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TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANS

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TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF
SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANS

By

SUSANNA J. BRICE

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Education
in Organizational Leadership

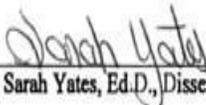
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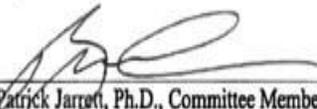
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DEDICATION

To God be the Glory! God is my Savior and my heavenly father, and without God, the completion of my dissertation would have not been possible. I dedicate my dissertation to God. My prayer is this dissertation and doctoral degree brings honor and glory to God.

Thank you to my husband, Steve, and three beautiful daughters, Madyson (Mady), Allyson (Ally), and Emerie (Emie). You have been my biggest cheerleaders and have supported me through the late nights, small victories and tears. Steve, your words of encouragement and unconditional love helped me push through, even when I did not want to, love you! To my girls, dream big, you can accomplish anything with God in your heart. I will be right behind you, always being your biggest fan –I love you girls!

Mom and Dad, thank you for always believing in me. Thank you for supporting me and showing me that hard work pays off. To my siblings, Sarah, Elisabeth, Leah, and Shayne, thank you for always encouraging me and offering me just a gentle nudge of competitive love to complete my journey. I love you all so much!

Finally, to my best friends, Laura, Lisa, and Michelle, thank you for encouragement, and strong nudges to push through. Each one of you have played such a vital role through this journey. Your loyalty, love and support are unmeasurable, and I love each of you dearly.

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to examine how teachers from Title 1 elementary schools implemented school-wide positive behavior plans in Northeast Florida. This qualitative study was founded on the theory of planned behavior (TPB). According to TPB, an individual's behavior can be predicted by attitude and purposes for the behavior. The research participants were six Title 1 elementary school teachers with whom semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather the data. Themes that emerged were professional development, consistency, teacher buy-in, administrative support, and the effectiveness of the plan. Participants indicated the importance of continued support through check-ins, collaborations, professional development, and explained expectations, especially when new administration implemented new expectations. Teachers also recognized that, when implementation of a SWPBS (school-wide positive behavior support plan) plan is done successfully, relationships are built, students can process their emotions with coping tools, and a classroom becomes a positive environment where students are learning and feel safe. Through examining the lived experiences of Title 1 elementary school teachers implementing a SWPBS plan, greater understanding may be gained through increased teacher buy-in to effectively implement a SWPBS plan.

Keywords: school wide positive behavior support (SWPBS), positive behavior support (PBS), Title 1, Theory of planned behavior (TPB)

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I. INTRODUCTION

Equality in schools became a focus with the Improving America Schools Act (IASA) passed in 1994. In 1997, the United States Department of Education revisited the idea of equality in schools and implemented a federally funded educational project known as Title 1. The United States Department of Education defined Title 1 as a program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that provided funds to schools to meet the needs of low socioeconomic families to ensure all students had an equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education and to perform proficiently on all state assessments (United States Department of Education, n.d.).

Title 1 federal funds provide additional resources to schools whose students have low socioeconomic status which, according to the Florida Department of Education, are schools in which more than 50% of the student body must receive free and/or reduced lunch (Florida Department of Education, n.d.). The purpose of these funds is to raise student academic achievement by providing resources to the schools including extra teachers, more support staff, and increased parental involvement opportunities.

Generally, students who are enrolled at Title 1 schools are more likely to exhibit low academic achievement and come from high poverty areas within the community (Johnston & Martelli, 2019). In addition, disciplinary referrals are more numerous in Title 1 schools than in non-Title 1 schools (Van Dyke, 2016).

Title 1 schools typically have to split any extra funds to support reading and mental health. They may have limited funds in the school budget to support a behavior program to correct students' inappropriate behavior cycles (Sugai, Simonsen, Freeman, & La Salle, 2016). When a student is disciplined for negative behaviors through punitive measures, such as detention, in-school suspension, out of school suspension, or expulsion, the student often becomes disengaged in school and academic work (Grasley-Boy, Gage, & Lombardo, 2019). To decrease rising disciplinary problems, administrators and teachers have sought less punitive behavior management strategies in classrooms.

Fallon, Cathcart, DeFouw, O'Keeffe, and Sugai (2017) indicated that many teachers felt overwhelmed and could not adequately deal with behavior problems in the classroom. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an option for teachers to use for behavior management. PBS is an applied science that was purposefully designed by educators to improve an environment that impacts students' "quality of life" and to "minimize problem behavior" (Carr et al., 2002, p. 4). Fallon et al. (2017) concluded that, when a teacher engages in self-assessment and professional development, PBS is implemented more effectively in the classroom than if the teacher did not do self-assessments or participate in professional development. To include the entire school on one behavior plan, the United States government created the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) plan for use in all schools (Brandt, Chitiyo, & May, 2014). According to Fallon et al. (2017), SWPBS plans required extraordinary commitment and training for the teachers in the school. Burke, Ayres, and Hagan-Burke (2004) reported that the PBS in the classroom is an extension of a school-wide positive behavior support SWPBS plan. The successful implementation of a SWPBS plan in a Title 1 school required a collaborative effort between parents and the school community (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Background of the Study

A SWPBS plan may serve as an early intervention plan for avoiding significant discipline problems at a school (Burke et al., 2004). Before a SWPBS plan is implemented, the school administrators evaluate the plan. Brandt et al. (2014) evaluated several different school climates and academic achievements in elementary, middle, and high schools. Schools with high levels of execution of a SWPBS should see a decline in problem behaviors, a rise in acceptable behaviors, and a positive school culture (Brandt et al., 2014).

SWPBS was defined as an organized system to help establish a positive culture within a school and to develop behavior support for academic and social goals for students (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). According to a study by Fallon et al. (2017), teachers felt unprepared to deal with behavioral concerns and problems. Additionally, teachers were concerned about not being able to discipline students effectively because they lack professional development that provided information about cultural differences (Fallon et al., 2017). Higgins and Ponte (2017) identified that finding professional development that encourages teachers to strengthen their teaching practices is important. However, Higgins and Ponte (2017) also argued that, when professional development is given at a school, it is often difficult to find professional development that convinced teachers to implement the content that is being presented. Fallon et al. (2017) believed providing professional development specific to different cultures may help teachers build a positive rapport with students. Providing professional development about cultures may also help teachers create a positive learning climate (Fallon et al., 2017).

Schools have become more diverse, and students need various levels of support. Schools that provided a multi-tiered system of support have enabled students to experience success at school (Fallon et al., 2017), and SWPBS is a multi-tiered system of behavior support. The first

tier targets the teaching of academic and behavior expectations. Tier 2 is an intervention to help students who need additional behavior support. The final tier, Tier 3, provided more intense small group instruction compared to Tier 1 and Tier 2 (Horner et al., 2010).

According to Brandt et al. (2014), a large percentage of discipline referrals are related to school climate. When students and teachers do not have a positive rapport, behaviors are often triggered with negative reinforcements, resulting in a higher number of discipline referrals (Brandt et al., 2014). A positive school climate allowed for students to have different perspectives and attitudes about school (Brandt et al., 2014). Teachers can have a positive impact on school climate. Rudasill, Snyder, Levinson, and Adelson (2018) explained that teachers are the caregivers that build both the instructional environment and the social-emotional environment that allow students to feel safe while taking risks and to express themselves without fear of judgement. Rudasill et al. (2018) also discussed the importance of solid, healthy relationships between not just teachers and students but also other between adults within the school to have a positive school climate

Burns, Houser, and Farris (2017) viewed open communication between teacher and student as an essential aspect of having a positive school climate; therefore, teachers demonstrated positive relations through communication which is vital for the future behavior choices of students. Burns et al. (2017) suggested that teachers building relationships with students impacted students and helped students make better behavior choices. Nairz-Wirth and Feldmann (2017) suggested that student-teacher relationships can have a significant impact on school achievement and later school completion. A study by Lewis, Cohen, Prewett, and Herman (2018) discussed the importance of a student-teacher relationship; the study indicated when a positive student-teacher relationship is present, the student is less likely to have

behavioral and mental health problems such as depression (Lewis et al., 2018). Motivation and engagement in school have been found indicators of a positive student-teacher relationship (Lewis et al., 2018). Burke, Ayres, and Hagan-Burke (2004) concluded that, when a student is provided opportunities to learn and participate in positive behaviors, the teacher will be able to spend more time on academics and less time ultimately on redirecting behaviors.

Teachers implement SWPBS daily with their students. Burke et al. (2004) explained how the implementation of a SWPBS plan can improve a school's culture as well as decrease behavioral problems; execution and follow-through of the plan rely on the teachers' ability to implement behavioral expectations. The purpose of a SWPBS is to address the behavioral needs of the students in the school (Burke et al., 2004). However, in Title 1 schools, resources, tools, and continuous support systems to help with the implementation of a SWPBS may not be available because of costs (Bruhn, Hirsch, & Lloyd, 2015). Without the buy-in and support of the teachers implementing the SWPBS plan, the SWPBS plan will be ineffective (Bruhn et al., 2015). Sanetti, Williamson, Long, and Kratchwill (2018) researched the implementation of behavior plans by teachers and explained all teachers did not have the knowledge of how to plan and implement the behavior plans and needed more support. Sanetti et al. (2018), also discussed the limitations of the study was a small sample of teachers, and more information from the teachers' perspective was needed. Another limitation was the limited number of participants and more input was needed to represent a higher population of classroom teachers.

Problem Statement

Research strongly supported the implementation of a SWPBS plan and revealed how such plans impact the overall success of reducing school-wide discipline problems (Burke et al., 2004; Fallon et al., 2017; Horner et al., 2010). However, more research is needed regarding the

lived experiences of Title 1 teachers who have implemented a SWPBS plan. More information needs to be known about teachers' everyday experiences and perspectives of implementing a school-wide positive behavior plan at a Title 1 school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study will be to examine how teachers from Title 1 elementary schools implemented school-wide positive behavior plans.

Research Question

This study addressed the following research question:

How do teachers at Title 1 schools implement their school-wide positive behavior plan?

Theoretical Framework

SWPBS is a method used to reduce the number of behavioral problems that occur within a school and classroom (Carr et al., 2002). The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is a framework used to develop and change behavioral interventions (Roos & Hahn, 2017). TPB is a method that is used across many disciplines and is one of the most powerful frameworks used to predict behaviors in environments (Burns, Houser & Farris, 2017). According to TPB, an individual's behavior can be predicted by attitude and purposes for the behavior. TPB suggested that an individual's behaviors are predictable based on attitudes toward the behaviors as well as feelings toward the norms established in the environment (Roos & Hahn, 2017). When a relationship has been built between two individuals, with one being an authority figure, the TPB indicates a positive relationship will decrease behavioral problems and will increase academic achievement (Burns et al., 2017).

