TEACHER-DIRECTED STUDENT AGGRESSION: PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISORDER. THE CHALLENGES, THE IMPLICATIONS, AND THE OUTCOMES.

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August 2023

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ABSTRACT

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A phenomenological study, according to Creswell (2013), is one that "focuses on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (p. 76). This phenomenological study aimed to (a) explore teacher perceptions who have experienced teacher-directed student aggression by students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) and (b) investigate how teacher relationships affect student outcomes, school climate, and the emotional demands of the profession within a career technical school. In addition, the study was designed to (a) explore how principals view their efficacy in supporting teachers who experience aggressive outbursts by students with EBD and (b) help students with EBD develop prosocial and problem-solving skills. There has been little research on teacher-directed student aggression (TDSA) and the leadership imperative to support teachers and students with EBD. This study is designed to illuminate the experiences and perceptions of educators who work as classroom ambassadors and school leaders in the face of student aggression to meet and serve the needs of students with EBD. In attending to the complex problem, solutions will be grounded through the lens of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Starratt's ethical leadership paradigm, and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory.

The study results were analyzed using Creswell's (2014) seven-step examination process for qualitative research. The overall findings suggest that mitigating TDSA can be positively influenced by the teacher-student relationship (TSR). Overarching themes indicated that teacher commitment, community engagement, ongoing professional development, and the emotional

charge significantly contribute to nurturing the TSR with students with EBD. This study has several implications for policy and practice in the educational domain, leadership practice, and higher education.

To my loving husband and children, who encouraged me to follow my dreams. Eternally blessed and forever grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you, God, for giving me strength, courage, and grace throughout this learning journey.

I also want to express my profound appreciation to my committee members for their invaluable advice and continuous support. Relationships matter, and I chose my committee based on their life experiences and commitment to genuinely caring for others. Through your care, you have touched the hearts and minds of many. I thank my dissertation advisor and moral and ethical leadership expert, Dr. Patrick Pauken. Your endless patience, invaluable advice, and continuous support motivated me to strive for excellence, try and stay true to my timelines, and ultimately cross the finish line. I also thank Dr. Kristina LaVenia, my methods advisor and guru on relational trust and emotional labor. Your encouragement and assistance when things got messy and in times of crisis meant the world to me – my heartfelt appreciation for being a phone call away and reminding me to breathe! Many thanks to Dr. Judy Jackson May, whose expertise in special education and principal leadership gave me rich insights. You always took the time to provide fantastic feedback and go the extra mile – truly impressive and earnestly valued.

I sincerely thank my external representative, Dr. Melody Tankersley, Senior Provost at Kent University. Your experiences and research affirmed a shared passion for working with and supporting students with EBD. I was so honored and giddy when you agreed to be part of my dissertation committee – I am indebted! Thank you to my graduate faculty representative, Dr. Lauren Maziarz, whose background in nursing and education contributed much and seamlessly spoke to the value of care and rapport. My committee was spot on, full of expertise, personality, and fervor. I would also like to thank my BGSU professors, who were part of my dissertation

voyage. You all challenged me in different ways and helped me grow professionally and personally to become a better version of myself – it has been transformational!

Thank you to my cohort, who made Tuesday night classes meaningful, whether online or face-to-face. The special connections and collective support helped me at every stage of the program. There were always significant takeaways and fun moments, and my mind constantly raced after class. As it is evident that I deeply value the power of relationships, I am compelled to mention four people who, during this process, supported me with kindness, laughter, and knowledge. Katie and Adwowa, you offered continuous encouragement and guidance. You listened when I needed to talk, cry, or vent, and you joined in my little victory dances, no matter how small the accomplishment. Thank you for being present for it all! To Darrin and Aimee, my genuine gratitude for being amazing to work and share ideas with. You have been awesome sounding boards in class, in stressful predicaments, and of course, in research. Your involvement in my study was stellar, and working with you has been an absolute privilege! Thank you for saying yes!

There have been many people who were incredibly supportive and instrumental throughout my dissertation journey. I am deeply grateful to my family, who never stopped believing in me. You have all given me such strength, and I appreciate your unwavering support that inspired me to fulfill a life dream. I am truly fortunate to have such a beautiful, not-so-straightforward, blended, perfect family. Despite the distance, we take the time to connect, and it works so magically. I value and embrace my relationships with each and every one of you. I love you all and am thankful for everything you have done and continue to do for me. Indeed, I am blessed and would not be the person I am today without all your love and support.

My dear friends from school. You are my family too. You have helped me through many challenges, and we have achieved countless milestones together. Through thick and thin, we have remained committed to making a difference. Nick, thank you for starting me on this crazy academic journey and believing in me more than I did myself. Angelique and Athena, thank you for being such dear friends, cheerleaders, and straight shooters. You always made me smile, even in the most menacing of times.

I thank my husband, Tej, for taking this journey with me, one degree at a time. This endeavor would not have been possible without you. Thank you for encouraging and supporting me in words, silence, presence, and space. Thank you for always reassuring me that I can, waiting up for me after classes, and making nighttime snacks. You always celebrated my accomplishments, proofed my papers, and endured my presentations with a pen and paper in hand, a nodding head, and a comforting smile. You have been my stronghold and nurtured my confidence throughout. To my boys, Christian and Aaron, you never doubted me and always inspired me to go the distance. It has been a long ride, but your positive energy is galvanizing. Thank you for giving me purpose and helping me to be my best.

The dissertation journey takes a village, and my village was absolutely perfect – full of love, care, encouragement, and trust. Thank you all for being part of my community.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) is a special education classification to describe students who struggle with relationships, authority, and self-regulating behaviors that adversely affect academic achievements (Forness et al., 2012; Leggio & Terras, 2019). Specifically, students with EBD tend to have difficulty controlling anger and aggression. Aggression is behavior directed toward another person that is carried out with the intent to cause physical or psychological harm (Tayler & Smith, 2019). Students labeled EBD often exhibit outbursts of violent behaviors and experience trouble with conflict and problem-solving strategies. The agitation can lead to a quick escalation of hostile behaviors. The Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD, 2020) affirms that the expression "emotional and behavioral disorder" is an umbrella term that includes psychiatric disorders and behavioral disabilities. Anxiety, bipolar, or psychotic disorders are considered psychiatric disorders. A behavioral disability falls under oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder. Emotional behavioral disorders are also called emotional disturbance and emotionally challenged, and hereafter will be referred to as EBD.

As students advance toward graduation and prepare to transition into a new life phase, adolescent student aggression has become a mounting concern for educators, schools, and society. Researchers affirm that aggressive behavior can compromise positive student development and impact social interactions (Leggio & Terras, 2019; Wehby & Kern, 2014). Teacher-directed student aggression (TDSA) involves displaying passive and overt acts of violent behavior by students toward teachers. Although violence affects all school members, most research has focused on student violence and the victimization of students, with little attention to teacher-directed violence (Santor et al., 2019). McMahon et al. (2014) affirm that

violence directed toward teachers has been understudied and received limited media and policy attention in the United States and internationally. Student aggression has been identified as a public health concern and is said to have a detrimental effect on both the perpetrator and victim (McMahon et al., 2019; Taylor & Smith, 2019). In school, teachers typically strive to de-escalate an aggressive student to secure the situation and prevent injury to the student, the teacher, or classmates. Knowles (2015) asserts that teachers must continually endeavor to create psychological climates that are safe, caring, respectful, and understanding.

Recent reports affirm that special education teachers are 2.7 times more likely to be victims of physical assault than general education (GE) teachers (Tiesman et al., 2014). With high reports of emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, burnout, and detachment rates occur more frequently among special education than GE educators (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Working with students who display aggressive behaviors presents unpredictable and daunting challenges, which can affect a teacher's well-being and practice. The Learning Policy Institute Report (2019) reveals that attrition rates for special education teachers are alarmingly elevated and are higher when compared to any other teacher group. Prather-Jones (2011) informs that educators working with students with EBD experience shorter careers than other special education teachers.

Supporting educators in establishing effective and proactive interventions to mitigate destructive student behaviors must be a priority (Basch, 2011). With solid leadership, students can develop self-regulation strategies, and teachers can receive the tools and training to handle student aggression successfully. Overcoming TDSA will entail a collaborative approach that supports teachers in developing and nurturing productive associations with students with EBD.

The present qualitative research aspired to explore if and how principals and teachers in Canada and the US build relationships with students with EBD who display teacher-directed aggression. The study aimed to ascertain if building a positive teacher-student relationship (TSR) can assuage TDSA. The inquiry researched and sought to discover the relevance of making meaningful connections and genuine relationships with students with EBD. The phenomenological research incorporated ethnographical methods. The present study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge within the under-researched student population by examining the unique experiences of principals and high school teachers at a career technical school. The implications for further research, policy, and practice will be presented.

Statement of the Problem

Federal and Provincial education regulations define the EBD category as characterized by sustained problematic behavior that adversely affects educational performance (IDEA, 2004; Ontario Regulation [O. Reg.] 181/98). Other detrimental traits may include difficulty building and maintaining interpersonal relationships, displaying excessive fears or anxieties, exhibiting compulsive reactions, and experiencing a mood of persistent hopelessness. Research has consistently found that students with EBD experience poor educational, social, and emotional outcomes (Alvarez, 2007). Aggression among children and adolescents can be a highly consistent behavior that predicts adverse experiences in school and can lead to challenges outside the school environment, including joblessness and incarceration (Ogundele, 2018; Sinclair et al., 2005).

Many students with EBD experience exclusionary discipline and peer rejection that fuels a negative view of the school, perpetuates poor self-esteem, and a toxic attitude towards others (Browne, 2013). While students with EBD progress through the school system, behavioral,

social, and academic deficits often become increasingly resistant to various interventions (Farmer, 2013; Reid et al., 2004). Landrum et al. (2003) assert that optimal support for students with EBD is essential to address problem behavior and difficulties associated with social adaptation. Engaging in group interactions involves taking a perceived risk or sacrifice. When a person is excluded or marginalized repeatedly, making social connections are often avoided to prevent the risk of further rejection (Twenge et al., 2007). Principal leadership can provide teachers and students with various supports to cultivate an inclusive and caring community. As classroom leaders, teachers can help overcome student ostracism by taking the initiative to establish and nurture a harmonious relationship with students with EBD.

The harmful effects of TDSA are also significant for educators. TDSA can influence professional practice, teacher recruitment, and career retention (Espelage et al., 2013). McMahon et al. (2014) designate teacher victimization to include offensive remarks, obscene gestures, verbal threats, intimidation, cyber violence, theft or damage to personal property, objects thrown, a weapon drawn, or a physical attack that may or may not require professional medical treatment. Teacher victimization can destabilize a person's sense of well-being and compromise the teacher's classroom efficacy as negative emotions of fear, anxiety, and depression are experienced (Wilson et al., 2011). Special education teachers who work with students with EBD represent one of the most critical shortages within the teaching profession (Billingsley, 2004; Farmer, 2020). In 2012-2013 the number of special education teachers in the United States declined by 17%, creating a substantial and growing teacher shortage (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). The recruitment of special education teachers remains a challenge for schools today, representing the teaching vacancies with the most significant area of need (NCES, 2022). Information on the rate and scope of teacher victimization is critical to developing practical

support and interventions to secure a positive learning climate. Improved awareness of teacher experiences can advance educator training and retention and enhance outcomes and experiences for students with EBD.

Teachers, principals, students, and parents know that TDSA is happening in our schools today. The present study aimed to validate the problem of TDSA to improve outcomes for all stakeholders and to bring the issue of student aggression to the surface. Many students with EBD attending career technical schools have had limited academic success in elementary and middle school and experienced an abundance of behavioral infractions. In high school, alternative learning options are often explored to avert the continuance of poor student outcomes for students with EBD. Transferring to a career technical school is one option to be considered. Teachers working with students with EBD in vocational schools strive to improve student performances and identify interventions that advance social, educational, and behavioral outcomes. The tasks for vocational school teachers who work with students with EBD can be exceptionally challenging. Teacher training, interventions, and leadership support can all play an integral part in helping students with EBD overcome many obstacles. Principals and teachers must work shoulder to shoulder to harness the power of making meaningful connections with students with EBD in the face of student aggression and continue to show compassion and empathy, listen with the intent to understand, and create a climate for students to experience success.

Teacher-Student Relationships

TSRs characterized by conflict can predict student aggression (Espelage et al., 2013). With a lack of qualified special education teachers, school districts may not effectively serve students with EBD, unintentionally contributing to learner frustration and aggressive outbursts

(Billingsley, 2004). Continued escalated student aggression can negatively affect teacher stress levels and TSRs. Contending with aggressive student behavior can take an emotional, mental, and physical toll on teachers. Brunsting et al. (2014) allude that sustained exposure to student aggression contributes to teacher vulnerability, job stress, and fatigue. TDSA can perpetuate the exodus and erosion of teachers and threaten the quality of learning and achievement outcomes for students with EBD (Prather-Jones, 2011).

Productive TSRs have consistently been associated with positive outcomes that improve school connectedness and a sense of belonging (Ang et al., 2020). Shaffer (2002) stresses that the development of challenging behavior is learned and circumstantial. Effective interventions suggest that more affirmative behaviors can replace unwanted aggressive conduct. A genuine relationship between the teacher and student may help to reduce the aggressive behaviors that students with EBD typically exhibit.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs can serve as a framework for developing and nurturing positive TSRs. Students with EBD feel safe and engaged when educators make connections in the classroom through meaningful lessons and consistent expectations. Love and belonging can be cultivated as teachers get to know the students personally and demonstrate the desire to listen, care, and respectfully support the student. As teachers progress in securing positive TSRs, individual confidence and trust can flourish as students become active participants and appreciated members of a learning community.

Vygotsky's (1978) unique perspective of human development and learning emphasizes that social, interpersonal, and interactional elements contribute to cognitive development. The interplay with the social, interpersonal, and interactional attributes is also involved when forming a relationship. According to Morcom (2015), the sociocultural theory in a shared school space

can influence emotional learning and growth. When teachers understand the student's perspective and frame of reference with greater clarity, the interactions and rapport can improve prosocial behaviors and potentially reduce student aggression. The TSR can create a unique opportunity for the teacher and student to share emotional and cognitive growth as both parties learn with and from each other.

Research supports that students with EBD show less aggressive behavior when teachers initiate encouraging exchanges incorporating positive feedback, trust, and care (Mihalas et al., 2009). The TSR may serve as a means to moderate student aggression. With a reduction in TDSA, the TSR has an improved opportunity to flourish (Sprouls, 2015). Although students with EBD may be the most distracting and challenging learners, they are likely also the individuals with the most significant and complex needs. To maximize learning outcomes for students with EBD, principals and teachers must ensure an environment where development, learning, and instruction are accessible. Browne (2013) reveals that constructing supportive relationships can increase teacher effectiveness and reduce environmental stress as teachers and school leaders proactively address student misconduct and aggression.

Student Experiences

Advances in special education have resulted in the development of behavioral models to support outcomes and experiences for learners with EBD. Although schools have implemented alternative approaches, students with EBD continue to have the poorest social and academic results among any group of learners (Campbell et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2017). The strong connection between academic and social problems for students with EBD can propel disengagement, disruptive, and delinquent behaviors, such as aggression, destruction of property, and frequent negative interactions with teachers and peers (Wehby & Kern, 2014). Program and

intervention advancements have provided schools and teachers with valuable frameworks, yet the outcomes for students with EBD remain bleak.

Learner motivation and on-task behaviors are typically lower for students with EBD. King et al. (2017) suggest that students with EBD are on-task 50% of the time compared to 77-89% for students without academic or behavior challenges. Off-task behaviors can exacerbate learning gaps and frustration, resulting in student aggression. When schools respond to student aggression with exclusionary punishment, students with EBD experience disciplinary removal more often than any other student population (US Department of Education, 2020). Disciplinary removal occurs when a child is removed from a learning space for disciplinary purposes. Disciplinary removal can include in or out-of-school suspension or relocation to an interim learning space. Disciplinary removal reduces time in class and limits opportunities for teacher-student interaction. The potential over usage of exclusionary discipline may intensify poor academic outcomes and behaviors that predict student dropout (Sullivan et al., 2014). According to the US Department of Education (2020), students with EBD are twice as likely to leave high school prematurely compared to all other disability groups. The graduation rate for students with EBD in 2018 was 60% compared to 73% for all other disability groups (US Department of Education (2020). The graduation rate for all high school students in 2018 was 85% (NCES, 2020).

Schools must do more to improve life chances and educational experiences for students with EBD. Violence and aggression were once considered criminal justice issues; however, they have become a significant concern in our schools today (Basch, 2011). The increasing prevalence of TDSA calls for school communities and leaders to understand the phenomenon with improved acuity. Harry and Klingner (2014) imply that broadened awareness can bolster

insight and perspective surrounding the impact, interventions, and outcomes caused by student aggression. To address the toxic effects of student aggression, an integrated intervention of practice, policy, and effective leadership demonstrated by the adults within the school can create a culture and climate to diminish TDSA.

Career Technical Schools

With the chronic display of academic and behavior deficits, mainstream high schools struggle to provide adequate support and interventions for students with EBD. The social, behavioral, and educational challenges result in higher rates of suspension and expulsions, disengagement, and poor attendance, often leading to premature dropout (Wilkinson, 2020). The National Center for Education reported high dropout rates in 2014-2015, indicating that 35% of students with EBD left school prematurely (McKay & Ellison, 2021). The learning challenges experienced throughout elementary and middle school continue into high school. The traditional academic routes typically worsen for students with EBD. Accordingly, vocational programming is often considered to provide students with EBD an alternative learning opportunity and prevent early dropout.

