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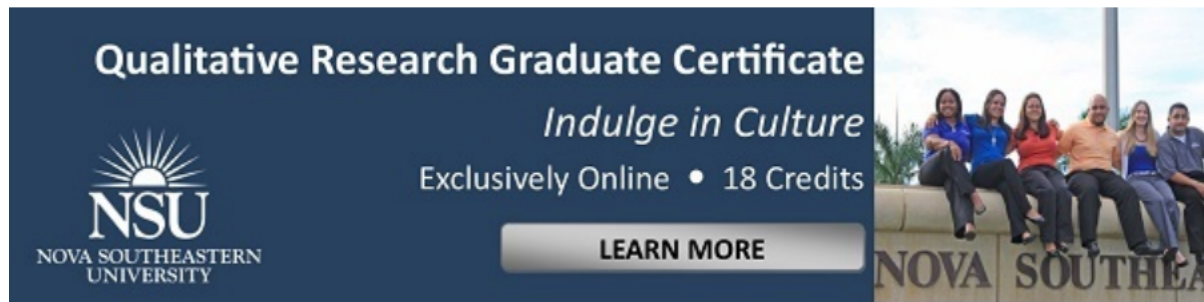
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Abstract

Paraprofessionals support teachers and students in the classroom. Their roles and responsibilities vary; however, their goal is always to improve student achievement. The purpose of the study was to fill a gap in the literature related to special education paraprofessionals' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs on the support and trainings they receive prior to and during their job as a paraprofessional for students in a special education setting. Generic qualitative methodology was used to capture the thoughts, experience, and perceptions of 42 paraprofessionals across the United States. Data collection included an eight-question online questionnaire. Results of the study revealed five patterns including (a) paraprofessionals are coming in with some training, (b) their ongoing training is not always consistent, (c) the biggest areas of struggle are addressing challenging behavior, (d) their education does not always prepare them for the responsibilities in the classroom, and (e) further support is needed for them to fulfil their responsibilities. After further analysis and synthesis, the five patterns were then condensed into two overarching themes which included paraprofessional training deficits and need for behavior support training. These findings are significant to school leaders and educators in order to properly support paraprofessionals in their roles of ensuring student learning and success.

Keywords

paraprofessional, special education, autism, qualitative research design, generic qualitative research, education

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Paraprofessionals in a Special Education Setting: A Qualitative Exploration of Their Perceptions

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Paraprofessionals support teachers and students in the classroom. Their roles and responsibilities vary; however, their goal is always to improve student achievement. The purpose of the study was to fill a gap in the literature related to special education paraprofessionals' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs on the support and trainings they receive prior to and during their job as a paraprofessional for students in a special education setting. Generic qualitative methodology was used to capture the thoughts, experience, and perceptions of 42 paraprofessionals across the United States. Data collection included an eight-question online questionnaire. Results of the study revealed five patterns including (a) paraprofessionals are coming in with some training, (b) their ongoing training is not always consistent, (c) the biggest areas of struggle are addressing challenging behavior, (d) their education does not always prepare them for the responsibilities in the classroom, and (e) further support is needed for them to fulfil their responsibilities. After further analysis and synthesis, the five patterns were then condensed into two overarching themes which included paraprofessional training deficits and need for behavior support training. These findings are significant to school leaders and educators in order to properly support paraprofessionals in their roles of ensuring student learning and success.

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Introduction

Paraprofessionals can serve various roles in the classroom to support student achievement. Paraprofessionals assist the teachers in preparing materials, working with students, and caring for students. Students who are supported may display emotional disturbance, cognitive or physical disabilities, autism, or other special needs (NYC Public Schools, 2019). As a result, the paraprofessional in the classroom may serve various roles.

Settings

Paraprofessionals may support students in an inclusive setting. An inclusive setting is a setting where a student with disabilities may be placed in a general education setting, with a supporting paraprofessional.

In contrast, a paraprofessional may also be assigned to support a student in a self-contained classroom. A self-contained classroom includes a classroom which has fewer students, who have a disability and have been instructed by a special education teacher. Self-contained classrooms can have various ratios. The ratios are displayed in the form of

students:teacher:paraprofessionals. For example, some available ratios from least to most restricted include 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1, 6:1:3, 12:1:4 (NYC Public Schools, 2019).

Paraprofessional Support Services

The support provided by a paraprofessional is continuously evolving. According to research, the services provided by paraprofessional is expanding, which results in a lack of clarity in terms of their actual role (Forster & Holbrook, 2005). Research shows that with their support, there are immediate results as the students receive immediate support and feedback from their paraprofessional (Mazurik-Charles & Stefanou, 2010).

