclusion before and during the pandemic for students with emotional and behavior disorders. Current studies have identified the following as barriers to including students with EBD in the general education classroom: social stigma, lack of classroom management, lack in teacher preparedness, collaboration, communication, and lack of knowledge regarding appropriate strategies to deal with student behaviors (Kirby, 2017; Oliver & Reschly, 2010). After a review of the data analysis, this study showed the following barriers were identified as being important by educators: teacher preparedness, lack of collaboration, lack of time to plan to implement strategies, the absence of parent communication and support, and inadequate district funding. The barriers identified in this study are very similar to the barriers identified in the current research as the most significant barriers of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education classroom.

Current research identifies several supports that are necessary for successful inclusion to occur. The supports that were deemed the most important in the literature are professional development and training for educators, differentiated instruction, implementing evidence-based practices, classroom management that caters to handling students with behavior problems, collaboration between teachers, communication between teachers and parents, and more support from administrators (Andreasen, 2014a; Andreasen, 2014b; Fuchs, 2010; O'Dear, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a major barrier educators have had to cope with since its existence. A major shift in how educational services were delivered to students and adopting newly created technology and remote learning policies impacted all students, especially students with emotional and behavior disorders (Hirsch et al.,

2021). The results revealed that over 50% of the educators identified the following limitations for students with the EBD during the pandemic: teachers did not have necessary resources, students did not have adequate access in any environment (in-person, hybrid, or virtual), students had decreased participation in all environments, student negative behaviors increased, and parents did not provide needed support.

The fourth research question wanted educators to identify supports needed to overcome the identified barriers of inclusion. The educator data in this study revealed the following as the most important supports needed to overcome inclusion barriers: professional development for teachers, teacher preparedness on the college and school district level, collaboration time amongst teachers, and parental support and communication.

Phase II Overview

Parent Interviews

Phase II of this study derived three themes from the experiences of the parents of students with emotional and behavior disorders: (a) social stigma; (b) teacher preparedness; and (c) communication. Research questions one and two inquired about parents' attitudes regarding inclusion specifically, inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders. Research questions three and four focused on barriers and supports of inclusion of students with EBD. Parents were asked about their experiences with barriers to inclusion and the supports they believed could help overcome those barriers in an inclusion setting.

The parents in this study all believe that inclusion is always the better option for students with disabilities because it provides these students with more positive outcomes;

however, it is not always the best placement for the students with emotional and behavior disorders due to the negative stereotype given to them because of their emotional disability ruling, previous incidents, and predetermined ideas of teachers. According to the literature, the main characteristic of stigma is that it has the ability to limit a person's potential (Dudley, 2000). The parent participants of this study stated that social stigma or stereotyping is the biggest determinant of educator attitudes regarding inclusion of students with EBD in the general classroom setting. Kelly and William both stated that placing their children in a self-contained environment kept their children away from most negative situations they would have faced in the general education setting, but it also limited their possibilities for progress. Dena stated, "teachers think that students with emotional problems can only be disruptive and harmful to others and as long as they [teachers] have those thoughts, kids like my child will forever fall behind". Along with social stigma, parents were very vocal regarding educators not being prepared to educate in an inclusion setting. The parents felt that teachers need more training on students with disabilities, especially students with emotional disabilities. According to Joan, her son "is not getting the time he needs in gifted studies because teachers fear he will become frustrated and have an outburst." Joan, and the other parents, felt that inclusion can be successful if educators can be properly trained to understand students with emotional disabilities and how to handle student behaviors and decrease the negative stigma due to lack of knowledge. Tina stated:

> my daughter has been blessed to have a teacher that understands emotional disabilities and is able to help and guide her in the classroom. Communication has been the major factor for us this year. We [the parent and the teacher] have very

open and honest communication. We work together, learn together, and make

decisions together so that my daughter has the best chance at success. My child's

teacher has built a very trusting relationship with my daughter and that has been

the best change of this school year.