The study of TPB by Burns et al. (2017) focused on the three main stages: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. These three main stages guide individual

behavioral intentions and are used to predict an observable response. The control stage determined the intentions of the behavior and the actual behavior (Burns et al., 2017). Burns et al.'s (2017) research indicated that positive interactions and teacher-student relationships could positively impact interactions and teacher-student relationships. When a teacher interacted positively with a student and validated appropriate behavior, the behavior is perceived to be controlled (Burns et al., 2017). Brandt, Chitiyo, and May's (2014) research indicated that giving positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior increased the desired behavior. TPB can be a powerful tool in the classroom to promote positive behavior through positive teacher-student interactions and confirmations of appropriate behavior (Burns et al., 2017).

Methodology

Research Design

The location and participants of the research are from elementary schools in northeast Florida. Each participant was required to implement a school-wide positive behavior plan. Each participant was also required to take professional development on the implementation of a school wide positive support plan. The researcher interviewed the participants in a neutral setting.

A case study research is a qualitative method that required the researcher to explore a real-life study in context or actual setting (Creswell, 2013). A case study also involves the researcher analyzing the lived experiences of individuals who experienced the same implications (Creswell, 2013). The current case study will specifically be collective, in which the researcher interviews and collects data from several individuals who have experienced the same experiences (Creswell, 2013). The researcher interviewed and selected multiple case studies to illustrate the teachers' implementation of school-wide positive behavior plans. The purpose of this case study

will be to examine how teachers from Title 1 elementary schools implemented school-wide positive behavior plans.

Data Collection and Procedures

The researcher interviewed six teachers total from Title 1 schools within the Northeast Florida school district. The research participants are teachers who have participated in professional development on how to implement a SWPBS plan and who have had experience implementing a SWPBS plan. The teachers interviewed will be personally known by the researcher and was asked if they would like to volunteer to be interviewed. Interviews were held at a local coffee shop or online and lasted about 30 minutes to gain perspectives on implementing SWPBS plan from participants. The participant's number of years teaching will vary. The researcher used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) with open-ended, semi-structured questions to encourage meaningful perspectives and detailed information. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants will receive a copy of the transcripts to review for accuracy. The transcripts will be analyzed, and the researcher searched for common themes.

Limitations

The research is limited to the interviewees who teach in Title 1 schools in Northeast Florida. In limiting this study to Title 1 teachers, the study does not include teachers who teach at non-Title 1 schools who may have also implemented a SWPBS plan. The study is limited to one area in Northeast Florida and does not include Title 1 teachers outside the area in which the research is being conducted.

Definition of Key Terms

The following phrases are key terms for this study:

- **School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)** Positive behavioral support is an extension of applied behavior analysis. SWPBS uses a plan for an entire school to reduce the number of discipline problems within the school (Burke et al., 2004).
- **Positive Behavior Support (PBS)** is an applied science that uses educational and environmental redesign to enhance the quality of life for students and teachers and minimize problem behavior (Burke et al., 2004).
- **Title 1** is an educational program that receives federal funding for a school that has a high concentration of low socioeconomic students (United States Department of Education, 2018).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the case study is to describe the perspectives of Title 1 teachers' lived experiences of implementing school-wide positive behavior plans in classrooms at Title 1 schools; research studies have identified the effectiveness of SWPBS to reduce negative behavior in problem schools (Fallon et al., 2017). The study provided information about the teachers' lived experiences when implementing a SWPBS plan within the school.

Summary

In summary, the study provided data from teachers at Title 1 elementary schools in Northeast Florida who have implemented SWPBS plans in their classrooms. Interview data provided more understanding of teacher perspectives and lived experiences during the

implementation of a SWPBS plan. Chapter II reviews studies of positive behavior plans.

Chapter III explains the methodology used in the study, including the data collection and data analysis procedures. Chapter IV presents the data and Chapter V provides a discussion of the results as well as a summary.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how teachers from Title 1 elementary schools implemented school-wide positive behavior plans. The goal of Chapter II is to provide a comprehensive review of literature on the theory of planned behavior. Research on school wide behavior plans and their implementation will also be discussed. The final section of the literature review focuses on research regarding teachers' perspectives of school-wide behavior plans and their implementation.

Theory of Planned Behavior

TPB, which is utilized across many disciplines, guides behavioral interventions and is one of the most powerful frameworks used to predict behaviors in environments (Burns et al., 2017; Roos & Hahn, 2017). Classroom management refers to the actions that teachers take to create a learning environment that supports academic achievement as well as social and emotional learning (Narhi, Kiiski, & Savolainen, 2017).

According to Burns et al. (2017), when using positive classroom management, teacher-student relationships can enhance student learning within the classrooms. A positive behavior plan has three concepts that will influence a student's behavior: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. Behavioral views are an individual's thoughts about whether an action will end with a positive or negative outcome. Normative beliefs are the expectations of how others feel about behavior and whether they want to adhere to the expectation of the

behavior. Control beliefs are the social interaction and pressure or support of others to participate in the behaviors (Burns et al., 2017).

Burns et al. (2017) examined if the theory of planned behavior had a predictive impact on behavior in the classroom and if positive teacher-student interactions could predict teachers' reactions and students' behavior. Burns et al. (2017) surveyed 343 students ranging in age from 18 to 44 years old who attended a large southern university. Of the participants, 41.7% were male students, and 58.1% were female students. Burns et al. (2017) collected research using a 58-item survey asking students to answer questions based on the last professor they had that day. A Likert-type scale was used to measure perceptions of positive teacher reinforcement and TPB variables, which view the attitude toward behavior (Burns et al., 2017). Burns et al. (2017) concluded that positive teacher reinforcement has a positive impact ($p < .001$) on predicting the attitude a student will have when communicating with the instructor. The results also indicated the adult students' perception of a negative behavior will highly control and relate to how the student would positively or negatively communicate to the professor in the future. Burns et al.'s (2017) research conclusions indicated a teacher's interaction with students plays a vital role in how a student will choose to participate or engage with teachers.

Burns et al. (2017) also suggested that teacher affirmation and attitudes toward communicating had a strong correlation with learning and students' behavioral intentions. Nairz-Wirth and Feldmann (2017) indicated teachers' attitude and behaviors, as well as engagement of teacher-student relationship, play a vital role in student achievement and success in the classroom. The more students feel validated by their teacher, the more likely they are to have positive behaviors, actions, and participation in the classroom (Burns et al., 2017).

Shin and Ryan (2016) examined the importance of teacher emotional support concerning

the overall levels of disruptive behavior in the classroom from 16 midwestern schools. The sample provided 879 students and reflected how the selection of friends influenced behavior choices. Teachers' engagement and approach to their students affected students' behavior choices in the classroom, including whether they copied their peers' disruptive behavior. The data were collected in two waves six months apart, once in the fall and once in the spring. In wave one, the findings of the research suggested that disruptive student behavior were not significantly different in classrooms that had low teacher emotional support compared to classes with high teacher emotional support ($p = .367$). However, in wave two, the findings of the research indicated that the classrooms with low levels of teacher emotional support had higher levels of disruptive behavior ($p < .01$). Students were more likely to be influenced by disruptive peers and join in the disruptive behavior in the classrooms where teacher emotional support was lower (Shin & Ryan, 2016). When teachers provided emotionally supportive classrooms, teachers indicated how well they knew their students. Positive relationships between the teacher and student are important in the classroom (Shin & Ryan, 2016).

School-Wide Behavior Plans

Multi-tier systems of support are systems implemented in the schools to help students be successful academically as well as behaviorally (Sugai et al., 2016). Teachers and principals work diligently to help all types of behavior concerns that are occurring within classrooms and schools (Sugai et al., 2016). In 1987, The United States Department of Education gave funding for training of a behavior management program called School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) to improve the implementation of behavior practices that are supported by research (Brandt et al., 2014). SWPBS is a multi-tiered system of behavior support: the first tier targets the teaching of academic and behavior expectations, Tier 2 is an intervention to help students

who need additional behavior support, and Tier 3 (the final tier) provides more intense small group instruction compared to Tier 1 and Tier 2 (Horner et al., 2010). SWPBS is designed to prevent new and reoccurring behavior disruptions and reduce the frequency and intensity of disruptive behavior (Brandt et al., 2014). Creating a school-wide program allows for a safe environment to be formed, which in turn helps the student to perform better in all academic and behavioral areas (Brandt et al., 2014).

Grasley-Boy et al. (2019) performed research to determine if schools that implement a SWPBS plan had suggestively fewer students who received disciplinary actions. Grasley-Boy et al. (2019) gathered data from the California public schools' discipline data, including discipline reports, discipline outcomes, and the California implementation data for the SWPBS plan. From the California state data, 1,088 schools were surveyed to determine if the school had implemented a SWPBS plan. Based on the data, 544 schools implemented a SWPBS plan with fidelity, meaning the plan was implemented with at least 80% accuracy. According to a California state database, the other 544 schools did not receive training on how to implement a SWPBS. Grasley-Boy et al. (2019) supported the belief that implementation with training was essential to determine if the plan helped support positive behavior as well as academic achievement. The results indicated that the schools that had implemented a SWPBS plan with fidelity had a significant decrease in overall out of school suspensions; the effect size ($g = -.25$) was substantial (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019). The results supported prior research by Gage, Grasley-Boy, George, Childs, and Kincaid (2019) that suggested implementation of a SWPBS plan reduced problem behavior (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019).

Impact of School-Wide Behavior Plans

Discipline problems in most public schools receive negative attention, and although many citizens might presume that teachers receive in-service or professional development training to help minimize the disciplinary issues in schools, previous research indicates that teachers are often not receiving on-the-job training related to discipline (Klaver et al., 2020). Brown and Payne (1988) wanted to determine the amount of professional development received for discipline. Of the 322 teachers surveyed, 65% did not receive any discipline training in the prior school year. Additionally, the results indicated that only 17% of teachers received hours of professional development on discipline, and only 10% of teachers received five or more hours of training on discipline. All teachers in the study disclosed that they needed additional professional development or training on school discipline (Brown & Payne, 1988). Brown and Payne (1988) offered the Structured Discipline (SD) behavior model which included a plan for professional development as well as the implementation of a three-component school-wide behavior plan for everyone. The first component is input for existing behavior discipline plans while the second component is a procedure where each school selects a plan. The third component is an ongoing teacher-administrator task force to discuss continuous input, techniques used, and in-service training needed for staff.

SD is an example of a SWPBS plan that requires the entire school to participate. Teachers feeling ownership of the program is crucial for high levels of consistent implementation. The impact of implementing a SWPBS plan or a SD allows for teachers not to feel alone when dealing with disruptive behaviors and provides a clear behavior expectation. Procedures and processes give direction and consistency when dealing with disruptive behavior. In order to have a high impact, a SWPBS's implementation is critical, and continuous

professional development is necessary for collaboration and support (Brown & Payne, 1988). Providing teachers an opportunity to meet and discuss with other teachers is one of the most effective aspects of professional development because collaboration builds a network and the discussion is relevant to current experience and situations (Hersheldt, Pell, Scehrest, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2012).