According to the NYC Public Schools (2019), some of the responsibilities of a paraprofessional in a self-contained classroom or inclusive setting include supporting teachers with small group instruction, or even working one on one to ensure student comprehension and advancement with his or her peers through the instructional program. As part of supporting teacher practices, they may collect data, document instructional progress, provide language assistance, or write anecdotally. Paraprofessionals also support daily living skill acquisition including supporting the students with dressing, feeding, and their personal needs (NYC Public Schools, 2019).

Throughout the instructional day, paraprofessionals also accompany students to their related services and support them with physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech therapy (Dennis et al., 2022).

Behavior support paraprofessionals support the implementation of a student's Behavior Intervention Plan and promote positive behavior to ensure the student demonstrated appropriate social skills and interactions with peers and adults (NYC Public Schools, 2019).

Health paraprofessionals support students with medical or health challenges to ensure their safety throughout the day. Health paraprofessionals monitor students who may have allergies, seizures, or severe medical concerns (Mahajan & Sagar, 2023).

Bilingual paraprofessionals serve various roles in classroom to promote students' second language acquisition. Because of their knowledge of the student's language and culture, they can help the student feel comfortable in their educational setting and work with them on developing their academic abilities. Many paraprofessionals felt that they did not receive professional support while assisting students in their language acquisition (Wenger et al., 2004).

In general, paraprofessionals assist students in the advancement of their social interactions, cognitive, emotional, motor, communication, and daily living skills (Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005; Mazurik-Charles & Stefanou, 2010).

Professional Needs

Para Needs

Research suggests that there is a great need for professional development for paraprofessionals, however there are little guidelines for professional development and training (Trautman, 2004). Many paraprofessionals felt that they did not receive professional support while assisting students in their language acquisition (Wenger et al., 2004).

Researchers express their concern over instruction provided by a paraprofessional, stating that they may not have the training or qualification specifically related to literacy instruction (Forster & Holbrook, 2005). While many paraprofessionals assist with instruction and assessments, research shows that formal training on how to administer academic testing

and curriculum programs is imperative. Proper training will ensure that there are no issues in reliability and validity of the assessment while it is administered (May et al., 2014).

According to McKenzie (2011), and Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren (2005), when paraprofessionals are well-trained, it results in improved student learning. For example, when receiving professional training on facilitating appropriate social interactions for students with disabilities, paraprofessionals were able to immediately see positive results from the students (Koegel et al., 2014).

Although many paraprofessionals support students with severe challenging behaviors, it is important that they are knowledgeable and prepared to utilize evidence-based practices and interventions (Ledford et al., 2017). In a study conducted by Brock, Seaman, and Downing (2017), paraprofessionals were trained to utilize evidence-based practices in supporting students with severe challenging behaviors. Results indicated that with proper training, they were able to successfully aid the student in self-regulating to improve time on task and learning (Brock, Seaman et al., 2017).

In a survey conducted by Walker et al. (2017), paraprofessionals stated that they greatly benefited from full day professional development. Although it improved the paraprofessionals' skill acquisition and informed their ability to support the students, there was often a lack of follow up or coaching after the professional development (Walker et al., 2017). Another study indicated that when paraprofessionals are professionally trained in social skills training techniques, there were immediate results and students improved their social skills interactions (Brock, Cannella-Malone et al., 2017). Proper training also resulted in implementation with fidelity. The paraprofessionals were more fluent and had a better understanding of the social skills programs which enabled them to successfully implement the program with their students (Brock, Cannella-Malone et al., 2017).

When asking paraprofessionals what they perceived their greatest training needs were, results indicated that understanding disabilities, behaviors, learning styles, inclusion, and communication, were some of the key areas identified (Riggs, 2001). In general, paraprofessionals feel the need for additional support and training (Griffin-Shirley & Matlock, 2004).

Teacher Needs

In a study conducted by Causton-Theoharis et al. (2007), some teachers expressed concerns about their preparedness to instruct paraprofessionals and support them in successfully completing their responsibilities. In some cases, there may be a teacher with up to four paraprofessionals and an additional 1:1 paraprofessionals in a classroom. Ensuring that a special education teacher is equipped to support and collaborate effectively and efficiently is of utmost importance in creating an environment which is conducive to learning.