All educators agree that communication was a major barrier for parents, teachers, and

students. During the pandemic, when schools were closing and attempting to determine

the best methods for educating students, communication was the necessary tool. All of

the parents stated that the lack of communication was a terrible setback for their children

with EBD. The parents stated that many of their children were not given the best

instruction while they were in a virtual setting. The communication was lacking and they

definitely did not receive adequate one-on-one support. William stated:

I thought trying to figure out how to log in and get on the Google classroom was

going to be the hard part during virtual learning, but it was not being able to

communicate with the teachers when we needed help or had questions. My son

did not have live classroom instruction or directions and we had to try to figure it

out.

Parents agree that lack of open communication between the parent and the teacher is a

detrimental factor for supporting inclusion.

There are a number of factors that can negatively affect a parent, student, or

teacher's experience with inclusion. The general education setting is not always the best

setting when appropriate services and supports are not in place for students with EBD to

receive the most educational and social benefit (Mckenna et al., 2021). The educators and

parents in this study have similar attitudes regarding inclusion, barriers, and supports for

our students with EBD. Educators and parents both believe that having access to inclusion is beneficial for students with EBD so that they can have positive outcomes and a positive school experience; however, the many barriers that include social stigma, lack in teacher preparedness and the lack in communication need to be reframed for inclusion to be effective for students with emotional and behavior disorders.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

There were many limitations associated with this study. The first limitation was the limited number of participants. The study was limited to 135 educator participants for the quantitative research in phase I and 5 parent participants for the qualitative research in phase 2. The educator survey was distributed through social media groups instead of school districts due to the reluctance of district administrators to particiapate. Educators from the southern region of the United States responded even though the survey was available for anyone in the groups that met the criteria. The study was limited to educators in an elementary setting K-6th grades. Sixth grade is considered middle school level in many school districts; however, there are some school systems that still have 6th grade as an elementary level. It is possible the sensitive nature of the topic and the pandemic were the main factors that influenced districts to refuse to allow their educators to participate in the study. The qualitative portion of the study will have limited generalizability of results due to its small sample size. However, the results of qualitative methods are not meant to be generalized. All parent participants were from Mississippi, of various backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and were available and willing to participate in the study.

A final limitation of this study in the qualitative phase is that parent participation may not have expressed their complete views or feelings because they did not feel confident despite being guaranteed anonymity.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study can be used by school districts to assist educators with improving their skills by offering in-house professional developments to enhance educators' knowledge and abilities to educate students with emotional and behavior disorders in any setting. School districts can also use this study to guide their parental involvement and support programs. Districts can offer opportunities for parents to collaborate with educators to help implement proven research-based practices at home and at school. The researcher can infer that collaboration amongst educators and parents will increase communication and provide a positive culture for the students.

College and university faculty can use the information in this study to assist them with rethinking and reframing their teacher education programs. The research concludes that higher education institutions can shift coursework and programs to not only focus on academics, but to also focus on students with social, emotional, and behaviors difficulties by offering student teaching within setting that contain these students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitations in this study, the first recommendation would be to open the study up to other regions of the United States that have a diverse population of students with emotional and behavior disorders in the general education setting. This would allow for an increase in the number of participants and provide more generalized results for a broader population.

A second recommendation would be to expand the research criteria to include educators from pre-K-12th grade levels because knowledge of the attitudes of educators in middle school and in high school may be beneficial to elementary school educators. A collection of views, strategies, and implementation techniques from all educators may improve the outcomes of students with EBD in the general education classroom.

With the extreme disruptions of the pandemic and school closures, researchers had to revise their tactics for distributing and collecting the necessary data for their research studies. These revised methods made it difficult to retrieve needed information, especially on highly sensitive topics. A third recommendation is to implement this study with a face-to-face approach within the school systems. When educators can make a situation more personable, they are more than likely to accept invitations to participate in research.

A final recommendation is to create a study using qualitative methods that focuses more on the parents of students with EBD. Parents are a major factor in the success of students with or without disabilities. Their ideas are lacking in past and current research. The findings of a parent study could reshape how educators think, communicate, plan, and implement strategies for students with emotional and behavior disorders and all other disability categories.