Career technical schools aim to build up students emotionally and mentally and prepare students for the next life phase. Enhancing literacy and numeracy skills, developing hands-on abilities, and increasing awareness and access to postsecondary pathways can help equip students with EBD to transition to post-school environments (Davis & Cuming, 2019). The learning challenges experienced in high school for students with EBD are extreme and represent a considerable undertaking for educators. The teacher's commitment and duty to make a difference and meet the various needs of the students with EBD is a daily and unpredictable challenge that can become an overwhelming responsibility in the face of student aggression. High school

represents the last phase of publicly funded learning, where students mature from adolescence to adulthood. Understanding principal and teacher experiences in supporting students with EBD who exhibit aggressive behavior can help address the phenomenon of TDSA. Although students only have a limited number of years in high school, career technical education (CTE) can help improve the experiences and success of students with EBD. Vocational programming can open up new opportunities that can lead students with EBD to a brighter future.

Leadership Imperative

Schools are a training ground for future citizens, providing students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences fundamental to becoming members of a democracy. (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). School administrators can be instrumental in securing and accelerating successful EBD interventions. As instructional leaders, principals need to advocate that learning is a lifelong opportunity not only for students but for staff as well. EBD training can provide educators with new ways to support students with EBD and alternative interventions to deal with student aggression. New learning provides staff with additional resources that can bolster professional practice. When administrators and teachers learn collaboratively, engaging in conversations offers an excellent opportunity. Exchanges that promote critical reflection can be very constructive and positively impact school climate and staff morale.

According to Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015), discourse and deliberation are essential to realizing collective change and buy-in. As principals provide opportunities for teachers and students to practice and apply their learning, members can become self-directed leaders and learners. Teachers, as professionals, are morally obligated to determine ways to "change, grow, and improve" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). With the support of school administrators, new directions and alternative interventions can be explored to address student misconduct and

respond more effectively to any violation of school values. Kouzes and Posner (2017) affirm that leaders must take action when a value is violated.

For interventions to be effective, expectations must be applied at all levels, in the hallways, classrooms, and on the bus. Thompson et al. (2017) affirm that administrators, teachers, and para-professionals must be trained to increase intervention success. An inclusive approach to addressing a school-wide problem conveys that all staff members are valued and encouraged to participate in overcoming TDSA. A shared set of commitments and a team approach where all stakeholders unite and work towards a common goal reflects good leadership (Burke, 2014). Principals must be proactive in securing a sustainable systems approach that meets the unique academic and behavioral interventions for students with EBD in every aspect of school. Students with EBD are diverse and have a multidimensional range of needs (Farmer et al., 2016). With a greater understanding of how students with EBD respond to stressors, principals and teachers can engage in ways to diffuse rather than escalate challenging situations and avoid exclusionary consequences for students with EBD (Sullivan et al., 2014). With a strong vision and genuine commitment to all human resources, the principal can fulfill great expectations, maintain high standards, and holistically meet the needs of students, teachers, and the school community. A focus that encapsulates the benefit of the whole school affirms a commitment to securing moral qualities (Fullan, 2003).

Starratt (2005) reveals the importance of incorporating ethics of justice, critique, and care into educational leadership. School principals must make decisions and resolve dilemmas to uphold values and democratic purposes. Like Starratt (2005), Branson (2010) suggests that leadership practices must be anchored in an ethical perspective that affirms a commitment to enhance moral education, promote self-knowledge, and secure community awareness. In the

ethic of justice, principals must ensure that individual rights and school policies support fairness, equality, and personal freedom. TDSA presents an ethical dilemma where the ethics of justice is overtly violated. Principals have the power and the position to use leadership influence to assist and support young learners (Ross & Cozzens, 2016). Although school leadership can significantly affect student outcomes, Ross and Cozzens (2016) assert that quality leadership can contribute to teacher job satisfaction. Demonstrating consistent leadership behaviors builds trust and support within the school community and can optimize principal, teacher, and student achievement. School rules and student conduct are upheld and reinforced more effectively with administrative affirmation.

The commitment to espouse a just and safe school is strengthened when principals are visible, model behavioral expectations, and address behavioral infractions. Feeling safe and supported "socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically is a fundamental human need" (Cobb, 2014, p. 14). The feeling of safety extends beyond violence and aggression. Teachers and students must feel cared for, valued, and part of the school community. According to Cobb (2014), focusing on creating, supporting, and sustaining a positive school is the most advantageous way administrators can ensure a safe school. As moral leaders, principals need to recognize, evaluate and assess ethical dilemmas and openly discuss the situation with staff and students to ensure all perspectives are heard. Discussions will encourage reflection and generate knowledge that can guide principals to support students and teachers respectfully. When administrators are present and available to staff and students, a genuine desire to care for the people within the learning community is conveyed.

Principals can take opportunities to discuss with school members to develop a broader understanding of how TDSA impacts individuals and the school climate. Enhanced awareness

can direct teacher training and support programming for students with EBD. The ethic of critique asks school leaders to redefine and reframe power, privilege, and social justice (Starratt, 1991). As principals ensure a comprehensive approach to understanding the phenomenon, the ethic of critique and justice can be applied to facilitate a diverse approach to addressing and overcoming TDSA. According to Ballangrud and Aas (2022), principals and teachers consider moral and ethical issues a school's top priority. As principals respond to TDSA with commitment and concern for all school members, care ethics is demonstrated. In being persistent and passionate about eradicating TDSA, the school administrator can create a space for everyone to learn, progress, and experience success.

Students with EBD typically have needs that move beyond the school walls. Teachers can play a critical role in identifying and providing interventions to help students with EBD handle difficult situations in and out of school. Teachers' interventions may not be specific to violence prevention but address universal issues that could lead to disruption or aggressive reactions. Cooperating and connecting with family and community members can unite stakeholders, strengthen associations, and identify resources and opportunities to maximize student success and development. The knowledge and input that other members can impart can contribute to identifying issues and developing practical approaches to support students with EBD in the classroom (Thompson et al., 2017). Adopting and modifying interventions to help a student with EBD is an ongoing developmental process. Waldron (2012) explains that resilient people make constructive adjustments to disruptive experiences, which is essential when dealing with TDSA.

Teachers are the backbone of schools and bring experience and expertise that can contribute to shaping students for tomorrow. The leadership displayed by principals and teachers can encourage a shared vision and commitment to help students develop and inspire success,

confidence, and hope. According to Knowles et al. (2015), human development is the most productive organizational investment; without it, all other processes are jeopardized. A willingness and flexibility to change approaches to suit a situation can help teachers effectively work with aggressive students and strengthen the connection between teacher and student. Covey (2020) states that when people engage in empathetic listening, it can provide accurate data with which to work. Attentive listening also demonstrates characteristics of care ethics, as the relationship is founded on trust and care (Noddings, 2010). When school administrators and teachers genuinely reveal the desire to connect with students with EBD and identify alternative strategies to further learning, it can offer a practical starting point for building rapport and be a compelling, refreshing, and healing experience.

Ensuring a safe and authentic environment can benefit students with EBD and secure feelings of support that promote individual development. When teachers take the opportunity to nurture constructive rapport, trusting, positive relationships can evolve, and interventions may be more effective in preventing aggressive behaviors (Crosnoe et al., 2004; Suldo et al., 2014; Ang et al., 2020). Addressing students with EBD's psychological and safety needs can establish a stable foundation from which positive associations and a sense of belonging can grow. Leggio and Terras (2019) assert that when teachers develop unconditional TSRs regardless of setbacks, starting each day anew and affirming the student's ability to succeed, students with EBD make the most gains academically and behaviorally.

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs model, educators can exhibit leadership attributes through teaching practices and demeanor that support the healthy development of students with EBD and procure a positive classroom environment where students feel welcome and encouraged to participate in daily learning. Although good nutrition and physical activity are

vital ingredients to optimal health, positive relationships, confidence, achievement, and the ability to self-regulate also contribute to student well-being. Teachers have the influence and the capacity to be powerful change agents for students with EBD (Leggio & Terras, 2019; Mihalas et al., 2009). The nurturing, modeling, and intentional efforts that focus on developing respectful TSR can help students with EBD feel connected and supported by teachers. With 190 days in each school year, educators can significantly affect outcomes for students with EBD and create a space of belongingness.

Teachers can enhance student learning and skills development through a holistic and interactive approach that builds student competence and confidence. By adapting instruction and interventions to meet the unique needs of the moment and the student's diverse needs, principals and teachers can fortify an inclusive and supportive mindset. Guiding and assisting students in developing skills and strategies to improve learning outcomes and social interaction will serve students with EBD in school and life. The well-being of community members can be procured with a culture of care, as unconditional TSRs preserve a safe and positive learning space.

Purpose Statement

Schools are to engage students in academic, social, and civic curricula that can help students prepare to be active, responsible, and ethical world members (Starratt, 2012). Historically, research on student violence has focused more on bullying, harassment, and violence against students. Espelage et al. (2013) confirm that little research has been conducted to understand and prevent TDSA despite its growing problems. Yet over the past decade, TDSA has increased substantially. Santor et al. (2019) uncovered that 54% of Canadian educators reported one or more acts of physical aggression during the 2017-2018 school year. Similar reports of school violence also continue to challenge schools in America.

The present research was conducted at career technical high schools in Ohio, US, and Ontario, Canada. The qualitative phenomenological study sought to understand the lived experiences of principals and teachers in building rapport in the face of student aggression with students with EBD. Specifically, the researcher explored if and how principals and educators promoted and developed healthy relationships with staff and students with EBD who display TDSA. The research investigated educators' experiences to mitigate and prevent harmful interactions and understand how TSRs influenced the school climate and the emotional demands of the profession. Schools are tasked with educating the whole child and finding effective interventions to promote prosocial and self-regulatory behaviors to bolster learner engagement and academic achievement for students with EBD. The hierarchy of human needs cannot be overlooked as schools strive to enrich learner knowledge and moral character that uphold societal values and critical consciousness.

In a leadership role, educators have an ethical and professional duty to meet their learners' various needs and dimensions (Starratt, 2005). Schools as institutions cannot directly care for anyone; instead, the people within the system deliver the caring (Noddings, 2010). Honoring an ethical and leadership view can lay the foundation to bear meaningful and authentic relations and reduce the display of TDSA (Basch, 2011; Kim & Taylor, 2008; de la Ossa, 2005). Moving beyond the aggressive student, teachers can strive to understand and develop the perpetrator's morality through a culture of care and respect. When students are comfortable being their authentic selves without fear of being judged or ridiculed, they are more likely to engage in relational care (Morrissette, 2011; Noddings, 2005). Individual talents and intrinsic motivations can be discovered with respect and trust at the forefront of the relationship (Starratt,

2005). Research that examines relationship building with students with EBD from various perspectives may help determine how to improve student and teacher experiences and outcomes.

Changing mindset and securing buy-in is often the most challenging aspect of teaching, and it is even more daunting for students with EBD (Ennis & Katsiyannis, 2018). As a teacher and student co-construct an association through collaborative problem-solving and meaningful interactions, new opportunities for knowledge attainment, honing social and self-regulatory skills, and influencing self-worth can present. Morcom (2015) avows that shared affective space incorporates social and emotional learning and can build students metacognitive, social, and emotional skills. Learning with and from others in schools can become more than mastering a skill set and knowledge acquisition. It can also be about building constructive and supportive TSRs to improve outcomes for students with EBD.

According to Reddy et al. (2018), a lack of research on students with EBD has detrimental, enduring effects on students, teachers, and the school community. Reddy's study investigated if the TSR served as a protective resource, role model, mentor, and knowledge provider for students with EBD. The research determined if aggressive outbursts can be altered when students with EBD feel safe and supported in the classroom. With little research on TDSA in US and Canadian schools, principal and teacher experiences of building relationships and victimization by students with EBD offers new insight into the phenomenon to improve and secure individual well-being.

To date, violence against educators has been significantly understudied and merits the attention of policymakers and school systems to prevent TDSA from increasing. Kouzes and Posner (2017) recognize that undesirable incidents will happen; however, such incidents can present leaders with powerful learning moments and opportunities that teach important lessons

about appropriate norms of behavior. The research captured insights through meaningful conversations with school leaders and teachers to develop an awareness of TDSA exhibited by students with EBD.

Research Questions

The following questions guide the study:

RQ1: What are teachers' lived experiences in building relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder who display teacher-directed aggression?

RQ2: What strategies and supports do teachers and administrators use to mitigate teacher-directed student aggression?

RQ3: How do teacher relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder affect school climate and the emotional labor of the profession?

Theoretical Framework

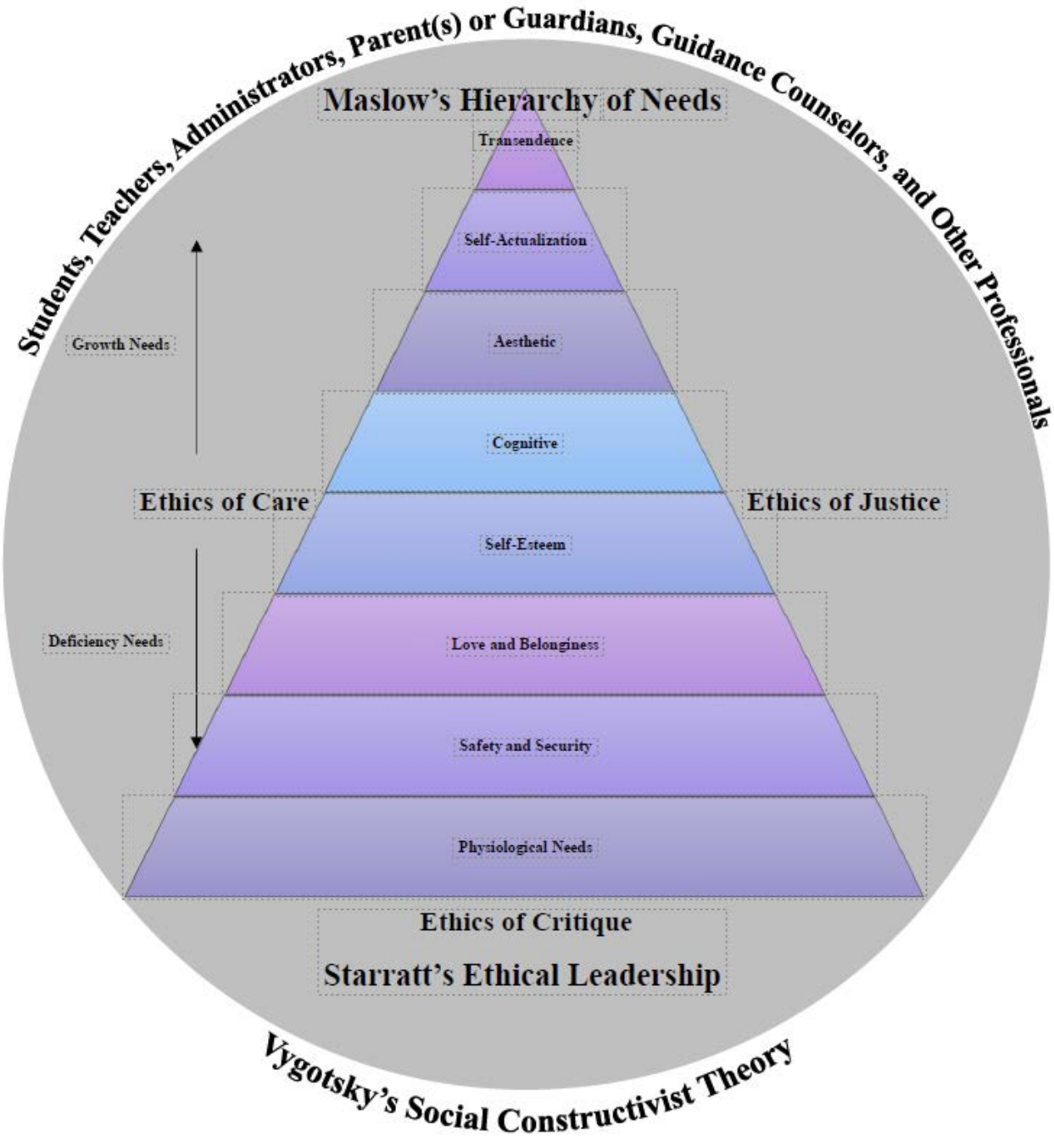
Social constructivists believe that individuals seek to understand the world where they live and work. It has been determined that an encouraging teacher relationship can yield positive outcomes (Klem & Connell, 2004). However, few have explored how a TSR can be realized and valued in serving students with EBD. An overlay of interconnected theories provided the conceptualization for the study. In framing the complex problem, the solutions are grounded through the lens of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Starratt's ethical leadership paradigm, and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was the basis for exploring teacher perceptions of essential elements and barriers in building relationships with students with EBD. Starratt's (1991) ethical leadership model provided context for principal leadership rooted in an ethics of critique, justice, and care to develop teacher practice and improve student outcomes. The notion of "caring" for principals and teachers was fundamental to understanding

the essence of TDSA. As such, the ethics of caring preceded the leadership model. Care concepts were woven through each theory, providing a unique view of how humans learn and develop as social constructs.