To make the classroom team work effectively, Causton-Theoharis et al. (2007), outlined important practices including acknowledging their efforts, being warm and welcoming by reviewing policies and procedures, planning and scheduling together, and having open and ongoing communication.

Many educational settings rely on teachers to prepare paraprofessionals and train them. However, it is important to ensure that there are standards set for the teachers and that they are knowledgeable and prepared to train the paraprofessionals. For example, a checklist may benefit a teacher by ensuring that they are implementing a professional development protocol (Brock & Carter, 2016). Teachers should create a collaborative work environment. Some strategies offered by researchers include communicating expectations, and always providing positive praise to reinforce the paraprofessionals skills (McGrath et al., 2010).

In a study, many teachers indicated that there were important skills necessary for supervising paraprofessionals such as, communication and planning (Hughes & Valle-Riestra, 2008). However, during their teacher training and professional development there was little mention of those important skills which would prepare them to support the students in the classroom (Hughes & Valle-Riestra, 2008; Wallace et al., 2001).

Perceptions of the Paraprofessional Role

In a study conducted by McKenzie and Lewis (2008), results indicated that teachers and paraprofessionals perceived the role of paraprofessionals as differentiating the materials and instructions according to the student's individual needs. For example, for visually impaired students, the paraprofessional would prepare braille, etc.

Often, paraprofessionals are assigned in a reactive manner to a challenge presented. Research suggests that it is important to design proactive measures in responding to student challenges, such as behavior challenges (Giangreco et al., 2012). While assigning paraprofessionals for students with disabilities is often the response, Giangreco (2010), challenges that assigning a paraprofessional may not always be the answer. Over-reliance is a central side effect, children often become dependent on the paraprofessional, resulting in poor skill development. For example, a child may have emergency skills related to counting from one (1) until ten (10). As the child begins to practice counting, he/she may become accustomed to turning to their paraprofessional to count along with them, instead of attempting to count independently. Other researchers suggest alternative supports include peer-tutoring, empowering teachers, co-teaching, and more (Giangreco & Broer, 2002). Specifically, peer support can help improve student access to the curriculum and content (Carter et al., 2005).

According to Patterson (2006), paraprofessionals perceived their roles as an academic and behavioral support. They also perceived their role to be vaguely defined and often had their schedule and assignments switched easily. In addition, teachers often preferred that they address behavior concerns instead of supporting a student academically (Patterson, 2006). This differs in an inclusive setting, where paraprofessionals will also support academically to ensure that the student with disabilities is able to keep up with his/her age-equivalent peers (Goldstein, 2017).

While paraprofessionals provide support to students, working collaboratively is key in ensuring that a student is successful in reaching their potential. Biggs et al. (2016), highlight the importance of the relationship between the classroom teacher and supporting paraprofessionals. When the team works together, and implements the same strategies consistently, the student will be more successful academically and socially. Although there are many challenges presented when working as a team, such as differed experiences and opinions, working in unison to meet the needs of the students will always yield better results (Biggs et al., 2016).

Impacts of a Paraprofessional

There are benefits of assigning a paraprofessional, however, it is important to also consider the possible negative outcomes as well. In a study conducted by Broer et al. (2005), with young adults with disabilities, results indicated that students often felt exclusive or singled out as there was always a paraprofessional with them. Having peer support would have made the student more accepted and comfortable (Broer et al., 2005).

While paraprofessionals support students and relieve the stress of teachers, research suggests that teachers should not assume that it results in better student outcomes (Giangreco, 2003). Giangreco et al. (2005) states that paraprofessionals are often assigned because of a

concern a teacher may have. However, it is vital to understand that students who have paraprofessionals often feel socially excluded.

Research reveals that having paraprofessional support a student academically can be complex. Some questions to consider are whether the paraprofessional is properly trained in instructing the academic area? This can impact the student learning and ultimate comprehension of the content (Brock & Carter, 2013).

Giangreco et al., (2004), urge educators and administrators to understand that students become over-reliant and dependent on paraprofessionals which impacts their ability to socialize and learn. Therefore, peer support, paraprofessionals supporting clerical aspects to relieve teachers, hiring additional special educators, and other alternative strategies should be considered prior to assigning a paraprofessional. Reducing 1:1 paraprofessional assignment (Russel, Allday, & Duhon, 2015).