<center>Summary</center>

Students with EBD are faced with many challenges due to their behaviors and circumstances academically, emotionally, and socially; however, beyond their circumstances they should have an equal opportunity to access the general education setting. Overall, educators have a positive attitude regarding students with EBD. The

attitudes of educators can greatly affect the effectiveness of inclusion due to the social stigma placed on students that comes with the label of having an emotional disability. Additionally, the feelings of parents can affect the successful inclusion of students with EBD because parents develop a lack of trust of educators and the school system based on their negative experiences with inclusion. By increasing the knowledge of educators through professional development, fostering collaboration with parents, improving communication, and fostering relationships, the many barriers and challenges that students with emotional disabilities face will decrease. The negative stigma will decrease and the focus can be on how to best support students with EBD in the general education classroom. This will lead to students with EBD having the opportunity for more positive experiences, positive outcomes, and positive relationships in an inclusive setting

IRB-19-582 - Initial: Sacco Committee Letter - Expedited and Full

irb@usm.edu <irb@usm.edu>

Mon 3/23/2020 4:06 PM

To: Lilian Hill <Lilian.Hill@usm.edu>;Shannon Howze <Shannon.Howze@usm.edu>;Sue Fayard <Sue.Fayard@usm.edu>;Michaela Donohue <Michaela.Donohue@usm.edu>;Michael Howell <Michael.Howell@usm.edu>

Office *of* **Research Integrity**

THE UNIVERSITY OF **SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5125 · HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6576 | USM.EDU/ORI

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-19-582
PROJECT TITLE: Educators and Parents Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of Students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders
SCHOOL/PROGRAM: School of Education, Educational Research and Admin
RESEARCHER(S): Shannon Howze, Lilian Hill

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited
       7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: March 23, 2020

Donald Sacco Jr.

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

IRB-19-582 - Modification: Modification - Expedited and Full

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Thu 5/27/2021 11:57 AM

To: Lilian Hill <Lilian.Hill@usm.edu>;Shannon Howze <Shannon.Howze@usm.edu>

Office *of*
Research Integrity

THE UNIVERSITY OF
**SOUTHERN
MISSISSIPPI.**

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Modification Institutional Review Board Approval

The University of Southern Mississippi's Office of Research Integrity has received the notice of your modification for your submission Educators and Parents Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of Students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders (IRB #: IRB-19-582).

Your modification has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
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PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-19-582
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SCHOOL/PROGRAM: School of Education, Educational Research and Admin
RESEARCHER(S): Shannon Howze ,Lilian Hill

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: May 27, 2021

Donald Sacco Jr.

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX B - Questionnaire

Demographics

1.	Gender: 1. Female 2. Male 3. Other (please specify) _____
2.	Age: 1. 25 or less 2. 26-30 3. 31-40 4. 41-50 5. 51-60 6. 60 and above
3.	Current Position: 1. Administrator 2. General Education Teacher 3. Special Education Teacher 4. Other: _____
4.	If an Administrator: What is your current title? 1. Principal 2. Asst. Principal 3. Special Education Director 4. Other _____
5.	If a General Education Teacher: How many special education college classes have you completed? 1. None 2. One 3. Two 4. Three or more
6.	If a Special Education Teacher: What area do you primarily serve? 1. Inclusion 2. Resource Room 3. Self-Contained 4. Other _____
7.	What are the grade levels of the students within your elementary school? Select all that apply. K4, K5, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th 6th
8.	What grade level are you currently teaching? Select all that apply. K4, K5, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th 6th
9.	Highest Degree Received: 1. Bachelors 2. Masters 3. Specialist 4. Doctorate 5. Other: _____
10.	Years of Experience: 1. 1-3 2. 4-6 3. 7-9 4. 10-more
11.	Location: _____

General Inclusion

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Somewhat Disagree – Neutral – Somewhat Agree – Agree – Strongly Agree

12.	I was prepared to teach in an inclusion classroom environment.
13.	Students with disabilities will likely perform better in inclusive classrooms.
14.	I am willing to make instructional modifications for students with disabilities.
15.	I can collaborate with other teachers in inclusive classrooms.
16.	Educating students with disabilities is disruptive to the classroom environment.
17.	Students with disabilities should be educated in self-contained environments.
18.	General education teachers are responsible for teaching students with disabilities.
19.	I have sufficient support with students with disabilities in my school or classroom.
20.	Special education teachers are responsible for teaching students with disabilities.
21.	Students with disabilities should receive all academics from a special education teacher.
22.	Students with disabilities should be educated in resource classrooms.