The social aspect of developing positive relationships is paramount to addressing TDSA, and teachers are uniquely positioned to influence and understand the interpersonal nature of the phenomenon. Several researchers have recognized the interpersonal intricacies of learning and collaboration (Covey, 2020; Mezirow, 2003). As Noddings (2005) outlined, positive relationships and caring discourse are at the crux of authentic learning that engages the heart and mind. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory encompasses the physical and emotional aspects presented in Maslow's and Starratt's theories and, combined, offers a holistic approach to securing prosocial behaviors for students with EBD. A fused model allowed a deeper dive into exploring multiple factors surrounding student aggression and teacher-directed violence. As exhibited in Figure 1, the three theorists served as the pillars for the phenomenological study, providing context and enlightenment to teacher experiences and building relationships with students who display teacher-directed aggression.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Theorist include Maslow, Starratt, and Vygotsky.

Maslow

Maslow (1943a) stated that people are motivated to achieve particular needs before satisfying others. The process of realizing psychological and physical needs is often called Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A human's fundamental requirements that must be addressed first are physiological and safety deficiencies. These domains can influence individual behavior and assist with supporting a person to advance to Maslow's next hierarchical level. The order of needs is represented using a pyramid divided into eight stages — the physiological conditions lay the foundation and represent a person's basic needs. As needs are satisfied, advancement to higher levels can fulfill the psychological or "growth" needs that support an individual to reach the peak of the pyramid – self-actualization.

Maslow (1943) initially stated that individuals must satisfy lower-level deficit needs before progressing toward higher-level growth needs. However, Maslow's order of hierarchy "is not nearly as rigid" as indicated in the original five-stage model (Maslow, 1987, p. 68). Maslow reveals that the order of needs might fluctuate based on individual circumstances. Kenrick et al. (2010) affirm this notion, acknowledging that each person is unique. The incentives and directions for self-actualization are distinctive. Maslow's theory is often referred to in a superficial and prescriptive way. However, the hierarchy is not a solidified framework where all needs must be fulfilled before individual growth can be realized.

The social aspect of developing positive relationships is paramount to helping the student develop self-confidence and self-control to mitigate TDSA. In satisfying Maslow's belongingness, self-esteem, and love needs, students must feel wanted, valued, and nurtured. A classroom environment that fosters healthy levels of risk-taking, where students are encouraged to ask and respond to questions, open thought sharing, and constructive discussion, can promote

a safe space and satisfy some of Maslow's identified needs. A caring and trust-based relationship can grow as teachers encourage ongoing collaboration and communication with students with EBD.

Starratt

Starratt's multidimensional triangular paradigm represents three key philosophies: ethics of critique, justice, and care. Starratt's ethical leadership affirms that the three principles represent the critical aspects of protecting human dignity, serving the common good, and securing all community members' human rights. When principals identify and respond to student aggression in a way that integrates responsibility and accountability, student character and learning can be maximized, and teacher-directed aggression averted. Providing critique, justice, and care for teachers and students is, first and foremost, the responsibility of building principals. The principal exhibits good leadership and moral consciousness by encapsulating Starratt's ethical leadership model and the essential elements. The ethic of critique requires principals to evaluate how schools can uphold the social responsibility constructs. Justice helps people to learn and grow from social experiences. When accountability and responsibility are integrated into responding to TDSA, student character, and learning are maximized, and teachers feel validated and supported. As each person is treated with compassion and dignity, the ethics of care is activated, which can positively affect the TSR, the school climate, and the emotional demands of the profession. In ethics of care, the principal and teacher are responsible for providing full attention to the unique needs of a student with EBD to support human potential, empowerment, and quality of life (Starratt, 1991). Starratt's theories will guide the researcher to interpret teacher perceptions about principal leadership and building relationships with students with EBD who display teacher-directed aggression.

Starratt's leadership model has implications for principals and teachers. The model encourages meeting individual needs and offering rich human responses to unethical situations, as seen in TDSA. How school leaders frame and make sense of student aggression can influence professional capacity and school learning climate (Bryk et al., 2012). Starratt's model provides a framework to unite the community with shared values and a reason to care. Such an outlook can secure consensus and mobilize mutual expectations through discussion and interaction. Fullan (2003) states that collective leadership can push a principal's moral imperative forward and lead to profound cultural change. Schools are a social system built to serve human needs and achieve human goals. In a shared leadership approach, principal and teacher collaboration may be more successful in responding to student aggression. The connection between followers and aspiring leaders is contingent upon a healthy relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Schools can unite through the ethics of critique, justice, and care, and members can cultivate meaningful relationships. By collaboratively developing plans to improve school outcomes and enhance the student knowledge base, schools are better positioned to shape citizens for tomorrow.

Vygotsky

Vygotsky (1978) believed education was intended to pass on cultural tools such as language and to enable learners to be cogent and creative thinkers. Education was meant to help learners express views and opinions with confidence and tact and problem-solve collaboratively with adult support. According to Vygotsky's theory, children learn from the beliefs and attitudes they experience in their culture. Vygotsky hypothesizes that knowledge is co-created through social interactions and affirms that culture is a primary element of knowledge acquisition. Vygotsky's framework will inform the researcher on how TSRs influence students with EBD and clarify how school climate contributes to the teacher-student dyad.

Dialogical interactions can build solidarity and trust between principals, teachers, and students and collect diverse views about the problem and the solution. Kouzes and Posner (2017) submit that powerful results can arise when we engage with different perspectives, sincerely listen with the intent to learn, and seek out opinions beyond our everyday circle. As new information is gained and ideas and opinions are shared, a fresh attitude, a different approach, or a shift in thinking can occur. When people have an equal opportunity to participate, generate opinions, and take on a new vision, associations crystallize, leadership influences flourish, and people can understand the circumstances more clearly (De Pree, 2004). Persistence and continued respectful modeling can convey to students with EBD that the school community cares about the well-being of every school member and that the school leader and teaching staff are committed to meeting the unique needs of all students.

Rationale and Significance of Research

The significance of the study is to provide qualitative research that offers a broader understanding and perspective of principal and teacher experiences who support students with EBD in school and the classroom. The research aimed to provide valuable responses to aggressive behavior to augment student learning and prosocial behaviors. Awareness of TSR qualities and possible obstacles can influence how teachers that work with students with special needs attend to students with EBD to mitigate TDSA (Leggio & Terras, 2019). The knowledge acquisition may also help school leaders develop professional learning opportunities for staff to ensure that all stakeholders have the knowledge and training to act as powerful change agents.

Teachers working with students with EBD experience student aggression and must deal with poor self-regulating behaviors exhibited by students with EBD. Incidents of student aggression may encourage teachers to engage in open dialogue about TDSA with colleagues and

administrators. However, TDSA might also be considered a taboo topic to avoid for fear of judgment or shame. Schools may have established protocols that follow formal channels to acknowledge and document student aggression. Resources also may be available to individuals who have been affected by TDSA. The support can offer space for meaningful conversations and recognition of TDSA at various levels within the educational system. However, TDSA has not been formally studied or researched extensively. Researchers confirm that violence experienced by educators has received limited scholarly attention in the US and Canada (Santor et al., 2021).

There is no single data collection process in the US to capture violent school incidents (Frederique, 2020). The Ontario Ministry of Education (Canada) does not require school districts to report or track violent incidents without injuries (Leitner, 2023). The school districts and individual schools in the US and Ontario are left to collect and monitor incidents of student violence independently. Developing an enhanced and comprehensive perspective is essential to grasp the gravitas of student aggression and establish effective interventions to mitigate TDSA. Following the data and examining findings within local districts fails to support a system in crisis. A broader data pool can help researchers develop a rich understanding and awareness of TDSA, which can, in turn, generate opportunities to address student aggression issues, improve teacher outcomes, and prepare students with EBD for the adult world.

As shared by participating administrators and teachers, the study aimed to fill a critical gap in the literature surrounding best practices to strengthen the TSR with students with EBD. The identified themes and discussed strategies can inform teachers and principals of practical methods for securing authentic relations with students with EBD. The knowledge can support new instructional approaches that help educators to refine and bolster their teaching practices.

Research outcomes could positively affect teacher efficacy and confidence, reducing job stress and fatigue.

The research on TDSA can inform school practice and policy. Policymakers can constructively revisit disciplinary programs and interventions to respond to aggressive behaviors through an alternative lens. For new practitioners, the study can help novice teachers feel increasingly prepared to handle TDSA effectively. The study sought to promote an awareness of various teaching demands unique to special education that can steer professional trajectories and guide career planning. For future studies, exploring the lived experience from a student's perspective could offer a different evaluation of TDSA.

The research sought to help school systems ensure teachers and students have the appropriate support to facilitate student success. The phenomenological study revealed social and systemic changes to improve school climate, develop teacher-student rapport, and cultivate prosocial behaviors. By narrowing the achievement gap and developing prosocial student behaviors, teachers can prepare students with EBD to succeed in school and throughout life. Capturing the voices of school leaders and teachers who educate students with EBD tendered excellent insights and experiences. The conversations with participants served as a professional resource and shaped meaning for all stakeholders that support advocacy and activism in this area of research.

Moral and ethical teacher leadership that honors social justice, accountability, and human dignity, can harvest a trusting, caring, and respectful learning community. As students with EBD try to navigate the educational system, the classroom can become an increasingly volatile space where problematic behaviors impinge learning and social experiences. Ineffective interventions will not serve students, teachers, or society well. By maintaining high expectations and nurturing

productive TSR, teachers can help students with EBD tap into their capacity and embrace who they are, encouraging schools, staff, and students to be the best they can be.

My research emanated from personal teaching experiences at a career technical school and encounters with TDSA. Having taught in Ontario, Canada, for over 20 years, the study was personally meaningful. Exploring principal and teacher experiences working with students with EBD contributes to the literature and can hopefully improve interventions, supports, and outcomes for students, teachers, and society.

Assumptions

The research method was rooted in philosophical and psychological inquiry to obtain an unbiased description of experiences through the participant's lens (Creswell, 2014). The phenomenological study assumed that participants answered questions genuinely and recalled situations of working with students with EBD with truth and accuracy. The assumption was that participants' thoughts and shared experiences were related to the teaching profession. Having witnessed and experienced TDSA directly, the researcher incorporated autoethnographic methods into the study. The researcher uncovered personal positionality before exploring the experiences of others. It was assumed that the researcher would develop a broader epistemological perspective of TDSA by conducting self and participant inquiry.

Limitations

Creswell (2012) indicated that identifying limitations in a study is helpful in determining generalizability and for future research. Although these limitations may represent a weakness in the study, the analysis can contribute to the scarce body of literature. Teacher experiences and emotional levels may impact the interview and influence teacher responses. Participant selection was based on teaching experience, subject area, and exposure to TDSA. The qualitative inquiry

was not generalizable; however, common themes resonated and had applications in similar contexts (Maxwell, 2013).

Delimitations

Delimitations taper the scope and define the boundaries of a study. The study was delimited to a career technical high school in two districts, one in the United States and the other in Canada. The sample size for the study was limited to a school principal (n= 1) and a small group of teachers (n= 5) from each site who instructed students with EBD at career technical high school. The teacher's experiences relating to TSR were the underlying theme and direction of the study. Creswell (2012) indicated that purposive sampling limits the ability to generalize from the sample to a population.

Operational Definitions

Providing term definitions for use in the study offers a level of precision (Firestone, 1987). Creswell (2003) suggested defining fewer terms in the early part of the proposal as more words may arise during data collection. The following terms are defined operationally for the study.

- ***Aggression*:** Behavior directed towards another individual with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).
- ***Autonomy*:** Independence, the ability to make choices and critical judgments, and the capacity to articulate the norms and limits of a learning society (Chene,1983).
- ***Disciplinary removal***: Disciplinary removal refers to any instance a child with a disability is removed from a learning space for disciplinary purposes. Disciplinary removal can include in or out-of-school suspension, relocation to an interim learning space (US Department of Education, 2020)

- ***Emotional behavioral disorder* (EBD):** A special education classification describing students who struggle with relationships, authority, and self-regulating behaviors. Students with EBD typically have difficulty controlling anger and aggression.
- ***Efficacy*:** Personal beliefs about oneself and one's capabilities determines how one thinks and feels, is motivated, and behaves (Bandura, 1994).
- ***Emotionally disturbed*:** IDEA describes emotional disturbance as a chronic condition that presents one or more of the following characteristics and, to a marked degree, adversely affects a learner's educational performance: (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).
- ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):*** A law that ensures services are available and provided for an identified student. The IDEA program requires all states and public agencies to provide adequate and appropriate instructions for identified students in an inclusive and least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE mandate increases students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).
- ***LRE*:** Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is the requirement in federal law that students with disabilities receive their education, to the maximum extent appropriate, with non-disabled peers and that special education students are not removed from regular

classes unless, even with supplemental aids and services, education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily. [20 United States Code (USC.) Sec. 1412(a)(5)(A); 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Sec. 300.114.]

- ***Prosocial behaviors*:** Personal actions that benefit others or society (Twenge et al., 2007).
- ***School climate*:** The nature of or sense of tone within the environment or workplace in a school (Cohen et al., 2009). School climate can be described as beliefs, attitudes, and values that characterize a multidimensional school life and quality, determine school structure and differentiate one school from another, occur as a result of the interactions between groups comprising the school society, and guide the behaviors of these groups (Ozgenel et al., 2018).
- ***Social maladjustment*:** Although social maladjustment is loosely defined in the special education literature, it is generally considered a consistent violation of the rights of others, a violation of social norms, and an awareness of the consequences of the actions chosen (Gresham, 2007).
- ***Special education:*** A field of practice that provides individualized support to identified students who require supplemental instruction, learning accommodation, and intervention based upon learning differences, disability, and special needs.
- ***Teacher-student relationships*:** Are defined as caring and authentic connections between teachers and students. Emotions-based experiences emerge from teachers' ongoing interactions with their students (Pianta, 1999).
- ***Teacher victimization:*** Includes obscene remarks, obscene gestures, verbal threats, intimidation, cyber/Internet violence, theft of personal property, damage to personal

property, objects thrown, physical attack not resulting in a visit to a physician, physical attack resulting in a visit to a physician, and weapon pulled (McMahon et al., 2014).

- ***Violence*:** the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or persons intended to cause injury (i.e., cuts, bruises, broken bones, death, etc.), psychological harm, or deprivation. Regardless of damage, violence includes any act of sexual assault or a threat made with a weapon (Borum et al., 2006).

Summary and Organization of Study

Chapter 1 introduced the problem of teacher-directed student aggression in schools, the statement of purpose, the outline of the study design, a rationale and significance for the research, and detailed information related to the study. TDSA affects teacher efficacy, student development, and school climate. Research has shown that building a TSR with students with EBD can significantly reduce destructive, aggressive, and violent behaviors (Crosnoe et al.,2004). As students move towards autonomy and adulthood, securing a compassionate rapport for adolescents is timely. The teacher must develop effective interventions to improve the social and learning outcomes for students with EBD. Supportive social interactions are paramount to developing the skills to function successfully throughout life (Cassidy & Shaver,1999). The study explored principal and teacher perspectives and lived experiences in building relationships with students with EBD who display TDSA.

The study is divided into five chapters, references, and appendixes in the following manner. Chapter II reviews related literature that extends evolving practice in special education, student aggression, and the impact of teacher-student relationships. Chapter III describes the research design and methodology of the study. A rationale for using the design and the instrument for data collection and analysis are explained. The ethical issues relevant to

conducting the research and the sample population will also be defined. Chapter IV offers a presentation of the data collected and the results of the data analysis. Chapter V contains the summary and interpretations of the findings, presents the implications for leadership, policy, and practice, and provides recommendations for future research. The study concludes with references and appendixes.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Identifying and incorporating effective interventions in special education is an ongoing and iterative process that can improve outcomes for students with an emotional behavioral disorder (EBD). An established teacher-student relationship (TSR) that embodies trust and care can be critical for addressing teacher-directed student aggression (TDSA), facilitating student success, and developing teaching practice. Chapter II reviews relevant literature that examines the foundation, theories, and research pertinent to special education and teachers in building relationships with students with EBD to mitigate TDSA. The related literature presents an evolving practice linking TSRs as an instrumental tool for reducing TDSA by students with EBD. Chapter II begins with a contextual background on special education in North America and explores how the field has supported students with EBD, directed teaching practice, and helped schools to address the unique learning needs of students with EBD. Examining previous research and literature provides perspective and allows the phenomenon's scope to be better understood.

Emotional and behavioral issues displayed at younger ages predict adverse outcomes later in life for students with EBD (McKenna et al., 2021; Sinclair et al., 2005). Maladaptive behaviors often lead to compromised learning outcomes and social development challenges. Research affirms that self-regulating behaviors become increasingly complicated and problematic as students with EBD age, limiting academic achievements and damaging relationships (Herron & Martin, 2015; Reid et al., 2004). As with all other subgroups within the school population, students with EBD should experience classroom success and positive social connections. The literature review explores barriers faced by students with EBD and the challenges teachers share in cultivating supportive TSRs. The chapter concludes with a summary

and substantiates a need for continued research in the field that applies to TSR with students with EBD.

The literature review relates to three central bodies of research: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Starratt's ethical leadership framework, and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. The themes overlap and, as a whole, represent the most salient research findings for constructing relationships with students with EBD to diminish TDSA. The literature review reveals a need for the special education community and teachers of students with EBD to deliberate and critique the value of rapport building. Researchers, school districts, principals, and teachers must judiciously determine best practices that support students with EBD to improve achievement outcomes, socialization experiences, graduation rates, and the well-being of all school members. Through a multidimensional framework, educators may be able to confront the moral and social issues caused by TDSA more effectively.

Contextual Background of Special Education

Over the past 20 years, studies have been conducted on inclusion, disciplinary practices, and academic achievement for students with EBD. However, there is an absence of well-developed research on intervention practices specifically to support students with EBD (McKenna et al., 2021; Twenge et al., 2007). With a lack of intervention research, teachers and principals are left searching for optimal ways to serve students with EBD. Teachers must be intentional with their efforts and interactions to ensure that the academic abilities of students with EBD do not decline (Farmer et al., 2016). Relationship building may be a catalyst teachers can use to improve the experiences and outcomes of students with EBD.