In conclusion, research sheds light on the role of paraprofessionals, the reasons they are assigned to students, and the needs they have while fulfilling their roles in the classroom (Mahajan & Sagar, 2023). A gap in the literature exists on paraprofessionals' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs on the support and training they receive prior to and during their job as a paraprofessional. As a result, this research will explore the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of paraprofessionals who work in the special education setting as it relates to the trainings they receive and how well it prepares them to be successful in their role of supporting students with disabilities.

Methods

The authors are administrators in a school for children with disabilities. Through observations, conversations, and informal interviews, it became apparent that many supporting paraprofessionals felt that their training before taking on the role of paraprofessional did not sufficiently prepare them for their responsibilities. As administrators, we became interested in exploring research related to paraprofessionals and training programs which are required prior to taking on the role. In addition, we were interested in conducting a study to explore their perceptions regarding the training they received, and the trainings that they feel are necessary to successfully support student learning in a classroom for students with disabilities. Our intentions are to learn about the needs of paraprofessionals, to shed light on the professional development needs of paraprofessionals. The research question for this study was: What are special education paraprofessionals' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs on the support and trainings they receive prior to and during their job as a paraprofessional for students in a special education setting?

Qualitative methodology is a method of research used to capture the thoughts, experience, and perceptions of participants related to the question of interest. Specifically, Generic qualitative research methodology is a form of qualitative research that explores phenomena that does not specifically meet the criteria for other methodologies (Caelli et al., 2003). Generic qualitative research places an emphasis on individuals' reports of an experience they had (Patton, 2014). Inductive thematic analysis utilizes a system of coding where the data results in its own patterns and themes without fitting the responses into pre-existing categories (Percy et al., 2015). In this study, the authors explored the perceptions and attitudes of paraprofessionals. Therefore, using generic qualitative methods with the responses were used to develop a composite synthesis and define themes which exist within the data.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study to gather participants which would meet the inclusion criteria of the study. Purposeful sampling is the selection of participants who have a particular experience or knowledge of the topic being studied (Creswell, 2013). Administrators were contacted through the distribution list of the Cahn's Fellow Program, a program for distinguished administrators to collaborate and improve their student outcomes. Administrators were contacted via email with recruitment materials to spread the word to paraprofessionals in special education schools about the opportunity to partake in an online questionnaire about their perceptions of their training prior to and while working with students with disabilities. The inclusion criteria for the study were a current paraprofessional working in a classroom for students with disabilities. The classroom they worked in had to be a self-contained special education classroom. There was no minimum number of years for the paraprofessionals to be in the role. Paraprofessionals who were interested and met the inclusion criteria, completed a link to a questionnaire. Participants were identified with a number to maintain their confidentiality. No personal data or information was collected. 42 paraprofessionals participated in the study. All 42 paraprofessionals received some form of educational certificate or degree prior to taking on the role. They were all employed in a self-contained special education classroom.

The following questions were part of the virtual questionnaire, administered via Microsoft forms, which the participants were asked to complete. The questionnaire was independently designed by the researchers to aggregate research specific data. Written responses were collected to capture paraprofessionals thoughts and experiences:

- How would you describe your education prior to beginning in your role as paraprofessional?
- How would you describe the ongoing training you receive in your role as a paraprofessional?
- How would you describe the setting you work in?
- What are typical responsibilities of being a paraprofessional in a special education classroom?
- What kind of challenges are experienced daily?
- What are your perceptions regarding your education preparing you for your responsibilities in the classroom?
- What do you believe are some parts of your job which you felt unprepared for?
- What areas do you feel like you need more support in?

Data Security and Ethics

During the data collection process, no personal identifiable information was collected from the participants. Each participant was assigned a participant ID number to help aid in the thematic analysis of responses during the data analysis phase. Participants signed an informed consent form and were able to opt out of the study at any given time. All data collected was secured on a password protected computer, only accessible to the researchers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study utilized Percy et al. (2015) Inductive Thematic Analysis for Generic Qualitative Research. Inductive Thematic Analysis refers to the coding of data to develop patterns and themes from within the data. These patterns and themes are then used to

develop a composite synthesis and a response to the research question. The inductive process allows a researcher to look at these new concepts and develop a response which is then generalizable to the population at large (Percy et al., 2015).

This study was exempt from IRB review as it included no personal or identifiable information. The participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and were given an informed consent form prior to beginning any data collection.