Students with EBD in Inclusion

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Somewhat Disagree – Neutral – Somewhat Agree – Agree – Strongly Agree

23.	I was adequately prepared to teach students with EBD in a general education setting.
24.	Students with EBD will likely perform better in inclusive classrooms.
25.	Students with EBD will likely form positive relationships with other students in the general education classroom.
26.	The presence of students with EBD in the general classroom will be a good experience for the other students.
27.	Educating students with EBD is disruptive to the general education classroom environment.
28.	Students with EBD will develop a more positive attitude toward school as a result of being in the general education classroom.

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29.	I feel my district/school will provide sufficient support for educating students with EBD in my school/classroom.
30.	The experience of being in the general education classroom will increase the chances for students with EBD to have more positive outcomes.
31.	Students with EBD should receive all academic instruction from a special education teacher.
32.	Students with EBD should be educated in the general education classroom for most of the day.
33.	Students with EBD will negatively affect the behavior of the other children in the general education classroom.
34.	I look forward to the challenge of educating students with EBD at our school.

Barriers of Inclusion

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Somewhat Disagree – Neutral – Somewhat Agree – Agree – Strongly Agree

35.	Administrators do not provide classroom support for teachers of students with EBD.
36.	Parents do not communicate with educators necessary information concerning their child with EBD.
37.	Teachers are not prepared to implement strategies in the general education setting for students with EBD.
38.	Parents of students with EBD do not provide the school with adequate support.
39.	Students with EBD cannot receive adequate support in a general education classroom.
40.	Educators do not adequately collaborate to plan strategies for implementation for students with EBD.
41.	Districts do not have adequate funding to provide support in the general education classroom for students with EBD.
42.	Teachers do not have enough time to adequately implement strategies for students with EBD.

Barriers of Inclusion (Pandemic)

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Somewhat Disagree – Neutral – Somewhat Agree – Agree – Strongly Agree

43.	Since the pandemic, students with EBD did not have adequate support in the general education classroom.
44.	Teachers were not provided with the necessary resources to educate students with EBD during the pandemic.
45.	Students with EBD willingness to participate in the general classroom environment (in-person) decreased during the pandemic.
46.	Students with EBD willingness to participate in the general classroom environment (hybrid) decreased during the pandemic.
47.	Students with EBD willingness to participate in the general classroom environment (virtual) decreased during the pandemic.
48.	Students with EBD inappropriate behaviors increased during the pandemic.
49.	Parents did not provide their student with EBD adequate support during the pandemic.

50.	Students with EBD did not have adequate access to the general education environment (in-person) during the pandemic.
51.	Students with EBD did not have adequate access to the general education environment (hybrid) during the pandemic.
52.	Students with EBD did not have adequate access to the general education environment (virtual) during the pandemic.

Supports

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Somewhat Disagree – Neutral – Somewhat Agree – Agree – Strongly Agree

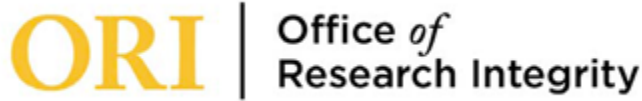|	
53.	Building administrators are responsive to daily concerns regarding students with EBD.
54.	We have ample access to professional developments regarding strategies for students with EBD.
55.	Administrators in my district are committed to inclusion of students with EBD.
56.	The teachers in my building support inclusive education for students with EBD.
57.	There is a positive rapport among educators in my district regarding inclusion of students with EBD.
58.	Administrators are receptive to any concerns I have regarding students with EBD.
59.	We have sufficient support to implement inclusive education for students with EBD.
60.	My district helped to prepare me for working with students with EBD.
61.	Parents are very supportive of the school concerning their child with EBD.
62.	I received adequate preparation in college for working with students with EBD.
63.	There are sufficient opportunities for educators to collaborate regarding inclusive practices for students with EBD.