Petursdottir and Ragnarsdottir (2019) assessed active behavior intervention programs to decrease behavioral problems and increase academic engagement. The study focused on three students: one second grader and two third graders, located at two different elementary schools. The students' teachers felt the students had continuous behavioral problems that had a negative influence on academic achievement for themselves and their classmates. The researchers used classroom observations to study disruptive behavior and academic engagement defining disruptive behavior as any type of behavior that involved vocal or physical interference with instruction. Findings from the research indicated disruptive behavior decreased by an average of 85% when a behavior plan was in place. Academic engagement of the three participants increased by an average of 85% of when a behavior plan was in place. The researchers also indicated reinforcements used to encourage positive behavior through the behavior plan were able to be phased out. Petursdottir and Ragnarsdorrit (2019) concluded that dealing with students with behavioral concerns is a significant problem in schools. Students' academics often suffer due to behavioral concerns because the students are typically allowing negative behavior to affect their academics. Implementation of a behavior intervention program within each classroom of a school supported by each teacher will allow for positive changes (Petursdorttir & Ragnarsdorrit, 2019).

Trussell, Lewis, and Raynor (2016) researched the use of using universal teacher

practices in conjunction with a behavior plan. Universal practices were defined as instructional time, prompts to students from teachers, feedback that reinforces the behavior, positive reinforcements, and wait time for the students to engage and respond. The participants of the research study were three general education teachers from the southwestern United States who taught second, third, and fourth grades and had received training on universal teacher practices. The Multiple Option Observation System for Experimental Studies measured universal teacher practices in the three classrooms where teachers each chose one student from their class that had a significant rating on the problem behavior section of a social skills rating checklist along with multiple office referrals. Trussell et al. (2016) used teacher interviews, observations, and student behavioral data. The results of the research indicated targeted interventions from the SWPBS helped decrease disruptive behavior and combining the universal teacher practices with the behavior plan influenced the participating students' behavior. An unexpected result of implementing universal teacher practices in all three classrooms was the creation of a positive learning environment. The research indicated that a school behavior plans reduced negative behaviors through universal teacher practices such as behavior prompts to students and feedback to reinforce the behavior. When a SWPBS was implemented, actions such as attention-seeking behaviors diminished without implementing an individual behavior plan (Trussell et al., 2016).

Klaver et al. (2020) conducted a study in the Netherlands that examined how effective training was in implementing a SWPBS plan with an individual that had an intellectual disability. The staff that was trained worked at a long-term care facility that served individuals with intellectual disabilities, and the training allowed the staff to feel comfortable developing a behavior plan to reduce the number of challenging behaviors endured in a day. The study predicted that if the staff was trained to use a behavior plan, a decrease in challenging behaviors

would occur. The study had 24 total staff members who participated and 11 individuals with intellectual disabilities. The 11 intellectually disabled individuals lived in a 24-hour care facility. The staff who participated in the study took care of the intellectually disabled individuals for different shifts and received a total of 1,440 minutes of training from a cognitive-behavioral therapist. The staff members gave positive redirection when an individual was displaying challenging behavior. The study was a mixed-method study that used staff-related questionnaires through an online program, Unipark, and 30-minute structured interviews. Staff members completed the questionnaires and interviews on behalf of the participants due to the intellectual disability. A one-way of analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data.

The findings showed a significant decrease in the intellectually disabled individuals' challenging behaviors after the caretakers received training. The ANOVA results indicated a significant difference ($p < .05$) in quality of life and self-efficacy based on the Irritability subscale scores measuring the quality of life and staff self-efficacy when dealing with challenging behaviors. According to the results, the staff felt self-efficacy increased because they felt empowered to handle and deal with challenging behaviors when they arose. While Klaver et al.'s (2020) research took place in a long-term facility and not in a school, the findings are still relevant to supporting a positive behavior plan. Klaver et al.'s (2020) research demonstrated that when a positive support plan was implemented and proper training was received, the challenging behaviors decreased.

Implementation of School-Wide Behavior Plans

Implementation of a SWPBS plan is successful when implemented with fidelity by the teacher (Burn et al., 2017). Collier-Meek, Long, and Kim (2014) explained the importance of

implementing a school-based behavior plan with a universal and common configuration to promote successful student outcomes. To implement a SWPBS plan with fidelity, a teacher would need to follow the plan's guidelines at least 80% of the time. Collier-Meek, Sanetti, and Boyle (2018) explained when teachers provide an exceptional behavior plan paired with excellent academic instruction, behaviors are less likely to be a problem. Branch, Hasting, Beverley, and Hughes (2016) supported prior research indicating behavior plans can only be successful if an active process and ongoing procedures are in place. Procedures, training, collaborations, coaching, and continuous commentary are all necessary to successfully implement a behavior plan for an entire school year (Branch et al., 2016). Collaboration during professional development is an effective way to help teachers apply and remember behavior intervention strategies addressed during professional development (Hershfeldt, Pell, Schrest, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2012). The effectiveness of a SWPBS can only be measured if the behavior problems and behavior interventions are accurately reported (Bruhn, Hirsch, & Lloyd, 2015).

Fallon et al. (2017) wanted to determine if teachers who engage in self-assessment training on a classroom behavior plan would result in students' increased academic engagement and a decrease of disruptive behavior. The sample population came from a middle school including grades 6-8 with an enrollment of 275 students. After the presentation and expectations of the study were presented to the faculty of the school, only two sixth grade teachers and one seventh grade teacher participated in the study. The teachers each used one class period of students that had the most disruptive behaviors (Fallon et al., 2017).

Researchers observed participating teachers to determine what further training was needed for each teacher. Participants self-assessed engagement in the classroom based on student feedback and input. The data were collected data interpreted, and then each teacher

received training based on the data. After training, the individual needs of each teacher were identified. Teachers self-monitored each day through indicating full implementation, partial implementation, or no implementation of the SWPBS plan for the day. If a teacher's self-assessment for implementation of the SWPBS plan fell below 80% for three days in a row, teachers would then receive an observation and performance feedback from another faculty member. Researchers used the performance feedback to assess the implementation of the SWPBS plan. In addition to the teacher self-assessment and the feedback provided by another faculty member, researchers also randomly chose a student to observe. The observation data was used to measure the number of class disruptions in each participating teacher's class (Fallon et al., 2017).

Fallon et al. (2017) concluded all teacher participants implemented the plan with low fidelity. However, according to two of the teachers' self-assessments, the accuracy of implementation increased when teachers followed the action steps of the behavior plan. When performance feedback was given by fellow faculty members on all three teachers' use of the behavior plan, most of the engagement in lesson within the classroom increased. The findings also indicated that all disruptive student behavior decreased as well.

Fallon et al. (2017) stated the importance of the implementation of the SWPBS plan. Professional development is crucial for teachers during the entire school year. Implementation with year-around rigorous support allowed students to receive the best behavior support (Fallon et al., 2017). Providing teachers with year-around feedback that is constructive and encouraging allows teachers to have success with the SWPBS plan in the classroom (Gilmour, Wehby, & McGuire, 2017). Giving teachers high levels of support year-round prevents a hurdle when teachers are trying to implement the behavior plan with effectiveness (Collier-Meek et al., 2018).

Sanetti et al. (2018) questioned if purposeful planning and implementation of a behavior plan with increased support from a behavior specialist would increase the likelihood of behavior plan use with fidelity 80% of the time. The sample population consisted of three general education teachers from two different public elementary schools in two school districts in the northeastern United States. Two teachers taught at the same school, and the third teacher taught in a different district. Sanetti et al. (2018), used a mixed-method design to gather data using a classroom behavior management survey gather background information about the teacher's knowledge of a behavior support plan and observing the behavior management system to determine if the teachers were executing the behavior plan 80% of the time. Sanetti et al. (2018) suggested teachers can be successful with implementation planning for a SWPBS plan when behavioral professionals, such as the school psychologist, provide continued support. The percentage of the fidelity of implementation of a SWPBS plan increases and the amount of disruptive behavior decreases in a classroom with continued support and planning. Sanetti et al. (2018) also suggested that teachers need different levels of support, and unless behavior strategies were useable and reasonable, the plan would likely not be applied in the classroom.

Gilmour et al.'s (2017) studied school-based and university-based coaches by assigning teachers to either a school-based coach who had received training or a coach from a university. A total of 28 teachers from two different schools participated. Eight teachers in both schools were assigned university-based coaches, and six teachers from both schools were assigned school-based coaches. Data were gathered through interviews as researchers looked for common themes about the impact coaching did or did not have for teachers implementing a behavior plan. Based on the feedback given from the coaches, both groups of teachers implemented the SWPBS plan most of the time. The results indicated that the school-based coaches may not have the

ability to provide teachers with the needed support for the behavior plan recommended by the program. The university-based coaching maintained a higher achievement of quality and devotion of implementation of the SWPBS plan (Gilmour et al., 2017).

Collier-Meek et al. (2014) researched the importance of planning throughout implementation of a SWPBS plan. Their participants included three teachers from two different public schools in the northeastern, United States who requested help with a student demonstrating challenging behavioral needs. Two school psychologists provided feedback when needed during the research. Data were collected through 25 minutes of direct observation. Once a behavior support plan was introduced in the classroom, positive behavior increased slightly. Once the teacher used the behavior support plan after significant planning, the disruptive behavior decreased tremendously. The study suggested that purposeful planning for the behavior support plan was more useful to reduce disruptive behavior than performance feedback (Collier-Meek et al., 2014).

Branch et al. (2016) endeavored to discover the impact of precision teaching on a behavior support plan. Branch et al. (2016) defined precision teaching as describing, calculating, and studying behavior to sustain learning within a classroom. The participants of the study were 24 staff members who worked with disabled children exhibiting problematic behavior. Problematic behaviors were defined as aggressive (physical and verbal), self-harming, and destructive. Each participating staff member went to a separate 3-hour training session focusing on severe behavior problems receiving follow-up training and an opportunity to discuss and receive information regarding precision training. The participants in Group One received the fluency training with flashcards which contained information describing and suggesting preventative measures to correct the problem behaviors. Group Two received flashcards with

written solutions which related to the experience the participants had with a disruptive behavior and practiced with the flashcards daily for a total of four weeks. Two weeks later, participants were tested without having daily practice of the flashcards. Measurements were based on how many flashcards they were able to answer correctly in 1 minute.

The results reflected that the number of flashcards answered correctly was significantly correlated to providing solutions to disruptive behavior ($p < .001$). The group that had experience relating to the behavior was more successful in retaining the flashcard information. The researchers suggested that, when implementing a behavior plan, it is essential to note the importance of teachers implementing the behavior plan properly. The researchers dually noted the importance of allowing time for meaningful training, such as collaboration or mini-practice times for teachers to work together through scenarios (Branch et al., 2016).