With successful instruction being the most critical goal of special education, smaller class sizes, interventions, and the knowledge to work with students with EBD are vital elements in

determining what is best for the student (Kauffman et al., 2018; De La Ossa, 2005). Given the diversity and variability among students with EBD, a single approach or placement may not meet the unique needs of students with EBD. If the student's needs and interventions are ineffectual, the student may be placed in a segregated learning space to increase support. However, the relocation may also increase the risk of student frustration and TDSA. Twenge et al. (2007) emphasize that when people feel socially excluded from amicable relationships, the display of prosocial behaviors significantly declines. Prosocial behavior can be seen through cooperative and helping acts that result in collective harmony and positive relations. Experiences of social exclusion, according to Twenge et al. (2007), can amplify emotional distress and erode positions of empathy. Using a continuum of placements for students with EBD may prevent feelings of isolation, improve social interactions, and prevent incitement of maladaptive behaviors and TDSA.

Emotional Behavioral Disorder

Special education is a field of practice that provides individualized support to students identified with a disability. Special education services provide children with disabilities supplemental teaching support, learning accommodations, and instructional interventions. Special education is a practice, not a placement, where learners with special needs can benefit. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a federal law to protect the rights of American children with disabilities. Under IDEA, thirteen categories have been defined to help states, schools, and service providers determine how to identify and educate children with disabilities. Ontario's Education Act has similar legislation, Regulation 191/98, which supports schools and professionals in identifying and placing students with disabilities. The Education Act has five categories for student exceptionality, with subcategories included in each grouping. Although

organized differently, the special education disability categories are consistent between the two countries. See Table 1.

Table 1

Special Education Disability Categories

Special Education Disability Categories	Ohio, US	Ontario, Canada
Specific learning Disability (SLD)	√	Communicational
Other health impairment (ADHD)	√	Communicational
Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	√	Communicational
Emotional disturbance	√	Behavioral
Speech or language impairment	√	Communicational
Visual impairment	√	Physical
Deafness	√	Communicational
Hearing impairment	√	Communicational
Deaf-blindness	√	Communicational/Physical
Orthopedic impairment	√	Physical
Intellectual disability	√	Intellectual
Traumatic brain injury	√	Communicational
Multiple disabilities	√	Multiple
Total Categories	13	5

IDEA and the Education Act aim to secure better educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities. The National Center for Education Statistics (2021) reports that the EBD category in the US represents one of the smallest special education groupings at 5%. A lower statistic in Ontario indicates that 3% of the special education population is identified with EBD (Statistics Canada, 2020). Despite the small percentages, students with EBD tend to experience the least academic success and are disproportionately placed in segregated learning spaces compared to students from other special education classifications (Kaplan & Cornell, 2005; Kurth et al., 2014). Students with EBD experience recurring difficulties that impede adequate functioning in school settings and produce adverse reactions from peers and staff (Browne, 2013). The display of chronic aggression can inhibit individual and group learning. As affirmed by French and Conrad (2001), aggressive behavior

seriously disrupts a child's academic advancement and limits encounters of prosocial interactions.

Compared to other special education students, pupils with EBD have inferior graduation rates, lower literacy, and numeracy scores, and are less likely to attend postsecondary school (Burke et al., 2015; Trout et al., 2003). Research suggests that although students with EBD entering high school may have average academic competence, the EBD population is usually three and a half grade levels below typically developing peers (McKenna et al., 2020; Garwood, 2018; Nelson et al., 2004). The educational disparities in content area classes and grade-level performances present particular challenges and frustration for students with EBD (Garwood, 2018).

Although students with EBD display higher rates of externalized aggression than internalized aggressive behaviors, both present many challenges for classroom teachers (Ennis et al., 2019; Hinshaw, 1992). Characteristics of externalized aggression include non-compliance, verbal attacks, and physical hostility. Verbal attacks are non-physical offenses ranging from personal insults, intimidation, rude or obscene gestures, name-calling, harassment, bullying, and verbal threats. Teachers report experiencing more non-physical aggression than physical attacks (Longobardi et al., 2019; Tiesman et al., 2013). However, verbal assaults can damage a teacher's state of mind, emotional labor, and professional practice and cannot be dismissed as less harmful. Student behaviors can quickly and unpredictably escalate into a physical confrontation that includes oral berating (Taylor & Smith, 2019). Physical hostility encompasses hitting, kicking, biting, fighting, pushing, shoving, being struck by a projectile, or using a weapon.

Researchers have identified a correlation between externalizing behavioral problems and academic achievement (Nelson et al., 2004). Students with EBD typically display externalized

behaviors more often, making it easier for schools to identify and secure special education services (Ennis et al., 2019). However, individuals with EBD may also have comorbid diagnoses where externalized and internalized behavior patterns are displayed. Internalized behaviors are less conspicuous and may manifest through self-harm, anxiety, and depressive moods (Smith et al., 2020; Reid et al., 2004). The needs of students with internalized aggression are often overlooked due to concealed behavior patterns but can become detrimental to a student's self-regulation and academic success (Ennis et al., 2019; Bradshaw et al., 2008).

According to Kennedy and Jolivette (2008), students with EBD encounter discipline challenges and academic struggles that can decrease learning opportunities and motivation. Research suggests that EBD is commonly associated with other disorders (Ogundele, 2018). The National Centre for Learning Disabilities (2017) reports that 60% of students identified with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) have a dual diagnosis with EBD. Ibrahim et al. (2019) reveal that more than a quarter of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have a comorbid diagnosis of EBD. With a concurrent diagnosis, the characteristics and behaviors associated with EBD can amplify student aggression. CHADD (2022) confirms that the combination of co-existing disruptive behaviors complicates a student's diagnosis and treatment, intensifying the behavioral prognosis for children and adults.

Policy and Legislation

With education directly influencing a student's life chances and outcomes, schools are morally accountable for maturing student wisdom and self-regulation skills. Until the mid-1970s, students with special needs were not included in the general education (GE) classroom, which many argued impinged upon educational and civil rights. In 1975, new US legislation was introduced to support the learning rights of students with special needs. The law was called

Education for All Handicapped Children Act and is now known as the Individuals with Disability Act. The bill ensured access to free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for every student identified as exceptional (USDOE, 2019). The legislation aimed to ensure that schools provided different service models to students with special needs. In Canada, special education services vary across the ten provinces and three territories. Although education is decentralized in Canada, full inclusion was introduced in 1980.

To receive special education services in the US and Ontario, students must undergo an identification process that includes a referral and assessment that qualifies the student with exceptional needs. The school team will then determine the services the student needs within an educational setting. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed to identify the student's disability and detail the programs, accommodations, and services the school board will provide to the student. An IEP is a working document created after a thorough assessment to distinguish students' strengths and needs and their ability to learn and demonstrate learning. Holistic development of special education services maps onto school policies and compels educators to meet learning goals outlined in a student's IEP.

Developing a student's knowledge base and shaping relational behavior will help ensure student progress is realized per the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA, 2015). These federal mandates were established to improve student performance and school accountability. The Ontario Ministry of Education has enacted similar legislation and policies to secure and optimize outcomes and opportunities for students with disabilities. Despite implementing federal, state, and provincial legislation and developing local policies and regulations, the school system continues to struggle to serve students with EBD effectively.

TDSA has become a mounting problem within the educational milieu, causing significant dilemmas and health problems for students and teachers (McMahon et al., 2020). TDSA increases stress levels and presents classroom challenges (McMahon et al., 2020). The rise in aggressive behaviors is a predictable occurrence given the extent of COVID trauma over the past eighteen months (Pierce, 2021). Physical and verbal violence against educators may intensify the reports of high stress, emotional labor, and teacher attrition (McMahon et al., 2022). The need to address TDSA effectively is critical and timely to provide teachers, students, and the learning community the supports to succeed.

Placement Determination

The EBD label is considered the most stigmatizing designation compared to other special education classifications (Forness et al., 2012). Students with EBD are identified through the special education process and qualify for services to improve individual learning and behavioral outcomes (Wagner et al., 2005). However, some reports reveal that special education programming can lower academic expectations, limit access to the GE curriculum, and possibly stigmatize student identity (Fellner, 2015). The adverse outcomes potentially associated with special education can perpetuate feelings of social isolation and diminish academic confidence levels (Grindal et al., 2019; Harry & Klingner, 2014; Kauffman & Badar, 2013).

According to Farmer (2013), the number of children identified with an EBD diagnosis has declined over the years. Although fewer EBD diagnoses in youth are conceivable, the epidemiological data do not support a decline in students with EBD (Farmer, 2013; Forness et al., 2012; Grindal et al., 2019). The incongruency indicates a potential under-identification by schools which may limit the special education services students with EBD receive. Forness et al. (2012) affirm that students with EBD require significant social and academic support. Without

the special education classification, students with EBD will experience unintended fallouts that pull attention and resources away. Accurate identification will help ensure that interventions are fully operationalized, and service disparities are avoided. Researchers avow that a combination of service gap discrepancies negatively impacts outcomes for students with EBD and can lead to problems for the classroom teacher and postsecondary trajectories for the student (Farmer, 2013; McKenna et al., 2020). Incorrect or under-identification of EBD can produce short and long-term harm for students, specifically for students of color and low-income backgrounds (Grindal et al., 2019).

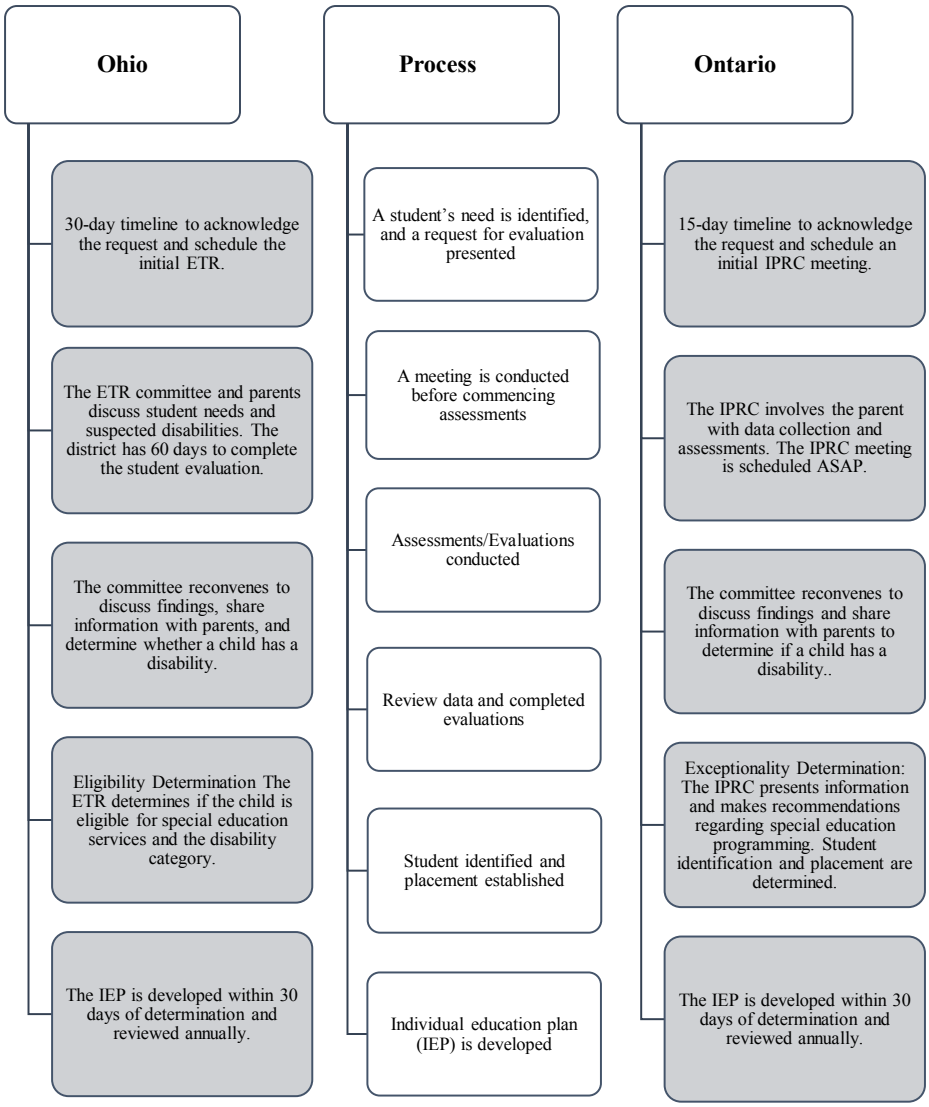
In the US, the Evaluation Team Report (ETR), as required by IDEA, is the process followed to qualify a student with a disability and determine a need for special education. The ETR procedure involves a team of qualified school professionals and parents to gather, discuss, and plan for a student's evaluation. Through the ETR process, the team will consider the possible disability categories and areas where the student needs to be assessed. In Ontario, the individual placement and review committee (IPRC) procedures are followed under Regulation 181/98 to establish special education eligibility and student placement (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2022). The process involves educational professionals with parental input, whose recommendations determine the identification and placement of exceptional students. There is considerable similarity between the US and Ontario's processes for identifying a student with a disability. Although slight differences exist in timelines and language, the student identification procedures are analogous.

The student referral can come from the parent or another professional who provides interventions and supports for the student. The number of days schools have to respond to the request for evaluation differs between the US and Ontario. A team of qualified personnel will

meet to verify necessary evaluations and assessments. Educational, health, or psychological assessments completed by a skilled practitioner are conducted, and information is gathered from the parent, student, and teacher. Other evaluations or information pertinent to student identification are fulfilled to ensure all areas related to the suspected disability are assessed. Once the assessments are complete, the ETR and the IPRC meet with the parent and principal to review evaluations, discuss possible decisions, affirm parent rights, request additional information, outline the agenda for the determination meeting, and answer any questions. Student identification and placement decisions are finalized at the determination meeting, and an IEP is developed. The timelines for developing the IEP vary between the US and Ontario. The comparison between Ohio and Ontario's student identification process is reflected in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Student Identification Processes Comparison between Ohio and Ontario



Research affirms that when placement determination separates students into segregated learning spaces, the isolation contributes to an escalating achievement gap (National center for learning disabilities, 2020). The US Department of Education (2018) sustains that 49% of the EBD population spends 80% or more of the day in the GE classroom, compared to 62% of students with other disabilities. Reports confirm a 3% increase over twelve years, indicating a

minimal change. Students with EBD spend a significant amount of time in more restrictive environments than in a GE classroom (The US Department of Education, 2018). Being in a separate classroom can create social and attitudinal barriers, impede academic success, and exacerbate aggressive behavior (Grindal et al., 2019; Hoge et al., 2014). Ryndak et al. (2014) echo fellow researchers, adding that a separate educational arrangement can reduce student productivity. Despite the findings, a restrictive setting is often deemed the most appropriate for students with EBD and to fortify the safety of all students.

School principals, teachers, and other professionals involved in the student placement process must address the concerns associated with exclusion, stigmatization, and erroneous identification to ensure that all factors are considered during the special education classification process to prevent inaccurate student labeling.

Least Restrictive Environment

Although more students are being educated in the GE classroom, students with EBD remain the most marginalized group of learners to receive instruction in self-contained classes compared to any other student group (US Department of Education, 2020). The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) policies outlined in the IDEA (2004) ensure that students with EBD must be provided the same learning opportunities and environments as in the GE classroom. Decreasing opportunities to interact and learn with students of the same age can create social barriers and stigma that augment student frustration and negatively impacts TSRs. McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) discovered that positive TSRs increased prosocial behavior, attitudes, and attendance for students with EBD. Student placement does not guarantee that students with EBD will make sufficient academic progress or establish prosocial behaviors. Kauffman et al. (2018) argue that broader social inclusion in a regular GE classroom that supersedes the student's right to make

appropriate progress subverts the very tenets of the IDEA (2004). A separate setting may provide certain benefits that are not achievable in the GE classroom. Schools must be prepared to deliver students with EBD the intense support needed for success regardless of location.

The LRE principle aims to support the maintenance of a continuum of services and student placement; however, the vague language has led to the segregation of educational arrangements for many behavioral students (Ryndak et al., 2014). The continuum of alternative service and placement options can occur in various spaces, including the GE classroom, self-contained classroom, alternative school, juvenile institution, or hospital. Under the federal special education law, a student with an IEP should be integrated into the GE classroom to the "maximum extent appropriate." The law states, "special classes, separate schools, or removal from the GE classroom should only occur if supplementary aids and services fail to provide the student with an appropriate education" (IDEA, 2004). According to Landrum et al. (2019), the full spectrum of placement options is not always well explored during the placement process. As such, students with EBD are served more often in restrictive settings when compared to students with other disabilities. Rose et al. (2019) report that students in restrictive settings display higher rates of physical aggression when compared to their peers with EBD in inclusive settings. While there are various placement options for students with EBD, the isolated learning space may further fuel student frustration and aggression and contribute to the rise of TDSA. (Reid et al., 2004).

Emergent Theories to Relationship Building

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow (1954) postulated that human decision-making is strengthened by a hierarchy of psychological needs. The needs were originally divided into five categories that

provide insight into human motivation. At the lower levels of the hierarchy are basic needs humans require for physical and psychological well-being. People need water, food, shelter, and safety to feel secure. The lower-level necessities represent a person's deficiency needs and are essential to avoid adverse emotions or consequences. Refinements to Maslow's hierarchy of needs revealed that it is not an "all or none" phenomenon (Maslow, 1987). Confirming that a needs level does not have to be fully satisfied before a person can advance to the next level of the hierarchy.