APPENDIX C - Interview Protocol

Demographics

1.	What is your relationship to your child with EBD? _____
2.	Age: 1. 25 or less 2. 26-30 3. 31-40 4. 41-50 5. 51-60 6. 60 and above
3.	Grade level of your child with EBD (circle all that apply): Pre-K, K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th 5th, 6th
4.	Current Classroom Setting of child: 1. General education classroom 2. Resource room 3. Self-contained classroom 4. Residential Facility 5. Other (please specify) _____

5. Before we begin the questions related to this study, please feel free to share any general information about you or your child that you believe is relevant to our discussion.

6. As parents of students with emotional and behavior disorders, what are your views about inclusion in the general education classroom for all students with disabilities?

7. What experiences have you had with your child with EBD and inclusion in the general education classroom?

8. Do you feel that your child is in the best classroom setting? Why or why not.

9. Educators believed that students with EBD will form positive relationships and have the opportunity for more positive experiences however they believe that educating students with EBD would be disruptive to the general learning environment. What are your thoughts?

10. Educators feel that the following are barriers to inclusion of students with EBD: adequate funding, teacher collaboration, teachers not having enough time to implement strategies, and teachers are not prepared to implement strategies. Do you agree or disagree with educators? What do you believe are the barriers regarding inclusion of students with emotional and behavior disorders in the general education classroom? Please elaborate.

11. According to the educator survey results, 52.6% of the educators surveyed reported that a barrier of inclusion for students with EBD is that parents do not communicate the necessary information to teachers. What are your thoughts?

12. During the pandemic was your child in class physically, hybrid, or virtual? Do you feel your child with EBD received an adequate education in that setting? What were the barriers? Explain.

13. Educators feel that the following supports are needed to ensure success: professional developments, teacher collaboration, district mentoring, better preparation in college, and parent support. Do you agree or disagree with educators? Why? What supports do you believe are necessary for your child with EBD in succeeding in the general education classroom?

14. The educators (60.8%) also reported that they believe that parents do not provide adequate support to the school regarding their child. What are your thoughts?

15. Educators reported that they believed that students with EBD did not receive adequate support during the pandemic and the students willingness to participate decreased during the pandemic. What are your thoughts?

16. What further information would you like to share on this topic?

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your input as a parent is important to the success of students with emotional and behavior disorders.

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STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES
The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. Use what is given in the research description and consent sections below when constructing research instrument online. Last Edited May 13ᵗʰ, 2019

Today's date:03/01/2022	
PROJECT INFORMATION	
Project Title: Educators and Parents Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders (EBD) in the Regular Education Classroom	

Principal Investigator: Shannon Howze	Phone: 601-549-4047	Email: shannonlatricehowze@gmail.com
College: Education and Human Sciences	School and Program: School of Education Educational Leadership	

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

Purpose:

The study will focus on the attitudes of educators regarding inclusive education, the attitudes of educators and parents regarding inclusion of students with EBD, perceived barriers of inclusion and the specific factors parents and educators recommend to overcome those barriers. This research will give insight and may help inform the field of education in providing professional development, support and changes in current practices to assist with the inclusion of students with an EBD.

Description of Study:

The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and involve approximately 160 participants. The researcher will use the social media timeline, messenger, and educator groups on Facebook to recruit elementary educators from the United States. Based on Facebook and the groups policies and procedures, posting an announcement to recruit survey participants will not be a violation of the groups terms of use policy. The Facebook groups are

Teachers Ask Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Educator.FYI Group, and The Done Dissertation.

Benefits:

This study can be potentially significant in breaking barriers of inclusion by exploring the attitudes of the biggest influencers; parents and teachers. Overcoming these barriers can help districts and administrators to provide the needed guidance, support, and training to teachers. Schools can also provide parents with a clearer picture of the inclusion process, so that parents can be an integral part of the successful inclusion of their children with EBD in the general education environment. Incentives will not be offered for completing the survey.

Risks:

There are no risks, inconveniences, or side effects anticipated.

Confidentiality:

Every effort will be made to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Participants will not be asked for their names or any identifying information on the survey questionnaire. Any personal information inadvertently collected will be deleted.

Alternative Procedures:

There are no other alternative participation methods for this study.

Participant's Assurance:

This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue participation in the project.