Chitiyo, May, Mathende, Chaidamoyo, and Dzenga (2019) researched the relationship between the confidence school employees have when using a SWPBS plan and the sustainability of the SWPBS. The sample consisted of 104 faculty and staff who had implemented a SWPBS, and data were collected through an online survey. Overall, Chitiyo et al.'s (2019) research indicated that individuals involved with implementing a SPPBS plan need to be confident with the program's training and knowledge to implement with longevity. Teachers facilitating an intervention plan may miss essential factors if they are not confident with the plan's expectations. When a person is not comfortable and confident with a plan, they will ultimately revert to what they know and are comfortable with, even if it is not effective (Chitiyo et al., 2019). To improve teacher confidence, teacher trainees must be trained until they feel entirely confident implementing the SWPBS plan. Furthermore, the training needs to be ongoing to continue to sustain the confidence of the continued implementation. Allowing teachers to participate and

observe settings where SWPBS plans are already in place and appear in the school and giving the teacher practical application will help establish confidence. Chitiyo et al. (2019) suggested that further research may indicate ways to involve faculty and staff in developing confidence with implementing a SWPBS plan to maintain sustainability. Future research may also focus on how professional development may impact the confidence of implementation and sustainability of a SWPBS plan.

Teacher Perspectives on School-Wide Behavior Plans

An number of teachers overall have reported feeling ill-prepared to handle behavior problems in the classroom (Fallon et al., 2017). Educators feel ill-prepared due to a possible lack of professional development on cultural sensitivity to better understand each student (Fallon et al., 2017). Teachers who deal with difficult behavior have often reported they do not feel prepared to deal with the behaviors and reported feeling ineffective with a high level of stress when there was a lack of support for challenging behaviors (Westling, 2010). Although teachers consult with behavior professionals such as the school psychologist and set up plans to implement, the support does not continue throughout the entire school year. Due to the lack of consistent support, learning how to handle difficult behaviors often comes from teacher experience (Westling, 2010). Narhi, Kiiski, and Savolainen (2017) expressed the difficulties teachers endure when dealing with problematic behavior continuously. Dealing with behavioral problems daily may induce work-related stress for the teacher (Narhi et al., 2017).

Wienen et al. (2018) evaluated teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of a SWPBS when addressing student behavior by conducting a three-year longitudinal study in 23 different Dutch schools implementing a SWPBS plan. The quantitative data collection was collected with a strength and difficult survey (SDQ-L) filled out by each teacher. Wienen et al. (2018) indicated

an overall decrease in challenging behavior and increased positive behavior interactions over the three-year research. The overall tendency of the change in challenging behavior to positive behaviors was significant ($p < 0.0001$) and the teacher's interaction with challenging behavior decreased ($p < 0.0001$) over time. The SWPBS plan's implementation had a greater effect on students who already had an existing record of challenging behavior. Another finding indicated the implementation of a SWPBS had an overall more substantial effect on girls than boys (Wienen, 2018). Wienen et al. (2018) suggested future studies on the most influential aspects of training teachers in order to develop the quality of implementation of a SWPBS.

Westling (2010) examined 38 individual education teachers and 32 general education teachers' perspectives using a Likert-type scale for participants to report their views on dealing with difficult behavior. The researcher's data indicated the reliability results of the questionnaires were high, and the findings suggest that special education teachers taught an average of 22.6 students and stated 43% of students showed difficult behavior. General education teachers taught an average of 41.2 students and said 24% showed difficult behavior. Special and general education teachers both reported that just over half of them had received suitable training for behavior interventions and plans. Both groups of teachers also indicated they were able to handle the problematic behavior due to experience, not professional development. The results reiterated the under-preparedness of teachers to deal with difficult behaviors and that teachers often feel ineffective when they deal with difficult behaviors. About 44% of general education teachers have contemplated quitting due to dealing with difficult behaviors, whereas only 11% of special education teachers considered quitting. Special education teachers felt they had adequate support from teachers and administrators, whereas general education teachers felt they did not receive sufficient support from teachers and administrators when dealing with difficult

behaviors. Few educators from the study felt they had received support from various sources to help them deal with difficult behavior and desired training to implement a behavior plan (Westling, 2010).

Collier-Meek et al. (2018) identified roadblocks of successfully implementing a behavior plan from a teacher's perspective. The researcher asked what teachers felt was the most challenging task of implementing a behavior plan and what strategies can help with the roadblocks when implementing the behavior plan. The thirty-three teachers agreed to participate, and the average teaching years of experience was 10 years. The results indicated that teachers have a continuous struggle with implementing behavior interventions because of a lack of knowledge on how to manage the behavior as well as a lack of support. One teacher's perspective for implementing a behavior plan was finding time to intertwine the behavior plan with daily activities. The final implications suggested the importance of implementing a reliable behavior plan that offers continuous behavior support through teacher collaboration and administrative year-around support (Collier-Meek, 2018).

Narhi et al. (2017) conducted a study to determine the effects of a classroom behavior plan used in a classroom with disruptive behavior as compared to the amount of teacher stress in conjunction with planning and implementation of the behavior plan. The participants of the study consisted of 607 middle school teachers from 35 different schools including grades sixth, seventh, and eighth. Each school had one to four trainers to receive the information and train the rest of the school on how to plan and implement a school-wide behavior plan that would be applied in each classroom. The goal was for each teacher to obtain 70% to 80% success in reaching behavior goals in each classroom following specific guidelines for implementation, and if a student did not meet their goals at the end of the week, parents were contacted. Every few

weeks, the teachers collaborated on the behavior plan discussing how the behavior plan was working and which part of the behavior plan still needed clear expectations. Teachers also discussed whether they wanted the behavior plan to continue once the study was over. However, Narhi et al. (2017) suggested that it is unclear which practices were sufficient and which were not sufficient due to the inconclusive evidence. The dealing with disruptive behavior continuously in a classroom can have adverse effects not only on the students but also the teacher. Narhi et al. (2017) suggested that, when disruptive behavior is regularly presented, the teacher is at risk for mental health problems. When a disruptive behavior continues to occur, the behavior puts the student causing the disruption and the other students in the class at risk for lowered academic engagement and completion.

Summary

Many studies have indicated the importance of implementing a SWPBS plan to reduce discipline-related problems. Furthermore, teachers have a vital role in implementing a SWPBS plan. A SWPBS plan relies on the teachers' perspectives regarding the plan as well as the teachers' training; additionally, the overall implementation process for the SWPBS plan affects its success. Teachers who feel they did not receive adequate training only implement or carry out the SWPBS plan for a short time, then return to a behavior plan they were comfortable with. Gilmour et al. (2017) concluded that consistent methods for continuous training through the entire school year of behavior plans were important for teachers to use the plan when faced with the daily challenges in classrooms. Although research has an abundance of evidence that supports SWPBS plans, more studies are needed to understand Title 1 teachers' perspectives on daily classroom implementing of a SWPBS plan.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study was to examine how teachers from Title 1 elementary schools implemented school-wide positive behavior plans. The study provided insight into the SWPBS plan from Title 1 schools regarding professional development on the SWPBS, teacher implementation of the plan, and teacher perspectives on implementing a school-wide positive behavior support plan. In Chapter 3, the methodology of the qualitative case study is presented and a detailed summary of the research design, data collection, ethical considerations, and reliability is included.

Description of Research Design

A qualitative design was used for the study. Qualitative research allows for a complex topic to be explained through directly talking with individuals who have experienced the topic being researched (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research has five different designs: narrative, case study, ethnography grounded theory, or phenomenology approach (Creswell, 2013). All five designs were explored, and it was determined that the best design for the topic of study was a case study. Case study research is a qualitative method that requires the researcher to explore a real-life study in context or in an actual setting (Creswell, 2013). A case study was specifically selected because the intent of the case study was to collect and examine data from lived experiences of teachers.

The current case study is collective, which consists of the researcher interviewing and collecting data from several individuals who have experienced the same practices (Creswell, 2013). The researcher interviewed Title 1 teachers to gather data on the teachers' implementation of school-wide positive behavior plans.

Participants

The participants were from public elementary schools in Northeast Florida. Six teachers, personally known by the researcher, from Title 1 schools within the Northeast Florida school volunteered were interviewed. The teachers. Interviews were held at a local coffee shop or online and lasted about 30 minutes. The purpose of the interview was to gain the participants’ perspectives on implementing a SWPBS plan. The participants’ number of years teaching varied from three years to over 30 years. Note that the research participants were teachers who had participated in professional development on how to implement a SWPBS plan and who have had experience implementing a SWPBS plan (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participants Professional Information

Participant Number	Grade Taught	Teaching Experience	Experience at Title 1
1	Fifth grade	7 years	7 years
2	Fourth Grade	2.5 years	2 years
3	Second Grade	10 years	10 years
4	First Grade	37 years	37 years
5	Kindergarten	39.8 years	25 years
6	Kindergarten	7 years	3 years

Role of Researcher

Qualitative researchers can capture human emotional experiences through conducting interviews (Yang et al., 2017). Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated qualitative researchers are

essential for interviewing, using well-constructed open-ended questions, and collecting data. During the interviews, the researcher's role was to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere for the participants to share and direct the questioning so that participants could share their lived experiences openly.

The researcher in this study had 10 years of teaching experience in two different elementary schools within the same county. Seven years of the researcher's teaching experience were at a Title 1 elementary school, and three years were at a non-Title 1 elementary school. The researcher had only one year of experience with SWPBS support plans. During the researcher's last year teaching in a Title 1 school, a SWPBS plan was introduced and was in the first year of implementation. Bracketing was used to set aside bias and judgments on the topic of study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher bracketed experiences as a teacher to gain participants' lived experiences without judgment.

Measures for Ethical Protection

Creswell (2013) explained the importance of ethical practices when conducting research. Prior to data collection, Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) gave approval for the research (See Appendix D). The informed consent described the purpose and intention of the study and guaranteed confidentiality. The participants volunteered for the study and gave verbal informed consent. They understood the purpose of the research and how the data would be used. The teachers' interviews were recorded and transcribed and the participants were given a copy of the transcripts to verify their accuracy before analysis began (Creswell, 2013).

Research Question

As stated in Chapter 1, the following research question guided the case study:
How do teachers at Title 1 schools implement their school-wide positive behavior plan?

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) discussed data collection as a sequence of interconnected activities with a goal to collect information to answer research questions. To gain the lived experience of Title 1 elementary school teacher and the implementation of a SWPBS plan, the researcher decided to interview the participants.

Instrument Used in Data Collection

An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used with open-ended, semi-structured questions to encourage meaningful perspectives, detailed information and to collect data (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Using semi-structured questions allowed the researcher to prepare follow-up questions to inquire a more detailed answer. Although the participants were asked the same questions, the responses varied based on experience and probing to further extend the participants' answers. A list of demographic questions (Appendix A) was used as well as a list of eight open-ended questions for the interviews (Appendix B). Note that the participants were provided a copy of the questions to reference during the interview. The interviews varied in time from 15-70.

Methods to Address Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2013) discussed many ways to address ethical areas within qualitative research and identified high ethical standards to be used through all parts of the research. The main principles for ethical research in respect and ethical treatment of the participants were outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018). Prior to conduction the study, the Southeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) gave approval for the research. The research participants volunteered for the study and were interviewed at a coffee shop, or by phone. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants and the participants were ensured they would receive a

copy of the transcribed interviews to review for accuracy. No anticipated risk was determined to the participants in the study and all confidential information was stored in a locked cabinet and a password protected computer which was only accessible to the researcher. Each participant was assigned a number to ensure that no identifiable information about the participants or school would be revealed in the results of the study.