The deficiency needs can be partially fulfilled, motivating an individual towards higher-level needs. When met, higher-level needs allow a person to mature emotionally and mentally. The upper-level conditions are called growth needs and manifest from a person's intrinsic desire to grow. Jamal et al. (2013) found that a positive TSR contributes to feelings of individual safety. Schools must be safe spaces to secure student and teacher well-being. As lower deficiency needs are satisfied personal growth needs can be realized. Maslow's expanded the model to an eight-stage motivational theory which defines human needs within a triangular hierarchy separating deficiency and growth needs. Maslow's approach is based on people seeking fulfillment and change through personal development.

Maslow's theory affirms that a person is always "becoming" and never static. Hoffman (1988) reveals that advancing toward self-actualization is a continual process of individual development. As deficiency needs are met, humans become motivated to satisfy growth needs, salient motivators that drive people toward actualization. Maslow (1987) suggests that behavior is typically multi-motivated and simultaneously determined by more than one basic need. Teachers can address the deficiency needs of students by procuring a sense of safety and belonging and establishing routines. Set procedures can offer predictability that, in the

classroom, helps students with EBD to anticipate activities and practices. If individual deficiency needs are not met, intrinsic motivations decrease, and the display of aggressive and problematic behaviors can worsen for students with EBD (Leggio & Terras, 2019; Taylor et al., 2019).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs presents a labyrinth of approaches and attitudes that can collectively and holistically serve students with EBD. Satisfying human needs hinges on the development of positive interaction and rapport. A sense of caring and belonging must be embedded in teaching approaches and school solutions to promote more productive and desirable outcomes for students with EBD (Farmer, 2013). Procuring positive teacher-student associations can enrich the learning space and cultivates a sense of connectedness with the school community (Blum et al., 2004). Students develop school connectedness when teachers and principals effectively communicate that the student matters. When teaching practices incorporate praise, positive interventions, and support for students with EBD, authentic liaisons between the teacher-student dyad are created, which can lessen TDSA (Leggio & Terras, 2019).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs affirms that people will not effectively achieve their potential without removing and dealing with counterproductive barriers. The obstacles students experience at home, school, or community can compromise one's sense of self and well-being. Such barriers can significantly affect student learning, focus, and performance, inhibiting student growth and development. Many students with EBD have profound learning gaps and disabilities that emasculate school successes. The trials and tribulations that students with EBD endure can manifest in the classroom and create contentious situations for educators (Spouls et al., 2015). The display of challenging behavior and apprehensions can widen the relational chasm between teacher and student. Accordingly, teachers must remain steadfast and intentional to satisfy the love and belongingness needs of students with EBD and secure a positive TSR.

According to Maslow (1954), the goal of learning is self-actualization. Maslow's interpretation reinforces that all teachers must meet students' physiological and psychological needs to maximize learning and behavioral outcomes. The physical conditions represent the foundation of the hierarchy and include food, shelter, housing, clothing, and sleep. The emotional needs include safety and protection, love and belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The physical and emotional needs are significantly intertwined when teaching at-risk students with EBD. However, with an inclusive and holistic approach, the teacher can help students with EBD achieve self-actualization. Maslow's theory (1970) affirms that physiological and psychological needs must be met before cognitive demands. For students with EBD to reach their potential, the learning space must secure physical and emotional safety. The fundamentals of Maslow's theory assert that social and academic development can improve when students with EBD feel secure, valued, and part of the community.

Starratt's Ethical Leadership Model

Robert Starratt's (1991) ethical leadership framework theorizes that principals and teachers can create and sustain a moral school by joining three ethical concepts. Each component allows school leaders to respond to situations and interact with students based on the circumstance or demands of the moment. The theory encourages educators to make ethical judgments through an ethic of critique, justice, and care lens. The ethic of critique can ensure that schools are organized so all members can grow and develop. When barriers or unjust arrangements are present, the school principal can take measures to restructure and address the situation. In so doing, the school will become an environment where learning and teaching can occur ethically. The ethic of justice can set a standard for moral and appropriate behavior for how people treat one another. Through the ethic of justice lens, the protection of human dignity

is honored and reflected in the quality of relationships between school members. Finally, the ethic of care is demonstrated in the integrity of human connection and interactions. In caring relationships, human potential and empowerment result. Starratt (1991) affirms that trust, honesty, and a caring school tone can develop a space for realizing attentive and helpful relationships.

Teachers are classroom leaders and are tasked to help students develop and grow as learners, team players, and society members. Starratt's framework calls for principals and educators to act as ethical leaders to secure an ethical school. Teachers instructing students with EBD are uniquely positioned to build positive TSRs. For many students with EBD, previous adult relationships have not been successful (Mihalas et al., 2009). Teachers have time to observe and interact with students during the school day, which places educators in a unique and powerful position. Teachers can influence how students view life predicaments and support students as they make behavioral choices. Teachers who structure classrooms to meet human purposes and curricular expectations are better positioned to uphold social responsibility constructs within the learning community.

The ethic of critique requires principals and teachers to address student aggression and immoral behaviors. Without analysis, efforts to secure a safe school and maintain classroom conduct cannot be realized. Responding to TDSA with a critical eye and attuned listening can affirm equality, the common good, and democratic student participation. The action of critique is essential to protect students' sense of security and inherent human and civil rights. Through the ethic of critique lens, principals and teachers can explore how TSRs can contribute to school climate and mitigate the display of TDSA. Teachers are morally obligated to ensure that student aggression is dealt with appropriately to maintain a just purpose and help students grow. The

ethic of critique presents principals and teachers with the challenge of securing an environment where education takes place morally.

Starratt's ethic of justice recognizes that protecting human dignity is contingent upon the moral quality of social relationships (Starratt. 1991). The ethics of justice ideology commands school leaders (teachers and principals) to serve all students for the common good and to honor human rights. Responding to TDSA with conviction and intent to support students and teachers is imperative. The need for transparent and challenging conversations may be necessary; however, the efforts put forth by school leaders can help reduce aggressive behaviors and improve TSRs.

The ethics of justice allows people to grow from social experiences. Living and participating in a just society teaches critical life lessons of honor and integrity – acceptable conduct and consequence. Justice ethics nurtures relationships and encourages students with EBD to self-reflect on how aggressive behavior can influence the larger common good. Pianta (1999) confirms that a "good" TSR enables students to regulate their emotional and social behaviors according to the learning demands of the school. The ethics of justice aims to secure safe and respectful learning spaces for all school community members. In securing a safe and respectful learning space, the ethic of justice becomes an integral aspect of structuring classrooms and schools to ensure optimal functioning. As building and classroom leaders, administrators and teachers must recognize, validate, direct, and respond to behaviors that do not align with school policies and practices.

Care ethics aspires to advance the ethic of justice, which focuses on fairness, equality, and individual freedom. According to Starratt (1991), the ethics of care seeks to make leadership a "human enterprise" (p. 195). The ethics of care demands compassion that honors each person's

dignity and the desire to see that person fully enjoy life (Starratt, 1991). Attention to care ethics can stimulate discussion of ideas that relate to loyalty, trust, and encouragement. Through dialogue, people can be encouraged to consider the consequences and impact of one's actions or decisions. Members can become increasingly empowered when faith, respect, and caring principles uphold a learning institution's foundation.

By embedding care ethics into the classroom and school climate, teachers can advance academic growth and prosocial behavior, developing student citizenship and character. As students engage daily in the lessons of care, respect, and service to each other, TSRs improve (Noddings, 2010). Students with EBD must learn how to problem-solve and self-regulate, discover how to forgive and move forward with securing positive relationships. Waldron (2017) asserts that forgiveness and healing rarely advance until emotions are substantiated. Accordingly, leaders must combine a resolute moral purpose with genuine empathy (Fullan, 2011). Caring and authentic interactions can help repair damaged relationships and broken trust. Positive changes can result when the leadership displays discipline and commitment in thought and action (Collins, 2001).

In the ethics of care, teachers and principals must respond to acts of anger and aggression in a manner that helps students with EBD take responsibility for violent actions and foster a sense of compassion and understanding. It is a shared initiative and obligation among people committed to mutual care. Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) affirm that TSRs can uphold care ethics and support students with EBD. Positive associations and high levels of closeness between teachers and students with EBD improve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes (Spilt et al., 2011). Alternatively, when TSRs are in high conflict, students are more likely to demonstrate negative behavior, social skills, and academic achievement (Pianta & Stuhlman,

2004). TSRs can improve as educators strengthen healthy interactions with students with EBD. According to Gage et al. (2016), positive adult interactions were the most effective predictor of reducing office/discipline referrals for students with EBD.

In a leadership role, teachers must put aside personal interests and motivations and shift their focus to securing affirmative exchanges with students with EBD. When the tenacity of moral and ethical teacher leadership is displayed, social justice, accountability, and the virtues of respect for human dignity are revealed—critical attributes to secure moral citizenship within the classroom and the school.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory

According to Vygotsky (1978), people play an essential role in the development of others. Human interactions and guidance from others with superior skills and knowledge allow people to acquire the tools, make sense of their surroundings, and grow. The activities and instruction teachers provide help learners develop the individual capacity to appropriately use tangible (calculators, computers, books) and psychological (symbols and language) tools. Principals and teachers are in the position of school leaders. They can reinforce the school culture by affirming the appropriate use of the tools that students have through social interactions and role modeling. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that knowledge attainment can be realized as people make meaning and develop their understanding.

The social constructivist theory emphasizes how a person develops and reaches development potential. Vygotsky coined the "zone of proximal development" to reflect the areas of opportunity between an individual's actual and potential cognitive development. The theory focuses on the mental and social processes that can present in the relationship between the principal, teacher, and student. Vygotsky (1978) outlined that the social development theory

creates two distinct developmental levels: actual and potential. The actual level reveals what problems the learner can solve independently, and the potential level indicates what the student can possibly accomplish through social interactions within a knowledge community. According to Vygotsky (1978), the potential level of development is where authentic learning occurs. The levels of development encompass maturing cognitive structures that, as outlined by Vygotsky (1978), can only emerge under the guidance of or in collaboration with others.

Vygotsky determined that teachers can control many factors within an educational setting, including tasks, behaviors, and responses. Positive Behavioral Incentive Support (PBIS) is a behavioral learning program that promotes positive expectations for behavior. The program uses behavioral and social learning principles to support the development of a positive school climate and reduce problematic student behavior (Scott et al., 2012). As teachers incorporate PBIS into their daily practice, interactions and behaviors in the classroom can improve and positively affect the school's climate. Vygotsky's (1978) unique view of human development and learning highlights the social, interpersonal, and interactional nature of knowledge development. The sociocultural theory posits that a student's social and emotional learning reflects the shared cultural school spaces that students experience in the classroom with peers and adult role models (Morcom, 2015).

Review of Related Research

There is extensive research on TSRs and the influence of rapport on students' intellectual engagement. However, there is minimal research on TSRs for students with EBD and a dearth of studies exploring teacher-directed aggression by students with EBD (Mihalas et al., 2009). The research explored TDSA experiences by principals and teachers with students with EBD. Mihalas et al. (2009) affirm that caring TSRs can improve student performance and the

emotional labor of the teaching profession. Teachers who value and develop caring TSRs provide schools with a solid foundation to build and implement system-based approaches to support students with EBD effectively (Mihalas et al., 2009). The research findings provide insight into how teachers can work towards holistically meeting the unique needs of students with EBD. The results uncover how teacher training and pre-service program gaps inform future school policies and procedures. With a more comprehensive awareness of effective interventions, educators can help to transform bleak outcomes into promising realities for students with EBD.

Manifestations of Aggression

The social lives of students with EBD are often quite fragile due to various factors, including relocation, exclusionary discipline, and life events resulting in students with EBD being in and out of school (Mihalas et al., 2009). The chaos and instability can cause students with EBD to harbor feelings of anger, rage, sadness, and grief, rendering inconsistent, antisocial, maladaptive, and self-defeating behaviors that hinder the school's climate. Student aggression can profoundly impact physical and mental well-being, negatively affect professional practice and emotional labor, and damage the classroom learning environment (McMahon et al., 2014). Violence directed toward K-12 teachers is a significant problem in North American schools. Although teachers have the potential to impact students at any age to improve student well-being and development, 80% of teachers report being victims of student aggression, and 44% were physically assaulted (McMahon et al., 2014). These findings affirm that principals and teachers have not successfully secured safe school environments where healthy TSRs can prosper and student learning thrive.

In a qualitative study, McMahon et al. (2020) examined the contextual factors surrounding incidents of physical aggression toward teachers. The research intended to bolster the understanding of teacher-directed violence to inform violence prevention practices and intervention strategies. A large sample of teachers (*n*=193) in pre-K-12 from 29 states completed an open-ended online survey. Results indicated that the most common type of physical aggression entailed bodily contact (65%), and 94% of the perpetrators were students. Teacher discipline (25%), teacher directives (19%), and breaking up student altercations (16%) represent the three most common reasons for teachers to be physically assaulted. Although many incidents of physical aggression resulted in adverse outcomes, some teachers reported positive effects such as genuine apologies, stronger relationships, and increased support. McMahon et al. (2020) suggested that teachers who develop high-quality TSRs sense student needs, adjust accordingly, and use gentle discipline to support the student. As teachers explain why a behavior is unwarranted and counterproductive, the student becomes informed and has the opportunity to contemplate. Using a reflective approach, teachers uphold social responsibility for the student, the school, the profession, and society. Teachers who cultivate TSRs could experience fewer episodes of TDSA, and students with EBD could become increasingly prepared to assume responsibility in the classroom and community.

Aggressive behaviors can manifest for many reasons. Issues experienced at home, school, or community can contribute to aggressive classroom behavior and misconduct. Students in middle school with EBD tend to become less interested in academic learning and seek other students with comparable attitudes and disengagement levels (Müller et al., 2016; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Petsch and Rochlen (2009) suggest that children of incarcerated parents cope with anxiety before, during, or after parental imprisonment. Müller et al. (2016) speak to the

influence of negative peers and associations. Family environments characterized by high levels of conflict, strained channels of communication, and a lack of parental support can negatively affect children and become a predictor of aggressive behavior and disengagement (Carrell et al., 2018; Jimenéz & Estevéz, 2017). An antagonistic household where antisocial and aggressive behaviors are normalized can also impede positive and healthy development and predispose a child to manifest aggressive behaviors (Stoutjesdijk et al., 2016).

The classroom should be a space where clear behavioral expectations are communicated and reinforced to divert aggressive conduct. According to Kennedy and Jolivette (2008), antisocial behaviors can be learned and unlearned. A positive and genuine rapport can be cultivated as teachers tailor instruction to develop student knowledge and proficiency. Braxton et al. (2010) assert that teachers who reward competence and build trust with students provide protective factors that can improve class functioning and transfer to adulthood. Poor outcomes are more likely to occur when students with EBD experience frequent disruptions in social relations due to program or school changes (Grigg, 2012). Establishing a positive TSR takes time and effort; however, it can be a worthwhile investment to reduce TDSA and improve school and life experiences for students with EBD (Hopman et al., 2018). The chronic display of aggressive behaviors is problematic, adversely affects classroom interactions with teachers and classmates, and reduces engagement levels for students with EBD. Adversities in social skills for students with EBD are typical and underline the importance of developing supportive relationships (Kauffman & Landrum, 2018). As teachers take opportunities to make authentic associations with students with EBD, prosocial behavior and academic outcomes can be realized.

Teaching Students with Emotional Behavioral Disorder

Many educators report becoming teachers to make a difference in the lives of children and provide lessons of a lifetime that students can apply throughout their learning journey. In a survey conducted by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers in 2021, 80% of educators revealed that they pursued a teaching career because they enjoy working with children. Moreover, 75% indicated a higher moral purpose in becoming a teacher - to make a difference in students' lives. Mihalas et al. (2009) acknowledge that the joy of the job is an important starting point for educators to accept a shared responsibility in developing a practice that improves outcomes for students with EBD.

In a study by Prather-Jones (2011), 13 teachers working with students with EBD with more than six years of experience were interviewed. Participants discussed rational and sentimental variables that contributed to the continuation of working with students with EBD. The key findings revealed that intrinsic drive was a key motivator and could explain why some teachers quit prematurely. Some research suggests that teaching students with EBD is a calling. "Not everyone is cut out to be a teacher of students with EBD" (Prather-Jones, 2011, p.183). Some traits or characteristics extend beyond the simple delivery of instruction that is difficult to define and measure. Students with EBD will exhibit hostile behaviors, and teachers must remain flexible and adaptable to meet the student's needs at a given moment (Scott et al., 2012). Prather-Jones (2011) reported that days could be unpredictable, entail frequent changes, and challenging student behaviors. As teachers aim to prepare students to reach their full potential and graduate, various teaching strategies are needed to respond to and support students with EBD.

Student progress, successes, and challenges of TDSA are unique and individualized. Behavioral challenges can manifest in unpredictable ways that delay student progress.

Accordingly, teachers must adapt, adjust, and reorganize daily lessons to accommodate student needs and behaviors. On the front lines, teachers working with students with EBD must be quick to respond, creative in their practice, and prepared to implement various classroom management approaches that align with preventing or de-escalating aggressive outbursts. Prather-Jones (2011) reports that students with EBD are influenced by unhealthy circumstances that can potentially obstruct success in school. Farmer et al. (2016) confirm that students with EBD are among the most vulnerable learning groups at risk for long-term adjustment problems and poor outcomes.