Findings

Findings of the study sheds light to the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of paraprofessionals on the support and trainings they have, the areas they struggle in, and domains which they still need further direction and professional development in. More specifically, the patterns which were identified when the responses were clustered included (a) paraprofessionals are coming in with some training, (b) their ongoing training is not always consistent, (c) the biggest areas of struggle are addressing challenging behavior, (d) their education does not always prepare them for the responsibilities in the classroom, and (e) further support is needed for them to fulfil their responsibilities. After further analysis and synthesis, the five patterns were then condensed into two overarching themes which included, paraprofessional training deficits, need for behavior support training.

Theme 1: Paraprofessional Training Deficit

After administering the questionnaire, results indicated that paraprofessionals come with a wide range of training and educational backgrounds upon entering their position as a paraprofessional in a classroom for children with disabilities. Their educational background ranged from Associates, Bachelors, to some master's degrees. There are also a large percentage of paraprofessionals with some college credits, with responses being, "I had no degree but had gone to college for a few years prior" (Participant 23), and another describing their education as "completed high school, have some college credits in education" (Participant 21). This drastic difference in educational and preparation levels of paraprofessionals has been identified in previous literature as resulting from a need to hire many people relatively quickly for a position that, in most states, has no certification or licensure process. Most paraprofessionals are hired and assigned to a class or to a specific student without any training or preparation, with the expectation that the teachers working with the paraprofessional will provide instruction as to job duties, which is problematic because few teachers have received training or instruction on how to train or supervise paraprofessionals (Butt, 2018). This wide range of educational experiences, backgrounds, and levels of supervision led to the paraprofessionals feeling unprepared at times to address the challenges in the classroom.

Regarding their education, paraprofessionals feel that the challenges in the classroom place them in a position requiring further support. While schools provide a variety of trainings as shared, "the ongoing training is crucial as a paraprofessional" (Participant 28), "the trainings I've received has helped me deliver better instruction to my student" (Participant 29), and "I have received some training on the way, but some you to learn on the job" (Participant 32). However, many responses shared that the training was inadequate, they needed more to help them fulfil their daily responsibilities. Responses included, "the training does not help with the real-life environment" (Participant 11), "in house training is rare" (Participant 2), "I think more is needed" (Participant 8), "I would describe the ongoing training I have received as insufficient" (Participant 12), and many stating that they received "no real training." These responses shed light on the ongoing training in many learning environments for paraprofessionals. The deficits became evident as the paraprofessionals mentioned that training

was rare and often it was difficult for them to apply the findings of the training to the actual learning environment. Rosenberg et al. (2020) found that “bug-in-ear” technology for real-time coaching improved intervention implementation with paraprofessionals. Likewise, coaching paraprofessionals using evidence-based practices has led to increased student learning (Ledford et al., 2018). Many school districts do not invest in training for paraprofessionals due to the high rates of turnover in the position and the lack of available substitutes to cover paraprofessional duties so that individuals can attend training during the school day. Limited training is often available during the designated teacher professional development days, though this is typically very brief training and is insubstantial in meeting the needs of the paraprofessional on a day-to-day basis (Butt, 2018).

Upon describing their work environment, paraprofessionals present a passion for their work. They see their work environment as, “positive,” (Participant 11, 18, 23, 24, 25, 28, 32) and “professional, very welcoming, and putting the student education first.” In addition, based on the responses it became evident that they have a love for the work they do every day and are proud of the work they do. There were a few who felt the “danger since covid,” and felt that the pandemic brought about more stress and demands in the workplace with one participant sharing, “at times the role of the paraprofessional is very overwhelming.”

Theme 2: Need for Behavior Support Training

They typical work environment of a paraprofessional includes responsibilities such as assisting the teacher, with participants describing it as, “keeping the students attentive,” “assist the teacher I’m assigned to,” “support both the teacher and students,” and “support the teacher in positive reinforcement.” Another responsibility shared by the paraprofessionals was instructing one or multiple students in the class and engaging them in academic lessons. Some paraprofessionals shared that they support with, “delivering instruction, using assessments,” “small group instruction,” and “help teach the kids.” Data collection and student progress monitoring were amongst the responses received as well, “record and report progress,” and “collect data.”

Another responsibility in the classroom was related to working on behaviors of the students when they demonstrated challenging behavior. Paraprofessionals shared that they had to redirect students to manage their behavior and keep them on task during lessons. “I work with students who become a distraction in the classroom.” Others shared that they check and use reinforcements to manage student behaviors and even, “Implement behavior strategies,” to support students academically.