Validity

Creswell (2013) focused on eight strategies that were frequently used when conducting qualitative research and one of the eight suggested member checking in which the “researcher solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (p. 252). This was a strategy the researcher utilized to allow the participants to view and judge the accuracy of the transcripts. The member checking strategy is often viewed as one of the most effective ways to establish credibility when conducting qualitative research, followed by peer review. Peer review provides the opportunity for a committee to review each stage of the data collection and analysis process (Creswell, 2013) and was conducted through the dissertation committee.

Another strategy used to ensure validity was rich, thick descriptions, which, in accordance with Creswell (2013) allows the reader to make conclusions regarding transferability. Physical, movement, and activity descriptions are considered rich in detail from the abundance of information provided (Creswell 2013). The data presented was interconnected with details and quotes.

Reliability

According to Creswell (2013), reliability in qualitative research can be achieved in several ways. Recording and transcribing interviews is the primary way to obtain reliable data, therefore a recording application, Otter, was used to record the participants’ interviews. Next, the

interviews were manually transcribed. Following transcription, the participants received a copy their transcript to review and validate before the information was analyzed.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) recommended analysis strategies for analyzing data. The interviews were numbered and organized in a file system for easy access. The six transcripts were read multiple times to gain an understanding of the data and then coded with colors and notes to look for themes. The data initially presented 12 themes, but after further review this was condensed to five overall themes. Once the themes were developed, data interpretation began. The data were discussed and displayed through tables for organization (Creswell, 2013).

Reading and Memoing Emergent Ideas

The six transcripts were read multiple times to get an overall grasp of the data. Notes were made by the researcher while reading the transcripts to gather ideas for coding and themes, and the notes were eventually sorted into a coding table (a sample of which is provided in Table 2).

Table 2

Sample Initial Codes from Each Participant

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
We have different expectations for recess, for the hallway, for the bathroom, with the classroom, all the different areas within the school.	Part of what we had to do was, had common language throughout the expectations, such as be kind, be respectful.	This year we're really pushing LEAD: Living safely, exhibit kindness, Act Responsibly, Demonstrate respect.	And nine times out of 10, when that happens in my classroom, it's working. So we also have LEAD expectations, and our classroom rules fall under these LEAD expectations.	Everybody, every classroom has to have posted or expectations that go along with Conscious Discipline.	It's all about common language, because we want if there's a sub that comes in and doesn't know our language, we want any adult to be able to pass that class and say, Please be respectful in the hall, get a bubble or you know.
So, we've actually had a lot of professional development.	Basically, we had a PD day on a Wednesday and we went over it. At the beginning of the year, they introduced the Be boards because it was new at the time so they told us about it	Then we also did a couple Wednesday's where everyone in the school together discussed it. So I feel like I've had a pretty thorough approach, and training.	My experience is that we're given the overall picture, and the overall professional development.	At our school, we had webinars that we went to, and then we came back and decompressed and looked at that information, we had a one-day training, also at our school.	We give people information, and they don't know what to do with it so they don't do anything with it, which makes sense.
So, last year we really talked about it more frequently, but this year it's not been talked about as much	I think if someone comes along and creates a plan and actually helps the teachers and teachers them how to use it effectively in their classrooms, I feel like it could be, a positive thing for the school.	You know, so the inconsistency is a big problem on how it's successful or not successful, because there is not enough buy in from all the teachers.	I don't think they received as much training as we did initially, I think that our behavior specialist works with them to help them understand and you know if they have any questions	We have greetings, we've started out with common greetings. I think that over the time, we've found greetings that again we do morning greetings	So, we're all on the same page, like what is the level one behavior. What are we doing an office referral for? What is the classroom issue?

Classifying Codes into Themes

Next, the codes were collapsed into themes. According to Creswell (2013), coding involves accumulating the data into smaller categories of information and then assigning a label to the code. When coding the data, it is important to look for concepts, themes, events,

examples, and typical markers (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A short list of codes started the coding and then expanded as the analysis process continued (Creswell, 2013).

From the initial code list, a codebook was used to develop themes. Through the second iteration of the codebook, themes were then discovered (Creswell, 2013). Through the coding process, 12 thematic ideas were identified: professional development, consistency, teacher buy-in, administrative support, effect of the plan/benefit, common language, positive reinforcement, expectations/character, time/priority, teachers' own-time, resources, outside factors. The themes were later condensed and concluded with five themes that described the lived experiences of Title 1 teachers implementing a SWPBS plan: consistency, teacher buy-in, professional development, administration support, and effectiveness of plan.

Developing Interpretations

Qualitative data requires interpretations to make sense of the data (Creswell, 2013). To that end, themes were combined to create descriptions taken from the participants' interviews to blend an interpretation of the data and the perception found in the literature. Table 3 shows a sample of the data, listed by themes, used for interpretation.

Table 3

Sample Codebook

Theme	Theme Description	Significant Statements
Consistency	Consistently implementing all parts of the SWPBS plan throughout the school day with each student, throughout the whole school.	“Definitely consistency, like the years where we have administrators and behavior specialists that are constantly reminding us and having meetings about it.” “if it’s not consistent with the kids, it’s not good if it doesn’t work for them” “there’s been years I’ve been consistent and not consistent and it’s usually if the leaders are pushing it, if they’re not pushing then it kind of falls to the wayside.” “It does work but I feel like you have to constantly be doing it.”

Representing the Data

Creswell (2013) suggested the data should be displayed through a table or discussion. The data for each interview was analyzed, coded (Creswell 2013). The data from each interview were then analyzed together to produce themes. The data were represented through a discussion of the research questions and themes that developed from the data analysis. Five themes were produced through the coded data. The five themes represented lived experiences of Title 1 elementary school teachers and the implementation of a SWPBS plan.

Summary

Chapter III provided a description of the methodology used in the qualitative case study. The research study was designed to understand the lived experiences of Title 1 elementary school teachers’ implementation of SWPBS plans through the use of semi-structured interview questions. The participants were 6 Title 1 elementary school teachers, in Northeast, Fl. The

reliability and validity of the study were discussed and explained and the process used for qualitative analysis is discussed. An in-depth analysis of the findings from the data of the case study is provided in Chapter IV.

IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this case study was to examine how teachers from Title 1 elementary schools implemented school-wide positive behavior plans. Researchers strongly support the implementation of a SWPBS plan and have revealed how such plans impact the overall success of reducing school-wide discipline problems (Burke et al., 2004; Fallon et al., 2017; Horner et al., 2010). A research study identified the effectiveness of SWPBS to reduce negative behavior in problem schools (Fallon et al., 2017), however, more research was needed regarding the lived experiences and perspectives of Title 1 teachers who have implemented a SWPBS. Chapter IV provides data analysis and the results of the qualitative study.

Methods of Data Collection

A total of six teachers who all taught at Title 1 schools within one Florida school district were interviewed. They had all taken part in professional development on how to implement a SWPBS plan and had experience implementing a SWPBS plan. The teachers interviewed were personally known by the researcher and were asked if they would like to participate. Interviews were held at a local coffee shop or online and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, then the participants received a copy of the transcripts to review for accuracy.

Findings

Research Question

How do teachers at Title 1 schools implement their school-wide positive behavior plan?

The behavior plan implemented within the participants' schools was described as a SWBPS, known as Conscious Discipline. Participant 4 explained Conscious Discipline as teaching "students that are needing to be loved and be safe." The expectation of the plan was for all teachers to incorporate the plan in the classroom and all other parts of the school. Participant 1 described that common language across all areas was important: "We have different expectations for recess, for the hallway, for the bathroom, with the classroom, all the different areas within the school." Each school has a school-wide reward system for following the expectations of the SWPBS plan. One of the schools represented had the mascot of a manatee. Therefore, manatee bucks were a reward incentive for positive behavior. Manatee bucks could be spent at the school's Manatee Mall. Another school represented in the study had the mascot of an eagle. Therefore, they had eagle eggs as reward incentive. Students could earn eagle eggs to use at the school store. Each school represented and displayed the school behavior expectations of the SWPBS plan in different ways. Two of the three schools used posters around the school to display the expectation of behavior in each area of the school. The other school used "Be boards" to display their behavior expectations for each area. A be board was, Participant 2 explained, a board that was displayed throughout one of the schools, that showed the behavior expectations for each area of the school. Upon using different spaces of the school, the be boards

were read aloud to review the SWPBS plan behavior expectations before use of the space occurred. Participant 2 said,

The 'Be boards' were set up all around the campus at different locations such as the library, the restrooms, the cafeteria, and then we each had a Be board in our classroom. Part of what we had to do was have common language through-out the expectations, such as 'be kind, be respectful.'

The purpose of the posters and be boards throughout the school was to remind students of the expectation of their behavior while in that area. Teachers expressed the importance of using common language throughout the school. Common language was important because, when a student needed to be reminded of an expectation, an adult could use the common language for an expectation and the student would understand and hopefully correct their behavior.

Each school also had an acronym that represented their overall school-wide behavior plan. Participant 3 explained their acronym of LEAD: "This year we're really pushing LEAD: Living safely, Exhibit kindness, Act responsibly, Demonstrate respect." Participant 3 went on to explain that the school personnel reminded the students to LEAD, and when a student demonstrates any aspect of LEAD, "we praise them and remind the rest of the kids to show LEAD." Having the same expectations consistently throughout the school allowed for a safe environment to be built for students and adults within the school. Understanding the expectations of the SWPBS plan played an important role when a student's behavior is escalating and needs intervention. Part of the Conscious Discipline plan is to use common language to help calm the student down. Other parts of the plan include reading social stories and allowing the students to feel emotions and talk about the emotions, not just sending them out of the classroom when misbehavior occurs. Participant 5 explained the importance of words in her interview

describing that if students are having a confrontation with each other: “it’s important to say, ‘use your words,’ ... tell the person that you’re having an issue with what is wrong, how they can help you fix it, and what can we do together to make the situation better for you.” This practice allowed validation for the student’s feelings and hopefully allowed the student to calm down and not escalate to the next level. Each participant also had a safe place, described as a calm down corner, in their classroom for students to go when they need a minute to collect themselves.

Another important part of the SWPBS plan was understanding administration’s expectations of the various levels of behavior and knowing when to write a behavior referral. When a behavior has not reached the level of receiving an office discipline referral but a disciplinary action still needed to happen, understanding the steps needed to help deescalate or eliminate the behavior is imperative for teachers. The SWPBS plan addressed the proper order and steps needed before a student receives an office disciplinary referral. Disciplinary problems have different levels within the SWPBS plan. For example, a level 1 behavior problem would just need a teacher intervention and consequence. Participant 6 discussed all levels of behavior were within her SWPBS plan and all the teachers and staff have a list of examples of behaviors for each level. Teachers keep the list by their phones; “if we call for a level 1, they know that it’s a repeated classroom issue.”