Teaching students with EBD can become increasingly stressful with the increasing pressures of academic accountability and the management of non-academic behaviors. The demands of teaching students with EBD can be overwhelming even for the most prepared, optimistic, and committed educator. The expectations can heighten learner frustration, perpetuating TDSA and undermining TSRs. With 32% of students with EBD withdrawing from school prematurely (NCES, 2020), identifying ways to improve student success is essential. In a longitudinal experimental study, researchers determined that students with EBD participating in a check-and-connect program experienced higher graduation outcomes and attended school with increased consistency. Regular participation in the school community, combined with supportive teacher interactions and interventions, helped students with EBD deliberate how individual behaviors contributed to the good of the community. The research produced encouraging substantiation that a check and connect intervention focusing on rapport, behavioral support, and social behaviors can provide a meaningful difference in the educational careers of students with EBD (Sinclair et al., 2005).

Starratt's theory asserts that human dignity is paramount through an ethic of justice and hinges upon the moral quality of social relationships (Starratt, 1991). Through ethics of justice,

educators can help students grow from social experiences. Teachers can work with students to discuss issues that may contribute to adversarial behaviors by engaging in challenging and necessary conversations. Teacher-student interactions can help educators better understand the student's frame of reference. As interactions mirror living and participating in a just society, teachers exemplify critical life lessons of honor and integrity. Such interactions can nurture the TSR and encourage self-reflection on alternative behaviors that positively affect the common good. When students are continually exposed to interactions that honor trust and well-being in school, lessons of care and respect can be learned. The TSR can help build a classroom community that advocates and models how human relationships should be revered and nurtured.

Academic Outcomes for Students with Emotional Behavioral Disorder

Data suggests that students with EBD often have deficient reading skills, placing them at increased risk for school and transition failures. Researchers recognize that reading is a critical skill that provides a foundation for student learning and access to core subject areas. The link between developmental reading difficulty and problematic behavior in school has been consistently identified (Campbell et al., 2018; Garwood, 2018; Maughan et al., 2006). Students with EBD typically exhibit higher rates of low reading success (Garwood, 2018; Kostewicz & Kubina, 2008). Research affirms that students with EBD entering high school score below same-aged peers (McKenna et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2004). Research by Wei et al. (2011) confirms similar findings and reveals that many high school students with EBD are at an elementary to middle-grade level in reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is particularly challenging for students with EBD; without it, achievement and success in content classes, college, and career readiness are obstructed (Garwood, 2018). The academic challenges students

with EBD experience often emerge in early grades and persist throughout the educational experience (Campbell et al., 2020; Mckenna et al., 2018; Trout et al., 2003; Wagner, 1995).

Deficits in writing also challenge students with EBD. Benner et al. (2002) reported that students with EBD obtained the lowest mean score on written language subtests and identified expressive language skills as a common deficit for students with EBD. The association between reading and writing seems clear, with expressive writing reportedly being the most difficult for students with EBD (Campbell et al., 2020). Low academic math performance and arithmetic scores represent another area of struggle. Children with EBD tend to demonstrate lower math scores compared to other students of high-incidence disability groups (Campbell et al., 2018). Trout et al. (2003) reviewed 16 data sets that focused exclusively on the academic status of students with EBD; 92% of the reports indicated profound academic deficiencies in mathematics. In a more recent study by Mulcahy (2016), students with EBD were consistently a grade level behind peers without disabilities during K-8. By grade nine, the gap widened disproportionally to three-grade levels.

McKenna et al. (2021) confirm limited research exists on reading instructional practices for students with EBD. Reading comprehension is a significant literacy challenge compared to developing foundational reading skills such as phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, and vocabulary (McKenna et al., 2021). Trout et al. (2003) report that students with EBD are not adequately responding to reading interventions. The social-emotional and behavioral challenges can intensify academic deficits and negatively impact educational outcomes. For students with EBD, the school experience and expectations may become overwhelming and fuel aggressive outbursts and TDSA. With low levels of engagement and challenging behaviors, skill acquisition is adversely affected (Reid et al., 2004). As learning gaps typically widen from middle to high

school, secondary teachers may be confronted with more aversive behaviors. The combination of learning challenges and poor social behaviors can escalate student aggression, and given the nature of frustration, the teacher can become the target of student frustration (Brown, 2013).

Participants from a recent study revealed that a significant amount of instructional reading time was spent on non-instructional activities. McKenna et al. (2021) determined that participating teachers required additional training, support, and resources to differentiate instructional approaches and maximize instructional time successfully. Teachers frequently expressed difficulties in planning and managing student behavior during small group reading instruction and reading instruction in general. Participating students made no or minimal progress in reading fluency and comprehension and frequently displayed low levels of academic engagement. Knowles (2015) emphasizes that through a democratic lens, the growth of people must precede the accomplishment of things. Principals must effectively recognize, validate, and respond to teacher concerns and student outcomes as they contradict school policy and purpose. The inaction in responding to and providing learning opportunities for teachers, according to Starratt (1991), is a dereliction of moral duty. Principal leadership is an unending quest to secure a commitment from the school community to inspire change and growth that improves outcomes for students and teachers.

With a persistent lack of achievement, the desire for students with EBD to engage in classroom learning and social exchanges can wane (Herron & Martin, 2015; McKenna et al., 2020). Adverse outcomes can increase with student frustration as a defeatist learner attitude intensifies. Reid et al. (2004) confirmed a correlation between low academic performance and maladaptive behaviors. However, research indicates that when teachers create engaging lessons with high expectations, where instruction is encouraging and motivating, students with EBD are

more likely to engage and embrace challenging opportunities from which they can develop and grow (Gage et al., 2017).

Career Technical Schools

Although there has been a shift in attitude towards career technical education (CTE), historically, career technical schools were generally viewed as a last effort to keep underachieving students in the educational system. The stigma around vocational education was reinforced by funneling the students who did not experience successful academic or behavioral outcomes in traditional schools (Malkus, 2019). Today, CTE is branded in a different light and an option for all students to explore an interest and discover a passion. CTE aims to help students gain real-world experiences that can lead to employment, higher education programs, and a successful career. For students with EBD, CTE can offer new opportunities for high school success.

Research supports that CTE courses along a career pathway strongly predict postsecondary employment for students with EBD (McKay & Ellison, 2021). A career technical school integrates academic and vocational learning that may improve student motivation and learning outcomes. Reading, writing, and math skills are integral to curricular and employment expectations but represent the skills that most EBD students lack. As students connect what is learned and how it applies to the workplace, it can present a motivating curriculum with meaningful contexts in which to learn academic skills. Researchers affirm when students with EBD improve academic and social skills, life outcomes and postsecondary transitions are supported (McKay & Ellison, 2021).

Preparing students with EBD for the adult world is convoluted and challenging, often resulting in poor outcomes (Wagner, 2014). Career technical schools support students with EBD

with goal setting and transition planning and offer a blend of theoretical and hands-on programming. Exposing students to vocational pathways and technical skills can help students explore various occupations. Unemployment rates for youth with EBD after secondary school are high. Wagner (2014) reports that 42% of students who have been out of high school for more than four years work full-time. Poor employment rates may increase the possibility of living in poverty and reliance on social assistance. Only 22% of adults with EBD live independently four years after high school (Newman et al.,2009). Employment, postsecondary education, independent living, and community involvement for students with EBD are legitimate concerns for schools and society. Career technical schools can help bridge the gap by coordinating industry connections, developing trade skills, improving high school experiences, and strengthening employability competencies.

Benefits of Teacher-Student Relationships

Positive TSRs can facilitate productive outcomes that equally serve teachers and students with EBD. The support and solace teachers can provide through cultivating a trusting relationship can help students with EBD manage aggression more successfully (Crosnoe et al.,2004). Researchers assert that behavioral trajectories in primary grades can become more difficult as the student matures (Montague et al., 2005). With age, the display of physical aggression typically increases in severity and frequency for students with EBD (Rose & Epelage, 2012; Alverez, 2006). The implications of intensified student aggression may become more problematic for high school teachers, highlighting the need for secondary teachers to foster positive rapport with students who exhibit behavioral disturbances. Students with EBD are likelier to interact adversely with teachers and principals than any other peer group (Hopman et al., 2018; Wagner & Davis, 2006). Precarious feelings and outcomes can have a profound impact

on the TSR. Reports confirm that students with EBD are more likely than any other peer group to display disruptive behaviors, which puts them at risk of dropping out of school early. (Lipscomb et al., 2017). A disconnect from school, academic failure, and poor social adjustment can spawn criminal involvement for students with EBD (Wagner, 1995; Reid et al., 2004).

The term "relationship" has many meanings. For the proposed study, the term "relationship" will refer to the interactions between administration, teachers, and students, where the adult does what is best for the benefit of the student. At the heart, relationships are about care and consideration. Starratt defines the ethics of caring as an act that honors individual dignity and the desire to enjoy human life fully. The ethics of caring embraces the person for who they are, remaining loyal to the relationship and open to an authentic encounter. It is a moral ethic that supports the needs of another (Noddings, 2010). Educators can demonstrate care by assessing student needs, considering approaches, and taking action. A caring teacher self-reflects to determine how choices can influence future student behaviors.

The value of establishing and maintaining a positive TSR rooted in care and respect can potentially reduce the frequency of TDSA, student disengagement, and leaving school prematurely. Research indicates that positive teacher-student interactions and TSRs have consistently influenced students' academic achievement and learner engagement (Hopman et al., 2018; Fitzpatrick et al., 2015; Crosnoe et al., 2004). Teachers can positively affect students' social and educational outcomes and produce long-term success in school and society (Mihalas et al., 2009). Given the positive TSRs' success on student outcomes, it is reasonable to believe that constructive TSRs could also benefit students with EBD.

Mihalas (2009) explored the potential role a caring TSR can have for students with EBD. Research validates the significance of teacher knowledge and practice combined with an

affectionate rapport. Alridge and McChesney (2018) assert that positive TSR has been affiliated with student well-being and reducing negative behavioral outbursts. Through effective interventions and genuine relationships, teachers can lessen student aggression, secure a sense of belongingness and improve social interactions and self-regulation. Human interaction is central to building relationships with students with EBD and is a critical component of Vygotsky's constructivism theory regarding social development. Researchers suggest that aggressive behavior is triggered by three main factors: academic ability, social ability, and self-regulatory ability (Bandura et al., 2001). As classroom leaders, teachers can positively influence the classroom environment and build TSRs to improve outcomes for students with EBD.

Leggio and Terras (2019) researched the qualities, knowledge, and skills that effective teachers of students with EBD possessed. The findings revealed three themes: developing an unconditional TSR, creating a positive classroom environment, and individualizing instruction. Most participants identified that active listening skills allow teachers to discover student issues and are best realized through a one-on-one discussion with a teacher who has developed a rapport with the student. Critical discourse can enable teachers to move from a challenging mindset to an empathetic understanding to seek knowledge and awareness (Covey, 2020). Participants expressed that genuine and authentic relationships affirmed to students that the teacher was "in their corner." One participant said, "If you care about the kids, the kids will know it, and they'll do just about anything for ya. It may take a while, but they will get there" (Leggio & Terras, 2019, p. 9). Starting each day fresh, without any spillover from the previous day, allows students to feel unconditional connections and reinforces a positive classroom environment. Individuals who fear retribution or feel intimidated will jeopardize a safe, caring

climate that prevents authentic interaction. Freire (2018) confirms that oppression has severe consequences for the process of social change and is a violation of humanity.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

To identify the unique needs of each student and design instruction that meets the individual academic and behavioral needs, teachers cannot apply a one size fits all approach (Leggio &Terras, 2019). Special education is only as effective as the teacher. Reports confirm that many teachers feel insufficiently prepared to support the needs of students with EBD (Cooper, 2019; Farmer, 2013; Landrum et al., 2003). Teaching faculties express similar concerns regarding teacher readiness for educators wanting to pursue a career working with students with EBD (Cooper, 2019; Farmer, 2013).

Teacher preparation programs must ensure that new teachers are well-trained and knowledgeable in working with students with challenging behaviors (Cooper, 2019). Special education teachers must be highly trained to work collaboratively with staff and students with EBD. As outlined by Kauffman and Badar (2014), various strategies and contexts must be provided to address the intensive, complex, and multifactored needs of students with EBD. Failure to apply effective and appropriate interventions will compromise the student's learning and behavioral outcomes. Without the training and support to use alternative approaches, teachers of students with EBD will struggle to overcome the research-to-practice gap. McKenna and Ciullo (2016) discovered that teachers feel inadequately prepared to meet the unique needs of students with behavioral challenges. Scott et al. (2012) identified that students with EBD demand more from teachers than any other subgroup. Working with students with EBD requires patience, empathy, optimism, and effective instructional practices. Farmer (2013) emphasizes

that engaging in open conversations within a caring community is essential and allows teachers and students to discuss perceptions, solutions, and successes proactively.

Interactions: Praise and Positive Feedback

Teachers require strategies and methods to deal with verbal and physical aggression. Students with EBD often encounter problematic relationships with peers and adults throughout their schooling years (Sprouls et al., 2015). During the school day, students with EBD may engage in behaviors that others find undesirable, strange, or contrary to social customs, thus leading to rejection by peers and teachers (Kauffman, 2001). Students with EBD will likely have more difficulty with teachers who view EBD behaviors as deliberate instead of a diagnosis that is as real as a learning or physical disability (Thompson et al., 2017). With a false understanding of the cause and mechanisms of EBD behavior, teachers may be unwilling to try and fail to understand the needs of students with EBD.

Behavioral and social deficits presented by students with EBD are often met with anger and punishment from teachers who respond to the behavior instead of trying to understand the whole person. Schools usually respond to student aggression using exclusionary practices such as suspensions and expulsion (Herron & Martin, 2015). Continued negative experiences can result in students mistrusting adults, where students hold negative expectations of themselves and others. Prolonged exposure to negative teacher feedback can create a detrimental cycle of deleterious interactions and relationships for students with EBD (Sprouls et al., 2015). According to Kauffman (2001), students with EBD want approval and reassurance but expect rejection and failure.

Research has confirmed that teacher praise and validation can produce substantial gains in academic and behavioral outcomes for students with EBD (Kennedy & Jolivette, 2008). The

implication of continued exposure to negative feedback can seriously damage the learning environment and create a space that hampers interaction and undermines TSRs (Kaufmann & Landrum, 2009). When teachers react to the display of problem behavior in a harsh and combative manner, students with EBD typically respond with increasing defiance. Yet, teachers continue to use negative feedback and disapproving attention more often than positive when responding to students with EBD for aggression and misconduct (Sprouls et al., 2015; Kennedy & Jolivette, 2008). Conroy et al. (2009) suggest that when teachers incorporate feedback and praise effectively and frequently, negative interactions can change into positive exchanges that improve the classroom atmosphere, social and academic behaviors, and teacher-student relationships.

Sprouls et al. (2015) examined teacher feedback practices for students with EBD and discovered that positive feedback was disproportionally different for high and low-risk students. Students identified with higher-risk EBD behaviors received negative feedback more often than students with lower-risk EBD behaviors. The high-risk students received negative feedback twice as often as positive. In contrast, a student with low-risk EBD behaviors received positive feedback three times more often than negative. The research suggests that although teachers may interact more with students who display high-risk EBD behaviors, interactions may be more adverse. Negative feedback can have a lasting effect on students with EBD and may contribute to a trajectory of school failures and poor adaptive behaviors (Sprouls et al., 2015). Educators working with students with EBD often overlook the value of simple academic and social strategies that have been powerful tools to shape student behavior positively (Kennedy & Jolivette, 2008). Conroy et al. (2009) substantiate that praise has increased appropriate behaviors and task engagement for students with EBD.

Incorporating frequent praise and PBIS strategies into the classroom environment could be instrumental in lessening student disruption that often results in student removal (Kennedy & Jolivette, 2008). Data has shown that positive verbal reinforcements and behavioral interventions can increase the amount of time students with EBD spend in the classroom. As students spend more time in class, the opportunity to participate in learning and build positive relationships can increase. Conversely, less class time can limit role modeling, hamper teacher-student rapport, and increase the development of failing behavior patterns for students with EBD (Browne, 2013). Taking a leadership stance allows teachers to be the frontline ambassadors for meeting the educational, emotional, and developmental needs of students with EBD. Interventions must be responsive to the immediate antecedents, and consequences should reflect displayed behavior. Interventions must also address the complexities of the student's developmental histories, environments, and interactional dynamics.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs framework can help teachers be the primary catalyst in satisfying the needs of students with EBD. Teachers can offer resources and referrals to help meet foundational and growth requirements. Praise and positive feedback reinforce basic hierarchical needs by fostering a classroom environment that allows healthy risk-taking, questioning, and participation without fear or concern of being judged. Cultivating a relationship founded on trust, care, and respectful interactions will satiate a student's sense of belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Reinforcing positive behaviors with praise can develop self-esteem and self-worth that enhances intrinsic motivations to bolster student capacity to learn and achieve (Conroy et al., 2009). Teachers who actively listen and provide positive and constructive feedback offer students with EBD meaningful exchanges that can strengthen the TSR, advance student development, and fortify regulatory functions (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). Positive

feedback aligns with Vygotsky's theory through the social progressions students with EBD can make. With teacher praise and positive feedback, students with EBD can bolster academic, behavioral, and emotional development to improve individual capacity.