Include the following information only if applicable. Otherwise delete this entire paragraph before submitting for IRB approval: The University of Southern Mississippi has

no mechanism to provide compensation for participants who may incur injuries as a result of participation in research projects. However, efforts will be made to make available the facilities and professional skills at the University. Participants may incur charges as a result of treatment related to research injuries. Information regarding treatment or the absence of treatment has been given above.
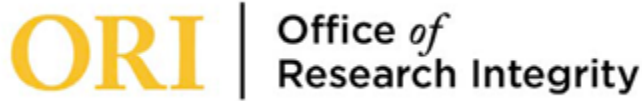
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

By clicking the box below, I give my consent to participate in this research project.

Check this box if you consent to this study, and then click "Continue." (Clicking "Continue" will not allow you to advance to the study, unless you have checked the box indicating your consent.)

If you do not wish to consent to this study, please close your browser window at this time.

ORI | **Office** *of* **Research Integrity**

STANDARD (SIGNED) INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD (SIGNED) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES
This completed document must be signed by each consenting research participant. • The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. • Signed copies of the consent form should be provided to all participants. Edited May 13ᵗʰ, 2019   Last

Today's date: 3/01/2022		
PROJECT INFORMATION		
Project Title: Educators and Parents Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of Students with Emotional and Behavior Disorders (EBD) in the Regular Education Classroom		
Principal Investigator: Shannon Howze	Phone: 601-549-4047	Email: shannonlatricehowze@gmail.com
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Description of Study:

Approximately 5-10 parents of children with emotional and behavior disorders in the elementary setting will be chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate in the interview. The participants will be selected from parents of students with emotional disabilities in Mississippi. Parents will be recruited with the assistance of educators via Facebook timeline posting, messenger, and educator groups. The educator groups the researcher will use are Teachers Ask Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Educator.FYI Group, and The Done Dissertation. Parents will be invited by email, mail, or social media correspondence to

participate in the interview. Once selected, each participant will be sent the parent consent form via e-mail, mail, or social media. The researcher will ask each participant to return the consent form within one week after they receive the form. Participants can return the signed form via picture message, e-mail or social media message attachment, or by mail. The interview questions are based on the data received from the educator survey. The researcher will conduct the interviews at the convenience of the parent via Free Conference Call or Zoom video conferencing. The researcher will contact the parent participants 1 week prior to confirm the interview and 2 days prior to give parents the login information for the interview medium of their choice. The parent participant will also receive a digital reminder 1 hour prior to the meeting.

Benefits:

This study can be potentially significant in breaking barriers of inclusion by exploring the attitudes of the biggest influencers; parents and teachers. Overcoming these barriers can help districts and administrators to provide the needed guidance, support, and training to teachers. Schools can also provide parents with a clearer picture of the inclusion process, so that parents can be an integral part of the successful inclusion of their children with EBD in the general education environment.

Risks:

Due to the topic, parents may become emotional or upset when discussing their child's educational experiences. Parents will be informed that participation is completely voluntary and they may discontinue the interview at any time during the process.

Confidentiality:

Every effort will be made to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. The interview participants will be assigned a pseudonym and the researcher is the only person with access to the information of which person was associated with which pseudonym. After receiving feedback from the participants on the transcription of the interviews, any association with the participant's name and pseudonym will be erased to protect anonymity.

Alternative Procedures:

There are no other alternative participation methods for this study.

Participant's Assurance:

This project and this consent form have been reviewed by USM's Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Participant's Name: _____

I hereby consent to participate in this research project. All research procedures and their purpose were explained to me, and I had the opportunity to ask questions about both the procedures and their purpose. I received information about all expected benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts, and I had the opportunity to ask questions about them. I understand my participation in the project is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. I understand the extent to which my personal information will be kept confidential. As the research proceeds, I understand that any new information that emerges and that might be relevant to my willingness to continue my participation will be provided to me.

Include the following information only if applicable. Otherwise delete this entire paragraph before submitting for IRB approval: The University of Southern Mississippi has no mechanism to provide compensation for participants who may incur injuries as a result of participation in research projects. However, efforts will be made to make available the facilities and professional skills at the University. Participants may incur charges as a result of treatment related to research injuries. Information regarding treatment or the absence of treatment has been given above.

_____   _____

Research Participant   **Person Explaining the Study**

_____   _____

Date   **Date**

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