Each piece of the SWPBS plan is important for the success of the plan. If at any time a question arose about what was expected or how to handle a situation, teachers could find the answer within the plan. However, teacher buy-in and consistency with the plan school-wide were important or the plan may not be successful. Using common language or verbiage throughout the entire school helps with consistency. Participant 2 explained that common language was the best way to determine if the SWPBS plan was successfully used in the school. Students recognized

the common language if teachers and staff are using it consistently. Participant 2 also commented that the students start to use the common language of the SWPBS plan when it was consistently used by teachers and staff. The effectiveness of the plan was determined by the implementation of the teacher and other adults within the school building.

Themes

The researcher followed Creswell and Poth’s (2018) process of making memos in the margin while reading to gather ideas for themes and codes from the data. Table 4 shows the five themes and their descriptions that arose from the data analysis.

Table 4

Theme Descriptions

Theme	Description
Professional Development	Participates and seeks out training in order to effectively understand and implement SWPBS plan
Consistency	Implementation of all pieces of the plan in all areas of the school daily
Teacher buy-in	Implements all parts of the SWPBS plan and keeps up with expectations, trainings and follows through despite extra work
Administration Support	Support is given to teachers implementing SWPBS plan in all areas
Effectiveness of the plan	Understand and see the benefits of the SWPBS plan

Theme 1: Professional Development

Professional development was an important element needed when implementing a SWPBS plan. All the participants understood the value of professional development. Participant 1 explained having monthly professional development was essential and 1 also described monthly meetings and trainings, between the teacher and the behavior interventionist to go over student behavior data. Data would include the number of manatee bucks given out and the number of positive referrals to the front office. Manatee bucks and positive referrals were a

positive behavior reinforcement used at one of the Title 1 schools, as part of the SWPBS plan. The front office would recognize the student and the positive behavior referral on the morning announcements.

Training was important for teachers (both new and veteran) and administration to maintain consistency with the SWPBS plan. Participant 1 explained the importance of consistent training and the consistency of professional development, which was to occur every year, even with new hires. Participant 1 continued to explain the importance of giving the new hires the same training that occurred in year prior, in order for the new teachers to understand the entire SWPBS plan, “if this is something that’s important, it needs to be trained every single year.” Many participants felt more training was needed in order to effectively implement the plan. Participant 2 stated, “More training - there needs to be specific training for the school-wide positive behavior support plan more than just once a year.” According to Participant 3, the training was sufficient and abundant for many years in a row; however, after a few years of receiving a great deal of training, the training started to taper off, especially when it came to new hires receiving the training for the SWPBS plan. The new hires did not receive the same level of training that was offered in years past. Therefore, because the new hires did not receive the same amount of training, their understanding of the SWPBS plan was less. Participant 3 stated, “We also did a couple Wednesdays where everyone in the school together discussed it. So, I feel like I’ve had a pretty thorough approach and training. Since last year the training has been spotty, I think.” Participant 3 also expressed she was not sure whether new teachers were receiving training or not for the SWPS plan. She felt a lack of training might be a problem area because new hires were not given the same information. Therefore, the new hires were not able to implement the plan as effectively.

Participants 1, 3, 4, and 5 all expressed the need for all teachers and staff, both those experienced with the SWPBS and those not, to receive the same training. Participant 6 described how her school has a plan in place for new teachers in that a meeting took place once a week to specifically discuss the SWPBS plan to help new teachers understand it.

Overall, the participants felt professional development was very limited for the SWPBS plan because the amount of time and information given during the training was limited. Participant 1 stated, “We’ve actually had a lot of professional development.” Participants 3 and 5 discussed how they have completed book studies, virtual trainings, and professional development day trainings, but they also mentioned that training in the most current year has been “spotty.” Participant 5 specifically felt she received ample professional development for implementing the SWPBS plan, and she felt comfortable with the implementation. However, Participant 4 explained professional development was offered and received for the SWPBS plan but not sufficiently. Participant 4 felt an overview of the plan was given, but the details were not discussed during the professional development. The teachers gained the overall picture of the SWPBS plan and but had to implement the plan and figure out the details along the way when behaviors happened.

Theme 2: Consistency

The participants felt providing consistency was important in everything they did, but especially when implementing a SWPBS plan. However, participants also expressed that, while providing consistency was necessary, but it was not always easy. Participant 1 explained that at times she did not feel she needed to use the common language or use the whole school rewards but still understood how the consistency was beneficial to the students. Participant 5 discussed how her grade level did a great job as a team holding each other accountable and helping each

other be consistent and implement the pieces of the SWPBS plan: “I’m lucky to be in a grade level that we’ve all kind of gone through it together.”

Having consistency often became part of the daily routine, as some of the participants explained. However, they also expressed that the consistency of the SWPBS plan was not school wide. Participant 2 supported the “Be boards” being up in the different areas of the school and had read them out loud to remind students of the expectations. She said, “When we go places, such as the playground...I have the students read the be boards out loud.” Although expectations were posted throughout the school and classrooms, some teachers were not using the common language. Participant 2 expressed that she does try to implement the SWPBS plan and the common language but explained how it could be challenging because the common language is not used throughout the school.

Participant 3 explained that the inconsistent implementation of the SWPBS plan played a significant role in the success of the plan. Participant 3 acknowledged that “inconsistency is a big problem on how it’s successful or not successful, because there is not enough buy-in from all the teachers.” Participant 4 also emphasized the same thoughts about consistency: “Consistency. When I see consistency, I feel like it’s more successful.” Many participants felt as if there was a SWPBS plan at the school, but consistency with implementing the plan school wide was falling short of the expectation of the plan. However, the participants also felt that a SWPBS plan did give students important consistency because the expectation was known and applied throughout the school. Participant 6 stated “I think school behavior plans give kids consistency. I think it gives them consistency and normalcy, and they know what they're working for. The consequences are consistent”. The participants’ views of consistency were an important part of

the SWPBS plan but seeing the behavior plan implemented consistently across the school could be challenging.

Having consistency from the leadership of the schools and actively discussing the SWPBS plan were also essential to the participants. Participant 1 explained, “Definitely consistency, like the years where we have administrators and behavior specialists that are constantly reminding us about the SWPBS plan and having meetings about it.”

Theme 3: Teacher Buy-in

Teacher buy-in occurred when the majority of the instructional staff implemented the SWPBS plan with fidelity throughout their day. Successful buy-in was also achieved often, according to the participants, when common language was consistently heard throughout the school. Participant 6 expressed that “there're always going have the naysayers, but if you have 80% staff buy-in, you're good to go. The student buy-in and the staff buy-in kind of goes hand in hand.” Participants realized that teacher buy-in played a very important role in the success of the SWPBS plan. Participant 1 expressed teacher buy-in as “when the teachers take it more seriously and that’s when they’re more consistent.” Participant 1 often felt like it there was “one more thing to do.” Participant 2 explained how she felt a lot of teachers at her school were doing the bare minimum of the SWPBS plan. She specified,

A lot of people were doing what they did, just to check it off and then do their own thing. So, my team is a team of veteran teachers who definitely ... have a way of doing things, ... and they just check off boxes and go about doing things the way they have always done them.

Participant 3 agreed that teacher buy-in was a big part of the success of the plan and talked about how the whole school had not yet bought into the plan: “Yes, you absolutely need

the buy-in from teachers for it to be successful. In order to sell it to the students, teachers have to buy into it.”

Participants 4 and 5 felt that, within the team that they work on in the school, they are doing well to implement the SWPS plan and buy-in among their grade level team was strong. Participant 4 stated, “My team, we try our best to implement it. I guess it’s probably the teachers who have been trained from the beginning.” Participant 5 stated, “As a team, it’s working for us.” However, Participant 5 also explained that, as a school, the same buy-in was not there; “We don’t have the buy in that we use to have in the beginning, where everybody was on the same page. I think that it’s just not the same kind of buy-in.” Participant 6 discussed how making sure teachers have the whole picture and really understand the SWPBS plan was important for teacher buy-in: “I think that having the literature, having the understanding, I think from reading about it, and hearing it, and kind of processing it, and then buying in with the teachers, and when they truly understand the whole picture.” Participant 6 also stated “I want it to be meaningful.” The overall thought of teacher buy-in was that if the teachers understood the training, felt supported, and knew how meaningful it was for the students, teacher buy-in would improve.

Theme 4: Administration Support

Administrative support was important for the success of a SWPBS plan. Many of the participants felt as if their administrators were not completely supportive of the plan, and the SWPBS plan had become a low priority to administration. Therefore, the SWPBS plan became a low priority for teachers because they did not see leadership promoting it. Participant 1 said, “I don’t know if the administrators feel that it’s super important.” Participant 1 commented that if administration would “give us time to discuss it and talk about it and make it a priority, then I think it is successful...Administrative support is important.” Participant 2, as a new teacher,

explained how she felt about the lack of support from administration when she was given very little information about how to implement the SWPBS plan and was expected to understand and implement. Participant 2 remarked,

They gave us a little bit of information and told us we had to create expectations and to follow the expectations on all the 'Be boards' in all the different places and around the school and that was pretty much how it went. I think it's kind of a natural kind of result of switching administrators.

Most participants felt they did not have a person they could go to and ask questions. The participants also expressed frustration with not receiving ongoing support and training in order to confidently understand and implement the SWPBS plan. Participant 2 expressed a need for "someone we can go and ask for help, or someone that asks us if we need help or gives us effective strategies to implement ... in the classroom." Participant 3 also expressed a similar statement thinking it would be great to have "someone who is in that position to support the teachers with the plan, who ... maybe helped create it, and they know how to support and guide the teachers with it." Participant 3 also indicated "more check ins with the staff, or at least check-in with the grade levels" regarding behavior would help the teachers feel more supported by administration. Participant 4 felt it was necessary for administration to show support through checking in with the staff: "Asking us if we still need help, not just expecting us to know everything or expecting us to do it all but not checking in with us and helping us fill the hole. I think that would make it more successful."

When asked about being supported, Participant 5 said, "I feel like students are supported, and when we have a school wide plan, if the teachers are supported, it's more successful, and the students feel successful and feel good about what they're doing and what they're learning."

Regarding support, participant 5 also stated having consistent support from the administration and the behavior specialist would also be nice.

Participant 6 explained that, at her school, the administration's support was high. The administration at Participant 6's school offered incentives such as gift cards or chats with administration to help motivate the teachers: "A chat with admin was another goal...we could do a 20-minute coffee chat with admin, it could be about restaurants, pets. Just anything."

Most of the participants felt the void of administrative support which ultimately affected the success of the plan. Participant 6 explained the exception in which the administration offered incentives for teachers to participate and buy into the SWPBS plan; however, all participants felt the support of administration was necessary for SWPBS plan to be successful within the entire school.