Interactions: Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) was created as a proactive approach to respond to the needs of students with EBD and provide more effective and sustainable inclusive instruction. Instead of removing students who display academic challenges and disruptive behavior in the classroom and with peers, students with EBD remain immersed in a learning environment that provides positive interventions and praise. PBIS supplied by the teacher is another concept that supports interaction and connection between the teacher and the student. A TSR can contribute to developing a safe learning space that incorporates accountability and ownership. According to Richards et al. (2014), PBIS reinforces the TSR and can successfully assist students with EBD in navigating their school careers toward graduation.

The lives of students with EBD are precarious and unpredictable, numerous and diverse. Many of these students struggle with social needs and securing positive relationships. Through PBIS, teachers and student interactions can be a protective force for students with EBD (Crosnoe et al., 2004) and a springboard for developing constructive rapport. Vygotsky suggests that cognitive functions are associated with social learning and contributing to community culture. Vygotsky disputes the suppositions made by Piaget, a contemporary cognitivist, who offered that knowledge and social contexts are independent of each other. According to Vygotsky (1978), every function in a child's cultural development appears twice: initially on a social level, between people on an inter-psychological plane, and then individually, within a person on an intra-psychological level. The inter and intra-psychological developments are pertinent to

deliberate concentration, logical memory, and formation of concepts. The higher-level competencies are derived from a relationship between individuals. According to Vygotsky, social constructivism affirms that knowledge is constructed and co-constructed. PBIS can serve as a virtual manifesto to help mitigate TDSA. The Vygotsky theory encourages interactive activities to promote cognitive growth through productive discussions, constructive feedback, and collaboration. The Vygotsky theory argues that the student's zone of proximal development is never static. Vygotsky's perspective on student growth and the zone of proximal development supports that students with EBD who display TDSA can always learn, grow, and advance. As teachers build rapport and secure a safe learning space, students with EBD can be part of the process.

Interactions: Inclusive Practices

Positive interventions can improve TSRs and create an opportunity to affect positive change in teacher-student interactions, contribute to inclusive practices, and improve school climate. Richards et al. (2014) determined that the PBIS program successfully created inclusive spaces when addressing behavioral challenges among students with disabilities and reduced the removal of students to alternative schooling formats. Significant to the study was that the program implementation required educators to shift perceptions regarding the behavioral management of school children. One school's principal added, "To really stop a punitive mindset, we needed to go deep and explore the roots of the school and home life" (Richards et al., 2014, p. 12). As teachers reflected on biases and routines, a shift in mindset helped educators to consider students in need and be more accepting of student differences. The positive behavioral intervention helped support students with EBD to maximize their classroom learning

experiences and increase socialization. The PBIS program sparked a new teacher attitude towards challenging behavior.

Traditional methods of discipline involve punitive procedures and exclusive practices (Richards et al., 2014). PBIS adopts teaching behavior and social skills by emphasizing a positive environment, strategic planning, data analysis, self-determination, and support (Richards et al., 2014). The interventions have the potential to assuage TDSA and nurture genuine interactions by using key ingredients that enhance TSRs.

Class and School Climate

School climate has been described as a multidimensional paradigm of beliefs, attitudes, and values shaping school life and human interactions that guide behaviors between different groups (Gage et al., 2021). A positive school climate predicts student behavior and can impact a school's physical and social dimensions to affect educational outcomes by increasing academic performance and decreasing problem behaviors (Thapa et al., 2013; Gage et al., 2021). According to La Salle et al. (2018), school climate can also support individuals within the school environment in feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. These emotions affirm the foundation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Although research has examined many schools and student-level predictors, including student discipline, few studies have examined the predictive relation between student disability status and school climate, particularly among students with EBDs.

School climate influences students' behavior in the classroom and can profoundly impact students' mental health, physical health, and development (Bradshaw et al., 2014). Negative emotions and stress levels can mount and fuel student aggression without feeling safe and a sense of belonging. In contrast, a positive school climate can significantly minimize adverse

outcomes caused by TDSA. A healthy learning atmosphere can secure a space to cultivate TSRs for a student with EBD. Astor et al. (2010) suggest that schools with high levels of positive school climate have higher achievement and fewer instances of student aggression, student absenteeism, and student reports of depression and anxiety.

In a study by Gage et al. (2021), researchers examined the relationship between school climate and EBD status, focusing on differing perceptions of students with EBD. Findings determined that students with EBD had significantly more negative perceptions in the eight domains of school climate. The domains include school climate, connectedness, peer social support, adult social support, cultural acceptance, social learning, physical environment, and school safety. A significant difference was noted between students with EBD receiving special education support and students identified without special education interventions. Students receiving special education services and EBD support confirmed a more positive perception of school climate than students with EBD not receiving special education assistance. The findings indicate that special education services may be a moderating factor that positively influences perceptions of school climate for students with EBD.

A connection between positive perceptions of adult social support may be related to the interactions between students with EBD and teachers. Strengthening teacher interactions can potentially reduce TDSA and positively develop students with EBD. Various interventions have been implemented nationwide to improve interactions and outcomes for students with EBD. Despite targeted programming, students with EBD remain to be a vulnerable population (Samuels, 2018).

Emotional Labor

Verbal and physical aggression toward teachers has been reported to be a detriment to student learning and teacher wellness (Santor et al., 2019). While educators are expected to meet the diverse needs of students and create a safe learning space, teachers must also address undesirable behaviors and displays of student aggression. In the teaching practice, emotions are an inevitable element that can impact student learning and academic achievement (Becker et al., 2014). Emotions can motivate, inspire and offer strength and focus, but emotions can also lead to heightened stress that compromises personal wellness.

The job expectations for teachers may be contractual, social, or political and can contribute to the emotional demands of the profession. Contractually, teachers are expected to develop lessons that follow education standards that meet curricular expectations. Teachers must manage student behavior to affirm school rules and procedures, attending meetings and supervision duties as part of the work contract. Socially, teachers are expected to display enthusiastic and motivating behaviors that convey a positive and welcoming demeanor, serving as role models to students. The politics of teaching are a daily matter ranging from textbooks to curriculum, relationships within the school community, to the policies that direct teachers' work and students learning. As Walker (2018) reported, cultural, social, and political contexts shape what and how educators teach. Teaching is a multitasking profession that consists of cognitive and emotional elements. Educators must be knowledgeable of subject matter and pedagogy, manage the daily challenges of a diverse group of learners, and regulate the display of emotions. Given the array of expectations, teachers are susceptible to the impact of emotional labor (Kariou et al., 2020).

The term emotional labor was created by Hochschild in 1983 and referred to managing one's feelings and expressions to comply with job expectations. Emotional labor consists of three components: emotional requirement, emotional regulation, and emotional performance (Lu et al., 2019). The emotional requirement calls for teachers to display positive emotions and enthusiasm. Teachers are expected to conceal negative thoughts or feelings caused by adverse situations to maintain a façade of teacher control and influence (Burić, 2019). Emotional regulation refers to the effort expended by employees to comply with the socioemotional demands of the job. Surface and deep acting are two main emotional regulation strategies used to manage feelings (Lu et al., 2019: Yao et al., 2015).

During surface acting, people display the emotions required by the profession without changing how they intrinsically feel. Deep acting is a form of reappraisal, a conscious process that encourages teachers to internalize negatively charged sentiments (Burić, 2019; Yao et al., 2015). In deep acting, the employee strives to match the feelings experienced with the job expectations. Surface and deep acting involve the mental energy and resources associated with emotional exhaustion (Yao et al., 2015). Finally, emotional performance is the visual expression of emotional labor and can involve the production of non-verbal cues and verbal responses that hide the teacher's true feelings. Emotional performance is not inherently challenging; however, the expectations become more difficult to address when they clash with the employee's emotions (Hofstee et al., 2021).

When there is a disconnect between the feelings experienced and the emotions needed to manage a situation, the emotional demands experienced intensify. With a gap between teacher sentiments and the reactions expected to display, emotional dissonance occurs and increases the emotional labor a person experiences (Pyhältö et al., 2015). Although emotional labor has the

potential to benefit student learning and TSRs, it can also cause undue stress and have a damaging effect on teacher health and wellness.

Student aggression is a growing workplace problem that profoundly impacts job satisfaction, stress levels, mental health, and employee efficacy (Sguera et al., 2016). Researchers affirm that TDSA negatively affects the school climate and intensifies teachers' emotional labor (Yao et al., 2015; Santor et al., 2019). Due to fear, frustration, and trauma, TDSA can quell teacher enthusiasm and excitement. In responding to student aggression, schools anticipate that the teachers will handle a situation in alignment with the school's norms. When confronted by an aggressive student, the teacher may repress felt emotions to ensure congruence with the school's expectations.

According to Gilmour and Wehby (2020), teachers working with students with EBD experience the highest levels of burnout. Despite elevated levels of workplace stress, teachers are expected to motivate and inspire students to bolster learning and behavior. However, when the daily job demands and frustration levels become too much, and the emotional labor exceeds what the teacher can handle, teachers are more likely to leave the profession (Billingsley & Bettini, 2017).

School leaders are in a prominent position to influence others by developing a vision that focuses and motivates collective action by followers (Burke, 2014). Principal leadership can play a central role in bettering workplace conditions and school climate to improve the emotional labor teachers experience. To prevent the suppression of negative emotions and experiences, the school principal must make a deliberate effort to focus on the people in the school – the teachers and the students. Gross (2002) reveals that suppressing deleterious emotions has adverse affective, cognitive, and motivational consequences. Organizational factors can be an antecedent

to teachers' emotional labor. Administrative support can help to reduce the display of student aggression and significantly improve the school climate and the emotional demands experienced by educators.

Principals must empathetically listen to teachers' feelings and emotions. Relational trust is forged through regular social exchanges that mature when connections and expectations for others are authenticated through action (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). With an authentic intent to understand teacher experiences, staff can feel validated and legitimized. According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), relational trust will atrophy, and barriers will develop without displaying personal regard for others. Principals must acknowledge the vulnerabilities of teachers and actively listen to their concerns and experiences. If teachers perceive that leadership is not taking steps to secure a safe school or hear teacher voices, TSRs and the relationship between the teachers and principals can deteriorate and further compound the emotional demands of the job.

Yao et al. (2015) connect the importance of teacher perceptions of school climate and emotional labor strategies to prevent adverse teacher outcomes such as burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover. Principals must strive to develop a high-quality working environment where teachers feel a sense of moral duty to devote themselves to their work. Fullan (2006) reveals that moral purpose is a tremendous motivator but will not yield changes alone. Motivation and engagement can be mobilized when combined with other circumstances that improve peer and leadership support and bolsters individual identity and capacity. Pyhältö (2015) affirms that when principals provide social support to teachers who have been victimized by their students, the adverse psychosocial effects experienced by teachers are lessened. If teachers harbor negative feelings, a damaging disconnect will fester between the teacher and their working environment (Yao et al., 2015).

As principals take action to mitigate TDSA, supporting teachers and students to improve social interactions is critical. A genuine display of care and regard for the well-being of all stakeholders can be affirmed through thought and action. Santor et al. (2019) report that principals and school boards have increasingly normalized student violence in schools. School violence has been reframed as "misplaced aggression" or "part of the job." The impact of student aggression and how school leaders address TDSA echoes through the personal and professional lives of educators, students, and society (Santor et al., 2019). The prevalence of school violence has raised concerns for all school members extending the imperative to develop policies, interventions, and prevention strategies to eliminate school violence (Reddy et al., 2018; Leutner, 2023). Student aggression cannot be minimized or normalized to prepare students with EBD to become contributing community members. The emotional toll of ignored or trivialized hostility further adds to a teacher's emotional labor and erodes the development of a productive TSR (Santor et al., 2019). Educators must not be blamed or deemed responsible for student aggression. Instead, students must be supported to develop appropriate self-regulation strategies, and teachers must be provided with skills, competencies, and proactive tactics to mitigate the risk of future violence. Presenting teachers with new approaches to self-regulate their behavior and co-regulate professional interactions can help prevent TDSA and improve relationships within the school.

School climate is seen to be a precursor to emotional labor (Yao et al., 2015). Mentoring relationships and supportive interactions between principals and teachers can soften the emotional labor teachers experience to improve TSRs and student outcomes (Capp et al., 2021). Emotional communication can be an instrument of relational manipulation but can also be a vital force that drives human connections (Waldron, 2017). Human relations are at the core of every

school. When problematic relationships with students with EBD persist, work-related stress intensifies. Education is a profession built on relationship building. As positive and supportive relationships are secured, the school's working conditions, climate, and emotional workload improve. Through constructive human interaction, the emotional labor that teachers experience can, in turn, enhance school climate, classroom dynamics, TSRs, student behavior, learning outcomes, and teacher self-efficacy. Through a collective response to student aggression and securing a safe school environment, teachers and students with EBD can be supported developmentally and in wellness.

Summary

Researchers confirm that various factors can contribute to the manifestation of aggression (Leggio & Terras, 2019; Mihalas et al., 2009). The complexity and severity of emotional and behavioral challenges increase with multiple risk factors. It is not uncommon for students to internalize teacher comments of poor performance and develop damaging views about their learning ability with negative teacher feedback. According to Sprouls et al. (2015), learner motivations decline when students with EBD no longer feel a teacher's desire or commitment to facilitate student success. When hostile interactions such as aggression and disrespectful dialogue are normalized, they can transfer into the classroom and negatively affect student achievement, demeanor, self-regulation, and social interaction. Externalized behaviors instigate adversarial interactions and can result in TDSA that erodes the positive development of TSRs. On the other hand, internalized behaviors can contribute to a barrage of destructive experiences and outbursts, resulting in student aggression and maladaptive behaviors.

Positive relationships between teacher and student are a necessary component of student achievement. Optimistic and well-qualified teachers believe all students have value, can learn,

and feel the need to belong. Teacher beliefs and relationships with students are essential to the educational experience. Aggressive, disruptive conduct interrupts the development of positive TSRs and breaches classroom order. The commotions can decrease achievement for the student and classmates. Researchers have agreed that classrooms containing high proportions of disruptive, aggressive students diminish classroom learning quality, hinder student learning, and negatively affect the school environment (Santor et al., 2019). Consistent behavior management and disciplinary procedures must be implemented to offset these disruptions.

Teachers require support in dealing with students with EBD's volatile and unwanted behaviors. When aggressive behaviors transfer into the learning environment, the commotions hamper learning for the individual and others in the class. Aggressive, disruptive behaviors undermine school safety and can become a wrecking ball that inhibits student success. When feelings of school safety are shared, all students can learn better. Nurturing and motivating students with EBD to engage in a constructive and prosocial manner can be a game-changer that facilitates student success. Students with aggressive, disruptive behaviors can create a fearful climate for teachers and students, undermining student achievement and teacher efficacy.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Chapter III presents the methodological procedures undertaken for the study. The phenomenological research explored if and how educators nurture healthy relationships with students who have an emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) and who display teacher-directed aggression. Investigating and reflecting upon participants' ordinary lives and everyday experiences working with and guiding our most challenging learners offered excellent insight. The dialogue generated awareness of held attitudes, approaches, and perceptions of school leadership and teachers. The interviews provided an understanding of how the teacher-student relationship (TSR) with students with EBD influences teacher-directed student aggression (TDSA) and student and teacher outcomes. Chapter III explores the research design and central questions for the qualitative study. The setting, target sample, and instrumentation used to collect and analyze the data are discussed. The researcher's role and the study's limitations are examined, and a discussion surrounding researcher bias, ethical assurances, and limitations is provided.

Design for the Study

Phenomenological research is a process where a deeper understanding of events in people's lives can be collected (Giorgi, 2009). The design is founded on a logical approach that entailed interviewing participants to capture the essence of lived experiences. A phenomenological approach is exploratory and describes experiences with a specific phenomenon (Landrum & Garza, 2015). Creswell (2014) suggested that phenomenological research is rooted in philosophical and psychological inquiry that aims to obtain an unbiased description of experiences through a participant's lens. For the current study, a

phenomenological method was chosen to capture the essence of principals' and teachers' experiences working with students with EBD who display aggressive behaviors.

According to Weiss (1994), the interviewing process gives us access to the observations of others, a gateway that allows the researcher to learn about places, situations, and settings experienced by others. Principal and teacher participants were interviewed using open-ended questions to reveal individual experiences supporting and building relationships with students with EBD. Questions were framed with authenticity and genuine interest, enabling the researcher to discover the true essence of teacher involvement with student aggression. The interview questions were pilot tested to endorse that each inquiry worked as intended and allowed sufficient space for participants to share their stories.

Vagle (2014) outlined that a phenomenological study is an interpretive, open, flexible, and responsive inquiry method that enables researchers to settle deeply into a phenomenon and thoughtfully sit with the data to understand it better. The study attempted to discover the perceptions and perspectives of all participants. The researcher acknowledged that TDSA might affect teachers differently. Through open dialogue and discussion with participants, the inquiry found unique and distinctive experiences and identified common themes from shared circumstances (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The research attempted to understand member experiences in developing positive relationships with students with EBD who display TDSA.

A substantial amount of research has been conducted regarding the impact of disruptive behaviors in the general education (GE) classroom using quantitative analysis (Carrell et al., 2018, Kauffman et al., 2018; Trout et al., 2003). Yet, little is known about the developments and experiences of students identified with EBD (Hopman et al., 2018; Mooney et al., 2003). A quantitative approach would not fully reveal detailed insight to answer a study's research

questions and address the research purpose or problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A qualitative research design is appropriate, with limited research regarding teachers' experiences building relationships with students with EBD. As Creswell (2014) outlined, qualitative research methods are beneficial when little information exists on the topic. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher who is considered the founding father of phenomenology, suggested that "science must go beyond an exclusive focus on the physical world and take human experience into consideration with equal rigor" (Churchill & Wertz, 1985, p. 247). Negative perceptions of students with EBD may harm TSRs and present unique demands where educators require additional support. There is abundant literature substantiating the positive influences of TSRs on learners, but there is a gap in the research for students with EBD who display teacher-directed aggression. The TSR may be a critical intervention that yields positive outcomes for students with EBD. Phenomenology can uncover underlying beliefs, practices, and demeanors, contributing to understanding teachers' encounters in building rapport with students with EBD and responding to TDSA.