When it comes to challenges that they face in the classroom within their responsibilities, some shared that “having student trust,” and “being short staff,” posed a challenge. They felt that when there were staff members absent, they had to fill multiple roles and take on more responsibilities than usual, however, 60% of the paraprofessionals in the sample, stated that their biggest challenge in the workplace was addressing student behavior in the classroom. Responses ranged from, “behavior challenges from students who learn differently,” “students not engaged in schoolwork,” “emotional students,” and “students refusing to do work, temper tantrums.”

While education supports some paraprofessionals, many share that training and professional development are still needed and an essential part of their success in the classroom. Specifically, they felt unprepared to address challenging behaviors such as, “different behaviors and how to handle them.” Some elaborated and stated that, “violent outburst and aggression,” and “biting, spitting,” amongst others were challenging behaviors for them to address and they felt unprepared. In addition, some said when they failed to manage behaviors students and staff in the environment were at risk of getting hurt.

Discussion

Findings Compared to Current Literature

In general, findings of this study aligned with previous research regarding the importance of paraprofessionals being well-trained. Previous studies suggest that there may be a gap in their training related to supporting students academically. Participants in the present study reported a perceived lack of preparation for their position which has resulted in they're not knowing what to do or how to be of assistance in the classroom at times. This can impact the student learning and ultimate comprehension of the content (Brock & Carter, 2013). The overall belief of participants was that training is a key factor in student success but that sufficient training has not been provided to them. Another systematic review conducted by Walker, Douglas, and Brewer (2020) noted that paraprofessionals required extra support and supplemental training when working with students with disabilities. In addition, when paraprofessionals were implementing specific instructional strategies, explicit teacher training and support was needed for effective implementation (Walker, Douglas, Douglas et al., 2020). Paraprofessional attitudes in this study were favorable to participating in training and education to improve the classroom situation for everyone involved, and additional training was favorable to participants to improve behavioral and academic outcomes for students. When paraprofessional training is not provided, paraprofessionals are likely to inadvertently exacerbate problematic behavior and to use ineffective teaching strategies that lead to stagnation of student outcomes if not a loss of student skills (Ledford et al., 2018).

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

One strength of the study was that fact that there was a large and diverse sample of 42 paraprofessionals across the United States in a variety of settings supporting students with disabilities. For example, some worked in a self-contained special education classroom which was within a general education school, while others worked in a special education school, supporting students in inclusion settings, or supporting students who were transitioning to a less restrictive educational setting. The diverse perspectives help improve the generalizability of this study (Patton, 2014).

One limitation of this study was the written format of the data collection method, which did not allow for conversation and follow up regarding participant responses. Therefore, the researchers were unable to ensure that participants will relate their full experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding the education they receive. In addition, paraprofessionals who worked in self-contained special education classrooms were surveyed, which makes findings specific to the training provided within the special education classroom environment, and outcomes less generalizable. To limit these limitations, researchers assessed the data for saturation before concluding the data analysis.

An astonishing factor evident from the data, was that although the paraprofessionals were from different states and geographical areas, there were still commonalities in their perceptions and experiences, which greatly informed the outcomes of this study. Ultimately, this information will be very informative to school administration teams who are exploring professional development opportunities for their staff.

Suggestions for Future Research

Recommendations based on the findings include that future researchers pilot various trainings with paraprofessionals and assess its impact on their performance through an

interview prior to the training and after the training on their preparedness to execute the responsibilities expected of them. This can potentially result in a resolution for addressing the training and preparation gap of paraprofessionals as they enter the workplace to support students with disabilities.

Implications of the Findings

Proper training and direct support ahead of taking on a position as a paraprofessional is key to each paraprofessional's success on the job. Many paraprofessionals have a high school diploma, with or without a college education. While training programs and colleges focus on important skills in the classroom, it is evidence that explicit instruction and training related to supporting students with disabilities in the areas of behavior and academics is lacking. Results of this study are important for higher education program coordinators and directors to act and design training and curriculum that better prepare paraprofessional.

This research is important for school administrators as well to fill the gap in information and training needed for paraprofessionals to succeed in their school environment. Trainings can be related to but are not limited to addressing behaviors in the classroom, providing instruction and appropriate supports to help students achieve their goals, and continue to promote student independence and success within their school environment and in their homes. Preparedness of paraprofessionals will result in greater student outcomes and success.

This study is generalizable to paraprofessionals working in a self-contained special education setting. This study sheds light on the importance of providing training prior to a paraprofessional at the beginning of employment and ongoing coaching throughout the school year. In general, paraprofessionals were open to participating in training, with some expressing a desire to be more prepared to be more responsive to student needs.

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