Theme 5: Effectiveness of SWPBS Plan

The purpose of a SWPBS plan was to have a school-wide plan to set expectations within the school, so that every student feels safe and loved while at school. The participants felt that, when the SWPBS plan was implemented properly and with fidelity, it was very beneficial for students. Participant 1 explained, "I've seen it be really successful with a lot of kids, and then I've seen it not really matter." Participant 2 indicated that the consistent expectations posted over the school helped because there was common language, "I think it's successful in a way that, because it's familiar, you see the boards all around the school. There's that common language, the familiarity of it, that expectation that we have when we go into the cafeteria." Participant 3 explained the SWPBS plan was beneficial to students because it helped them self-regulate and gave them tools to deal with feelings. Participant 3 stated,

Having to think more about, you know, are they not feeling safe, or they're not feeling loved or those kinds of feelings. Are they not in their executive part of their brain where they're able to process everything? So, we've been using Conscious Discipline to really help them with their feelings.

An important piece of implementing a SWPBS plan is the opportunity the plan offers to teach the students strategies in order to deal with their feelings and emotions. The SWPBS plan also gives students expectations and a voice for their decisions. Participant 4 stated, "If they misbehave, we go deeper into why they are misbehaving instead of just seeing they are misbehaving and calling them out and then giving them punishment." Participant 4 explained that the expectations with rewards were also important in order the plan to be successful: "Some kids aren't treated the same or get the same rewards as other kids. And then I think that's where it becomes unsuccessful." Participant 5 explained one of the great benefits of a SWPBS plan was the sense of community it builds. Participant 5 specified, "They're part of a family or part of community. And that we're all working in this world, working together to have a better school, and a better atmosphere in our classroom." Building a community within the school within each classroom helps build trust, a sense of belonging, loved and safe. Participant 5 explained building a community was a positive effect of a SWPBS plan because it allowed the students to understand the adults were not just there to discipline them, but they were there to guide them and help them. Participant 6 also explained one of the benefits of a SWPBS plan was giving the students the power to take responsibility and ownership within a positive community. She stated, "I feel like it gives them a sense of self, you know, because, especially when you take the, the toughest kids, and they're the model. You know those kids never get to be the example."

All participants felt the biggest benefit of a SWPBS plan was creating a sense of community for each student within the school.

Evidence of Quality

Validity

Creswell (2013) recommended several strategies to validate qualitative research. One of the strategies suggested was member checking, in which the “researcher solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Member checking was a strategy the researcher utilized to allow the participants to view and judge the accuracy of the transcripts. Peer review, which gives the opportunity for a committee to review each stage of the data collection and analysis process, was a second strategy Creswell suggested when conducting qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). A peer review was conducted through the dissertation committee, who inquired about the methodology and the establishment of external checks at each part of the data collection and analysis process (Creswell, 2013). To ensure transferability, the researcher used “rich, thick descriptions” when explaining the findings, including physical, movement, and activity (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Finally, the data presented was interconnected with details and quotes.

Reliability

According to Creswell (2013), reliability can be achieved in several ways in qualitative research. Recording and transcribing interviews is a primary way to obtain reliable data and a recording application, Otter, was used to record the participants’ interviews. Then the interviews were then transcribed manually. Following the transcription, the participants received a copy of the transcripts to review and validate before the information was analyzed.

Summary

Chapter IV showed data analysis of the interviews with six participants from three schools in the same region within a Northeast Florida school system. All participants knew and understood the benefits of a SWPBS plan in helping students feel safe, loved and a part of a community while at school and were also aware the implementation of a successful SWPBS plan depended on many factors. Themes emerged that influenced the implementation of a SWPBS plan: professional development, consistency, teacher buy-in, administrative support, and the effectiveness of the plan. Implications obtained from the study and proposals for further research will be discussed in Chapter V.

V. DISCUSSION

When a nurturing teacher-student relationship exists alongside a positive classroom management system, student learning and engagement increase in the classroom (Burns et al., 2017). School-wide behavior plans were created for consistency within schools to help enhance student engagement and reduce behavior concerns (Branch et al., 2016). Gilmour et al. (2016) concluded that consistent methods for continuous training through the entire school year of behavior plans were important for teachers to use the plan when faced with the daily challenges in classrooms.

In order to help implement behavior plans, the US Department of Education in 1987 provided funding to support schools across the US to implement a SWPBS plan that was supported by research (Brandt et al., 2014). The implementation of SWPBS plans allowed for multi-tiered levels of support to help prevent new and reoccurring behavior incidents that interfered with learning (Brandt et al., 2014).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how teachers from Title 1 elementary schools implemented SWPBS plans. The research findings showed teachers did not feel prepared to implement a SWPBS plan (Westling, 2010). Although an abundance of studies supports teacher perspectives when implementing a SWPBS, little available research supports teacher implementation of a SWPS plan within Title 1 elementary schools.

The current research examined the question: How do teachers at Title 1 schools implement their school-wide positive behavior plan? Through the qualitative process, five themes were discovered: professional development, consistency, teacher buy-in, administrative support, and effectiveness of the plan. The participants consistently discussed these themes and expressed the importance of them for a successful implementation of a SWPBS plan.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher interviewed six teachers from three Title 1 schools within the Northeast Florida school district. The research participants were teachers who participated in professional development on how to implement a SWPBS plan and who had experience implementing a SWPBS plan. The teachers interviewed were personally known by the researcher and were asked if they would like to volunteer to be interviewed. Interviews, which were held at a local coffee shop or online and lasted about 30 minutes, were used to gain perspectives on implementing SWPBS plan from participants. The years of experience in teaching varied among the participants. The researcher used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) with open-ended, semi-structured questions to encourage meaningful perspectives and detailed information. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and participants subsequently received a copy of the transcripts to review for accuracy. The transcripts were analyzed, and the researcher searched for common themes.

Summary of Results

Research Question: How do teachers at Title 1 schools implement their school-wide positive behavior plan?

The purpose of the research question was to gain Title 1 teachers' perspectives when implementing a SWPBS plan. As previously referenced, a SWPBS plan can enhance or improve

school culture, and decrease behavior problems, but the execution and follow-through of the plan relies on the teachers' ability to implement the behavior expectations consistently (Burke et al., 2004). Prior research supports the implementation of a SWPBS plan, and the implementation of a plan can successfully reduce school-wide behavior concerns (Burke et al., 2004; Fallon et al., 2017; Horner et al., 2010). However, specifically understanding Title 1 teachers' perspectives of daily implementation was the focus of the qualitative research.

The TPB framework is a method used across many types of environments that helps predict a behavior before it occurs (Burns et al., 2017). The TPB theory indicates that behaviors can be predicted based on the attitudes toward the behaviors and feelings towards the norms established within the environment (Roos & Hahn, 2019). The current study presented five common themes that arose from the interview data: professional development, teacher buy-in, consistency, administration support, and effect of the plan.

Professional Development

The six Title 1 elementary school teachers in the current study indicated that continuous professional development for the SWPBS plan was essential. Each teacher expressed an understanding of how important professional development was to implement a successful SWPBS plan. Participant 1 and 3 described the importance and consistency of the professional development, explaining that it is not just consistent training but going back to train the new teachers on information that was already taught, so everyone can be on the same page.

Most of the participants (1, 3, 4, and 5) felt if as if the professional development was not offered often enough and the teachers were not receiving the same training. Participant 2 stated "more training, there needs to be specific training for the school wide behavior support plan, more than just once a year." However, participant 6 indicated her school had a specific plan in

place for when new teachers were hired, particularly to train, discuss, and understand the SWBSP. The overall support of professional development was seen as important among the six participants. Participant 4 stated, “My experience is that we’re given the overall picture, and the overall professional development.” Participant 4 indicated each participant received the big picture of the plan, but consistent, continual training to further understand the pieces of the plan was not provided. Except for participant 6, each participant did not feel their schools offered continued professional development for themselves and new teachers. Participant 6 discussed how her school incorporated the SWPBS plan into every school meeting, handbook, and even paired new teachers with mentors. Teachers were paired with mentors to ask questions specially about the SWPBS plan. Participant 6 indicated, “What we are doing in between the trainings, I think it’s important for everybody.” Ongoing coaching with targeted feedback after observation was supportive to the teachers when implementing SWPBS plans (Gilmour et al., 2017). Fallen et al. (2017) indicated that professional development was crucial for teachers throughout the school year for the successful use of the SWPBS plan. The findings of the current study support the previous research that continual professional development is necessary for the plan to be successful.

Consistency

Consistency was viewed as implementation of all pieces of the SWPBS plan in all areas of the school on a daily basis. Previous research indicated that lack of consistency, use, and availability of resources with the original implementation caused the SWPBS plan to shut down within two years after initial implementation (Chitiyo et al., 2019). Overall, the six participants indicated consistency was important for any SWPBS plan to be successful. For the student to take the SWPBS plan seriously, the teachers had to consistently follow through with the

expectations of the plan. Participant 1 stated, “If you’re going to do it, you have to make sure that it’s consistent and that all the pieces are put into place, or else it’ll just kind of crumble, making it one more thing for teacher to do.” Participant 3 stated, “The inconsistency is a big problem on how it’s successful or not successful, because there is not enough buy-in from all the teachers.” Another important finding in the current research among all six participants was consistency not with just implementation of the plan daily but consistent, common language. Previous research suggested that when teachers do not feel confident in a plan, the consistency and fidelity of implementation are low, causing teachers to revert to a behavior system that has not been proven to be successful (Chitiyo et al., 2019). Creating a SWPBS plan means implementing the plan for the entire school with complete buy-in from faculty and staff. Participant 6 indicated in her school, when walking in the hallway, any teacher can say a phrase or word related to the SWPBS plan and every student knows and understands what is expected, with the intentions to correct the behavior in that moment so that the behavior does not escalate. Participant 5 stated, “Consistency; when I see consistency, I feel like it’s more successful.” Participant 6 shared that when one is consistently using the SWBPS plan to engage and build relationships with students, the consistency helps the students be successful. She continued by explaining that consistent common language and the use of SWPBS plan expectations helps to predict a behavior that could escalate. Participant 6’s feedback supports the TPB theory that indicates, when a plan is in place, behavior can be predicted and escalation of the behavior can be avoided (Burns et al., 2017).

Teacher Buy-In

To have consistency with the implementation of a SWPBS plan, teacher buy-in, which is explained as 80% or more of the instructional staff accepting and implementing the SWPBS plan

all day, must be present. All participants of the current study indicated that teacher buy-in was vital for the SWPBS plan to be successful. Participant 1 stated, “If it is not shown as a priority then it’s not going to get done because it’s just kind of one more thing to do.” Participant 1 indicated that it was important for administration to also show the importance of the daily implementation of the plan. With exception of participant 6, the other participants felt as if the teacher buy-in was not strong enough to carry out a successful SWPBS plan. Participant 3 explained the training received was not successful. She elaborated, “I received one Wednesday professional development. It was a one-time training and then sort of left us to navigate the rest of it....you absolutely need buy-in from teachers for it to be successful.” Participant 3 also mentioned getting so many new teachers and students made it hard to buy-in to the SWPBS plan as well. Participant 5 stated, “We don’t have the buy-in that we use to have in the beginning, where everybody was on the same page.” Previous research supported offering frequent short, practiced exercises that were effective, inexpensive, and easy facilitated by leaders to have consistency and promote teacher buy-in (Branch et al., 2016). Participant 6 also indicated how important teacher buy-in was and further explained that, by introducing the SWPBS plan in parts each year, it would have been a gradual process and not so overwhelming all at once. All participants agreed that teacher buy-in was important, and, without teacher buy-in, the SWPBS plan was likely to not be successful. The current findings support previous findings of teacher buy-in. Bruhn et al. (2015) stated without the buy-in and support of the teachers implementing the SWPBS plan, the plan was ineffective.

Administrative Support

The participants of the current study felt that administrative support was needed throughout the implementation of the SWPBS to be successful. Most of the participants, except

for participant 6, felt that their administration wanted to support the plan, but due to their responsibilities and interest in the SWPBS plan, administrators did not make it a priority to support it. Three of the participants experienced a change in administration from the previous year and felt the change had an impact on the implementation of the SWPBS plan. Another important finding some of the participants mentioned was that, when an administrative change occurred, new administration came in with a new agenda and possibly did not want to use the SWPBS plan, so some support is lost. Participant 2 stated, "I think it's a natural kind of result of switching administrators. Then they have their plans that are important to them so then they start implementing their plans in all areas." Participant 3 elaborated that she had a new administrator this year, and she was not sure the new administrator knew what a SWPBS plan was. She indicated that, overall, she did not feel supported by administration, especially when it came to the implementation of the SWPBS plan. Participants 4 and 5 expressed the importance of administration supporting the teachers so the plan could be more successful for the students. Participant 6 also stated, "That would be nice to have consistent support from the administration and of course the behavior specialist."

Participant 6 indicated having more administration support than the rest of the participants and discussed how administration supports teachers with a reward system for follow through with the SWPBS plan, which in turns made the implementation of the SWPBS successful. Administration makes the SWPBS plan and expectation for the school, so that the implementation and use of the plan are not an option. When an administrator sets the expectation for using the SWPBS plan, the teachers are accountable and accountability helps the success of the SWPBS plan.

Previous research also supports an effective implementation of a SWPBS plan being successful is influenced by the administration (Wienen et al., 2019). Chitiyo et al.'s (2018) research determined that, when something was viewed as important to administration or school leadership, the SWPBS plan was more likely to be sustained and carried out by the staff. Fallon et al. (2017) supported the conclusion that ongoing support and professional development were needed for a SWPBS plan to be successful. Branch et al. (2016) also encouraged ongoing collaborations and coaching from administration to successfully implement a SWPBS plan for the entire school year. Sanetti et al. (2018) suggested that, when different levels of professional support were offered, the implementation of the SWPBS was more likely to be applied with fidelity.

Most of the participants of the current study indicated the importance of administrative support. Participants expressed the importance of continued support through check-ins, collaborations, professional development, and explained expectations, especially when new administration implemented new expectations.

Effectiveness of the Plan

Participants of the current study felt that, for the SWPBS plan to be successful, teachers must sell it to the students and really implement all parts of the SWPBS plan well. Prior research suggests that consistent implementation of the SWPBS plan is a significant challenge to making the plan successful and improving student behaviors (Meek et al., 2014). The participants also felt that, when the SWPBS plan was implemented, the plan could help the students understand their feelings and frustrations because teachers were able to catch the behavior before it escalated. Participants 3, 4, and 5 all indicated that both helping the student understand why they are reacting and behaving in a way that is not acceptable and giving them tools to help the same

reaction from occurring in the future was a beneficial and an effective piece of the plan. Participant 4 indicated, “if they misbehave, we go deeper into the why they are misbehaving; instead of just seeing they are misbehaving and calling them out....We would want to sort out the problem, help them see what needs to be done.” The participants all stated that some sort of behavior plan was necessary within school; however, for a SWPBS plan to be successful, all the parts of the SWPBS plan need to be present. Petursdottir and Ragnarsdottir (2019) researched how SWPBS plans decrease negative student behavior and stated that problem behavior interfered with learning and instruction and was a major difficulty in schools today. They stated that an effective plan and strategy were needed to address the problem. The previous researchers’ findings also indicated that, when a SWPBS plan was implemented with fidelity, support, and teacher buy-in, the plan was successful, and the overall academic engagement increased (Petursdottir & Ragnarsdottir, 2019). However, the findings of the current study indicated that, without all the components of the SWPBS plan in place as well as constant training, support, buy- in and consistency, the plan was only as effective as much as the teacher saw the value in it.

Study Limitations

The case study provided valuable qualitative data revealing the daily lived experiences of Title 1 teachers implementing a SWPBS plan. However, the study did have limitations. First, the sample that was limited to Title 1 school teachers in Northeast Florida. Teachers from Title 1 schools around the United States may have different opinions and perspectives about the lived experiences of implementing SWPBS plans within their schools.

The research was also limited by the number of participants who participated in the study: six Title 1 elementary school teachers agreed to participate. All participants were from the

same county but participants 1, 3, 4 and 5 were from the same school. A teacher who taught 3rd grade was not interviewed. The number of only six Title 1 elementary school teachers limited the data to a small population of Title 1 teachers from a Northeast County in Florida.

Another limitation of the study was the gender of the participants: all participants were female teachers. Although the population that was studied typically reflects a high number of female teachers, it is important to note male teachers were not interviewed. A male teacher could have possibly offered a different perspective when implementing a SWPBS plan.

Implications for Future Practice

The purpose of the study was to gain information surrounding the lived experiences from Title 1 elementary school teachers while implementing a SWPBS plan. Even though this case study cannot display all the possible lived experiences of Title 1 elementary teachers implementing a SWPBS plan, the participants' insight showed understanding of the important elements of implementing a SWPBS plan. The data from the study suggested that teachers need support through professional development, as well as administrative support, to successfully implement a SWPBS plan. Professional development should be offered in various settings such as formal training, virtual training, articles and book studies, and hands-on live training in the teacher's classroom to make the professional development relatable and applicable in the direct setting. Not only should professional development be offered in many ways, but it should also be offered throughout the entire school year for support and understanding of the SWPBS plan. Overall, data from this study, as well as from the literature review, indicated that trainings, collaborations, coaching, and continuous feedback throughout the entire school year were necessary for the successful implementation of a SWPBS plan (Branch et al., 2016).

Research from the current study also suggested that teachers understand the importance of a SWPBS plan and the benefits it has for both the school culture as well as the students. However, teachers must also understand teacher buy-in and student-teacher relationship building are important for most of the school. Teachers also recognized that, when implementation of a SWPBS plan is done successfully, relationships are built, students can process their emotions with coping tools, and a classroom becomes a positive environment where students are learning and feel safe. Previous research has suggested that a teacher's attitude toward behaviors and the teacher-student relationship have a significant impact on school engagement and success of the student (Nairz-Wirth & Feldman, 2017).

Teachers should not be forced to understand the elements of the SWPBS plan on their own, or even within their grade-level teams. Teachers need continuous support for planned and continuous professional development that happens through the entire school year. The school should also have a leader who can provide support when needed. When a SWPBS plan is not being supported by the school leadership team, teacher buy-in tends to dwindle. Moreover, the percentage of teacher buy-in to implement the plan with fidelity decreases because the behavior plan becomes another item the teachers must add to the list of things to do. Wienen et al. (2019) explained the leadership of the school could influence the successful implementation of a SWPBS plan. Wienen et al. (2019) also stated that if teachers' views on a SWPBS support were negative, then implementation was more likely to be unsuccessful. Consistency and engagement of the SWPBS plan should be a priority, made known to the staff, and supported by the administration. When a consistent SWPBS plan is in place, buy-in, consistency, and support are noticed within the school culture and in the relationships between the students and adults.

Recommendations for Future Research

More information is needed to understand specific professional development that could help with the implementation of a SWPBS plan. Interviewing teachers to find out what type of professional developments best meets their needs would allow them to better understand the SWPBS plan. Allowing teachers to have input in the type of professional development that is offered may allow for more teacher buy-in.

Another recommendation for future research would be to interview school administrators to gain perspective, knowledge, and understanding of the implementation of a SWPBS plan within the school as a whole. Interviewing administrators and teachers could help gain understanding for a better support system and promote the best learning environment for the student. In addition, interviewing teacher and administrators at different points in the school year could help gain understanding to see if the buy-in, effectiveness, and consistency of the SWPBS plan changes throughout the school year.

A third recommendation for further research would be to interview teachers at both Title 1 schools and non-Title 1 schools (e.g., charter schools), focusing on the correlation between the two different types of school when implementing a SWPBS plan. Other research could compare a middle school and elementary school that have implemented a SWPBS plan. Interviewing teachers at different types of school that have implemented a SWPBS plan could help schools gain strategies to effectively implement a supported plan.

Conclusion

Teachers' lived experiences are vital to developing and keeping safe, healthy learning environments for students. Having a successful SWPBS plan can contribute to a healthy learning environment where students' needs are met because they feel safe and they know and

understand the behavior expectations. The reason for and findings of the study contribute to the success of implementing a SWPBS plan.

This study added to the existing research regarding implementation of SWPBS plans. Other studies have evaluated the success of the plan and perspectives of teachers, but little research offered the perspective of Title 1 elementary school teachers who are implementing a SWPBS plan. Overall, the study presented information and suggested that, when Title 1 teachers are supported with implementation of the SWPBS plan and are given continuous and thorough training, teacher buy-in increases and the plan is likely to be more successful. The study also indicated when ample support and professional development are received within the Title 1 school, the plan is very successful, the teacher buy-in is sufficient, and the whole school benefits from the SWPBS plan. Though all participants of the study knew and understood the importance of implementation of the SWPBS plan, the effectiveness of the plan was ultimately determined by the organization of the support of the plan and continued professional development. Implementation of a SWPBS plan, particularly in a Title 1 school, was viewed in the current study by most participants as an extra task and something else for them to do without additional help. The current research determined that, without support and continuous professional development, the full implementation of a SWPBS was difficult to effectively execute without teacher buy-in and fidelity.

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Appendix A

Teacher Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?
2. Did you obtain your education degree from a state certified program?
3. What are your areas of Certification?
4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
5. How many years of teaching experience at a Title 1 school do you have?
6. What grade are you currently teaching?
7. Are you teaching out of field?
8. What grade have you implemented a school wide positive behavior support plan

Appendix B

Protocol for Teacher Interviews

- 1) Tell me about your School-Wide Positive Behavior Plan (SWPBS).
- 2) Describe the professional development you received when your school implemented SWPBS.
- 3) Describe your experiences incorporating a SWPBS plan.
- 4) How do you incorporate elements of SWPBS during instruction?
- 5) What do you feel makes your SWPBS plan successful or unsuccessful?
- 6) Considering the use of the school wide positive behavior plan, how do you perceive that a school wide positive behavior plan influences student behavior?
- 7) What else would you like to contribute to this study about SWPBS?
- 8) What kind of support would make implementation of a SWPBS plan successful