Research Questions

The overarching research questions relate directly to the theoretical and conceptual framework, incorporating Maslow, Starratt, and Vygotsky's philosophies. Maxwell (2013) discussed that the most crucial element of the theoretical and conceptual framework is that it informs the research design. Specifically, it helps the researcher assess and refine study goals, develop realistic and relevant research questions, select appropriate methods, and identify potential validity threats. The following research questions guided the inquiry based on the literature review and theoretical framework:

RQ1: What are teachers' lived experiences in building relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder who display teacher-directed aggression?

RQ2: What strategies and supports do teachers and administrators use to mitigate teacher-directed student aggression?

RQ3: How do teacher relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder affect school climate and the emotional labor of the profession?

Setting

The study focused on career technical secondary schools. The high schools featured in the study involved a school in Ohio, United States, School A, and a school in Ontario, Canada, School B. Each institution supports a public high school experience with an enrollment of approximately 700 students. School A serves students in their junior and senior years, and School B serves students from grades 9-12. Both schools offer a unique selection of hands-on technical programming for students interested in learning a trade, entering an apprenticeship, or pursuing a career in a specific pathway. Student programming combines academic and skills development to prepare students for the world of work and post-secondary learning. Each school serves students from the catchment area and neighboring communities from urban, suburban, and rural districts.

Career technical schools offer pathway options that reflect real-world learning and can spark intrinsic student interests. Wilkins and Bost (2014) state that personal enthusiasm and self-efficacy increase when students with EBD feel they can contribute meaningfully to their school and community. Career technical schools can become a pivotal turning point for students with EBD. Instead of bleak outcomes, new learning opportunities can present, leading to continued education, post-secondary training, and purposeful employment prospects (McKay & Ellison,

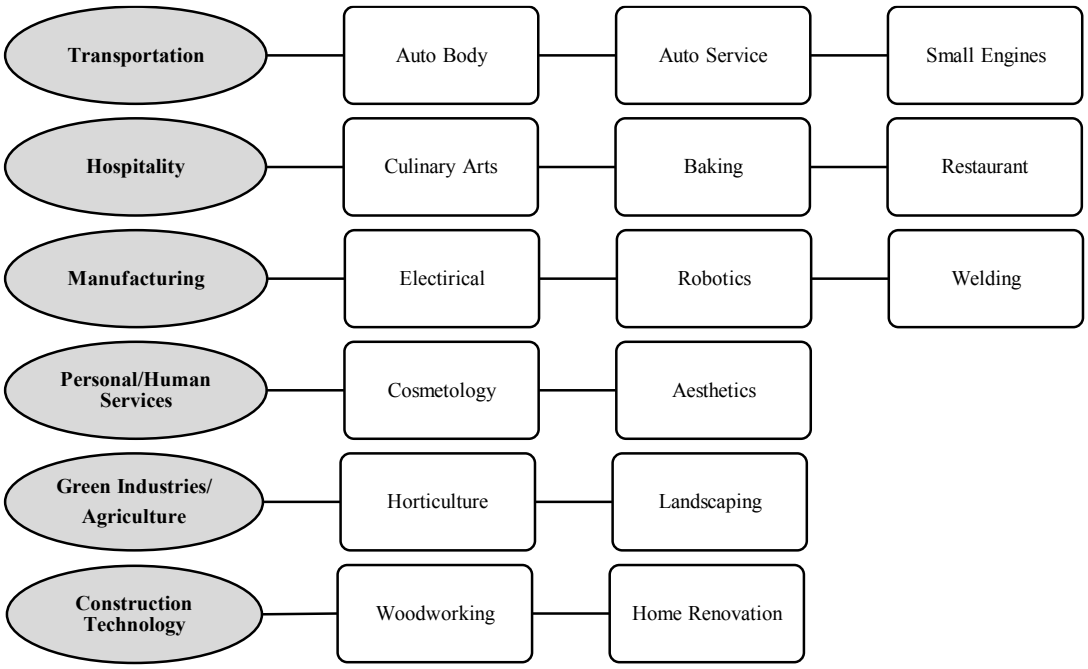
2021). Investigating how principals and teachers in career technical schools experience student aggression, build relationships, and affect achievements for students with EBD provides excellent insight and understanding.

Each career technical school offers special education programming. To meet the unique needs of a diverse student population, qualified special education teachers collaborate with teaching staff and students with special needs to support and serve the individual learning styles of each student. Many students with special needs also have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP outlines each student's educational goals, special needs, and learning strategies. Upon high school graduation, students can transition to an apprenticeship, college, university, community living, or the workplace with confidence and proficiency. Based on the student's interest and areas of strength, the pathway programming bolsters career technical skills and academic learning.

Each school is committed to making community connections that can help students with special needs transition from high school. With over ten different career technical pathway programs, students can pursue a passion that is of genuine appeal. Although not all career technical pathway courses offered at each school are the same, as depicted in Figure 3, there are many similarities. The assortment of technical programs reflects the community and industry needs and provides students with various pathway options to explore.

Figure 3

Similar Pathway Options and Course Selections at School A and School B



Poor academic outcomes, elevated dropout rates, increased disciplinary actions, and leaner disengagement can lead to poor employment and limit post-secondary options (Campbell et al., 2018). However, Wilkins and Bost (2014) report that students with EBD are more inclined to remain in school if they can participate in relevant curricula and secure close relationships with teachers who genuinely care about their success. For such students providing instruction to develop self-regulation strategies, social proficiencies, life skills, and technical competency can improve autonomy and aptitude and support students with EBD in school, career trajectories, and the adult world post-graduation. Career technical schools may be a valuable opportunity for preparing students with EBD to transition from high school with improved success. Exploring the experiences of leadership and educators with TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD in career technical schools may offer much wisdom.

Sample

Educators at career technical schools are doing hard work, trying to reach students, lift students, and prepare students to transition from high school successfully. Teachers working in a career technical setting with students with EBD deal with social and educational obstacles that negatively influence self-confidence levels and learner frustration. The emotional, physical, and mental demands of working with students with EBD can be arduous. Preparing students to become contributing members of society is a significant expectation that can bolster life outcomes. Exploring principals' and teachers' insights in building relationships with students with EBD who have been impacted by student aggression can shed light on understanding new approaches and interventions to support students with EBD.

The study was approved by both schools and Bowling Green State University's institutional review board. A letter (Appendix A) was sent to the principal introducing the researcher, the purpose of the study, participant criteria, recruitment letters, participation interest form, and the researcher's contact information. With school leadership support, the interviews were conducted at a convenient location for each participant. Potential participants received a letter via school email explaining the purpose of the research and the time commitment (Appendix B and Appendix C). The letter sent to potential participants further confirmed processes and confidentiality. Lichtman (2013) states that individuals participating in a study should have a reasonable expectation that they will be informed of the nature of the research and can choose to participate. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) echo the same notion adding that the data collected should not be able to be traced back to specific individuals.

The targeted population involved a school principal and five teachers working with students with EBD at one career technical school in each district. Using a purposive sampling

strategy, the environment and persons selected to participate in the study were deliberate. As Palys (2008) explains, purposive sampling ensures that all participants in the study are appropriate and aligned with the research questions and goals.

To gain an enhanced perspective, the researcher wanted to explore if students with EBD present different behaviors, attitudes, and engagement levels in content classes compared to career technical classes. The researcher recruited career technical, special education, and content teachers from each school. The selection of teachers supported maximum variation sampling and offered different experiences with students with EBD based on teaching area.

The criteria for teacher participant selection were (1) three or more years of teaching experience; (2) more than two years of experience working with students with EBD, and (3) experiences of student aggression toward the teacher. The selection criteria ensured that teachers could speak to the phenomenon of interest and enhanced the data collected to answer the research questions. The administrative participants included the school principal and the supervisor of student services. The leader participants had more than one year of experience in their leadership position. With familiarity in disciplining students with EBD and responding to TDSA, the school leaders could address how the leadership team supports teachers and students to mitigate TDSA.

A participation interest form (Appendix G) was sent electronically to all prospective participants, requesting their participation in a study to explore the lived experiences of school leadership and teachers affected by TDSA. Selecting teachers who had experienced aggressive behavior by a student with EBD ensured that participants could speak to the research questions during the interview process. Participants received an informed consent form (Appendix F) that presented an overview of the study and outlined research goals, procedures and predicted

timelines. The document also introduced the researcher and affirmed the commitment to upholding participant confidentiality. After receiving the completed IRB permission forms, the data collection commenced through in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Teachers' experiences were the predominant focus of the study. There is a lack of research on teachers' perceptions and experiences of TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. Exploring what teachers are experiencing in the classrooms was a fundamental starting point for collecting data on this phenomenon and, in turn, can inform leadership.

Maxwell (2013) asserts at least five achievable goals for purposive sampling. The first goal is to achieve representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities. Securing a principal and five teacher participants from two career technical high schools who experienced student aggression fulfilled Maxwell's initial goal of purposeful sampling. The second goal is to capture heterogeneity in the population adequately. Guba and Lincoln (1989) indicate that "maximum sampling" ensures that the dimensions of variations are defined in the population. The researcher secured heterogeneity by selecting teachers with various teaching experiences in years, grades, and subject areas. Participants invited to participate in the study ranged in age, had different years of teaching experience, and represented both the male and female population. The researcher sought to recruit a diverse group of participants. According to Maxwell (2013), the third goal in qualitative research is to deliberately select individuals who will test the presented theories. The researcher aimed to understand if and how educators develop relationships with behavioral students and if and how a TSR affects student learning, engagement, self-regulation, and TDSA.

The fourth goal of purposive sampling is developing a rationale for differences between settings or individuals. The research involved participants from two schools in different countries delivering similar programming to students with EBD. Since the study involves a smaller number of participants, Maxwell (2013) asserts that focusing on comparisons can skew the analysis of differences and neglect the essence of the research. TDSA is a problem affecting high schools in Canada and the United States. Data collection from each school allowed the researcher to determine if similar themes existed without making contrasts but to develop a broader perspective. As Maxwell (2013) outlined, the fifth goal of purposive sampling entails selecting participants with whom the researcher can establish the most productive relationships. Given the researcher's trusting relationship with many teacher participants, the researcher was optimistic that teachers would be enthusiastic about providing rich descriptive details about their work, experiences, and beliefs. The approach may be considered convenience sampling. However, Maxwell (2013) argues that it is a form of purposive selection to provide the best data for the study.

Researcher Positionality

Given the researcher's experiences as an educator and someone who has experienced TDSA, the researcher incorporated an autoethnographic component into the study. Accordingly, a first-person narrative will continue to be used for the duration of the chapter.

My compassion for students with EBD and teachers working with students with EBD originates from my experiences as a teacher working in a Canadian school. Part of my rationale for including the career technical context in my study is because it is personally significant. I have found that by grade nine, many students with EBD are frustrated with the system, wary of teachers, and unmotivated to engage in the core curriculum. Research reveals that when lessons

are personally meaningful, learner motivation and knowledge acquisition can improve (Wilkins & Bost, 2014). As students apply the learning through hands-on interactions, cognitive and skills development occurs, and students can begin to conceptualize essential concepts. By making curricular connections to real-world applications and career explorations, students with EBD may become increasingly interested to learn.

If students with EBD experience success and receive positive returns and feedback, teachers might be able to make connections that nurture and develop the TSR. It can be a turning point for students with EBD. Affirmative experiences can help students with EBD cultivate a sense of who they are and what they can do. The TSR can be a means to convey that the student is cared for and part of the learning community. Many students with EBD do not have hope in the school system, and the continuum of failures and marginalizing experiences fuels the self-fulfilling prophecy of adverse outcomes. The emotional work teachers must engage in to realize a shift in attitude and buy-in is integral to supporting students with EBD (Wilkins & Bost, 2014). Making connections and building relationships takes time but can be starting point to mitigate student aggression and holistically support a student with EBD.

Social constructivists believe that individuals seek to understand the world they live and work. The study aligns most appropriately with the constructivist paradigm, and the knowledge can help bridge the gap between the mind and what is. TDSA is increasing in schools and may contribute to normalizing aggressive behaviors. Yet, society expects schools to be safe spaces for facilitating productive learning and development. As Gilmour et al. (2021) outlined, violent behaviors displayed through TDSA can influence teacher burnout, injury, and job dissatisfaction. Educators are enormous resources and can provide great insight. Listening to teachers' experiences working with students with EBD allows others to understand TDSA better and add

to the existing body of knowledge. The research can help school leaders to ensure that teachers and students have the appropriate support to improve wellness and sustain success.

I recognize that my experiences will shape my interpretations and influence the study. Keeping an open mind and a self-reflective narrative throughout the research process helped me detect my preconceived partialities and avoid bias. I sought to gather information from the interviewee without revealing my perspective (bracketing). As informed by Leedy and Ormrod (2019), background characteristics and my experiences can shape participant relationships and views regarding the research topic.

My personal experiences and the relevant literature regarding students with EBD and student aggression helped me to develop the interview questions and understand the complexities of building relationships with students with EBD. As Churchill and Wertz (1985) outlined, an intuitive connection must exist between the study and the researcher to engage in phenomenological research. As an educator for over twenty years, I have been personally affected and involved with TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. To physically recover from one incident, I underwent two surgeries. Principal leadership can support teachers and students in healing and preventing student aggression. I have experienced various forms of student aggression and de-escalated many hostile teacher-student interactions. Managing verbal and physical aggression and adverse behaviors is an ongoing practice when working with students with EBD.

Many students with EBD come from challenging backgrounds and have likely endured various forms of marginalization and school frustration. Throughout my practice, I strive to begin every day with a fresh start enhancing my connections with students that will nurture a supportive rapport. It is a learning process; it is not a sprint. It takes time. When working with

students who manifest aggressive behaviors, I have found that in building the relationship, students begin to move closer to me and engage in academic learning and social development.

Relationship building with students with EBD can be challenging. Still, from my experience, the TSR is critical to undergird my professional conduct, and I believe it can influence where the school goes as a system. I remain open-minded and willing to learn from my experiences. Despite the challenges, I find promise in my efforts and actions. Students with EBD are bright, and they are survivors. Many students with EBD have an edge that has protected them in difficult life situations. However, learning about the student can help remove the protective layers and allow a trusting relationship to evolve. "Only when such personal access has been facilitated can the researcher begin to acquaint himself or herself with the essence of the event" (Churchill and Wertz, 1985, p. 252). I continue to work as a career technical and special education teacher, working with students with EBD; hence I have a natural connection to the phenomenon being studied.

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) indicate that impartiality can be very difficult for researchers who have personally experienced the phenomenon being studied. I strived to suspend preconceived notions or personal experiences that would inadvertently influence participant perspectives throughout the data-collection process. I purposefully set aside preconceived knowledge or everyday beliefs that I thought might be used to explain the investigated phenomena. Withholding personal details regarding the researcher's involvement with a phenomenon is called bracketing or epoché. The interview allowed me to listen to and record the participant's descriptions and experiences in a naïve manner. By bracketing, I gained a deeper understanding of the participant's typical experiences in building relationships with students who display teacher-directed aggression.

Autoethnography

Krizek (2003) maintains that personal experiences and autoethnography are best used to "illuminate the reader's understanding of the cultural event, place or practice" (p. 149). As part of the data analysis and effort to minimize bias, I incorporated an autoethnographic component into the study. Autoethnography enabled me to investigate personal perspectives, beliefs, and practices (Ellis et al., 2011; Muncy, 2010). I amassed my personal experiences and responses to the teacher interview questions as detailed in my researcher's journal with the data generated from participant interviews and reflective memos. The collected data were analyzed, and I produced accessible texts relevant to the study. I created thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experiences with the phenomenon. As accounts and experiences from the interview questions and self-inquiry overlapped, patterns and processes were analyzed. I considered similar and opposing epiphanies from my background and the experiences shared with me by participants during the interviews.

Data Collection

Multiple tools can be used to generate data in a phenomenological framework, including interviews, observations, and surveys. Since phenomenological methods are nonprescriptive, the researcher must reflect deeply on what is captured in the text and the data. Data was gathered through recorded in-depth interviews and reflections that explored principal and teacher-lived experiences with TDSA and educating students with EBD. The data collection and analysis were dense and rich and needed "winnowed" (Guest et al., 2012). I winnowed the data, focusing on some data points and disregarding other parts. Statements were used to develop meaning clusters and organized into themes. Bracketing activities were reflected and documented in reflective memos to capture researcher perceptions and feelings. Creswell (2012) describes "bracketing" as

identifying and setting aside personal experiences and prejudices in a study. I used the bracketing strategy throughout the phenomenological research process to help eliminate personal partiality.

The Irving Seidman (2013) three-interview series is a well-known model for phenomenological research. The process involves conducting three separate interviews with each participant. In the first interview, the researcher attempts to understand the participant's background experiences within the context of the explored phenomenon. The second interview encourages participants to reconstruct specific details about their experiences within the research context. During the third interview, participants are prompted to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) confirm that in the third interview, the researcher and participant can make connections between aspects and contexts of the participant's personal and professional lives and the research topic. The Irving Seidman (2013) three-interview series was modified for the present study and entailed two interviews and researcher journaling.

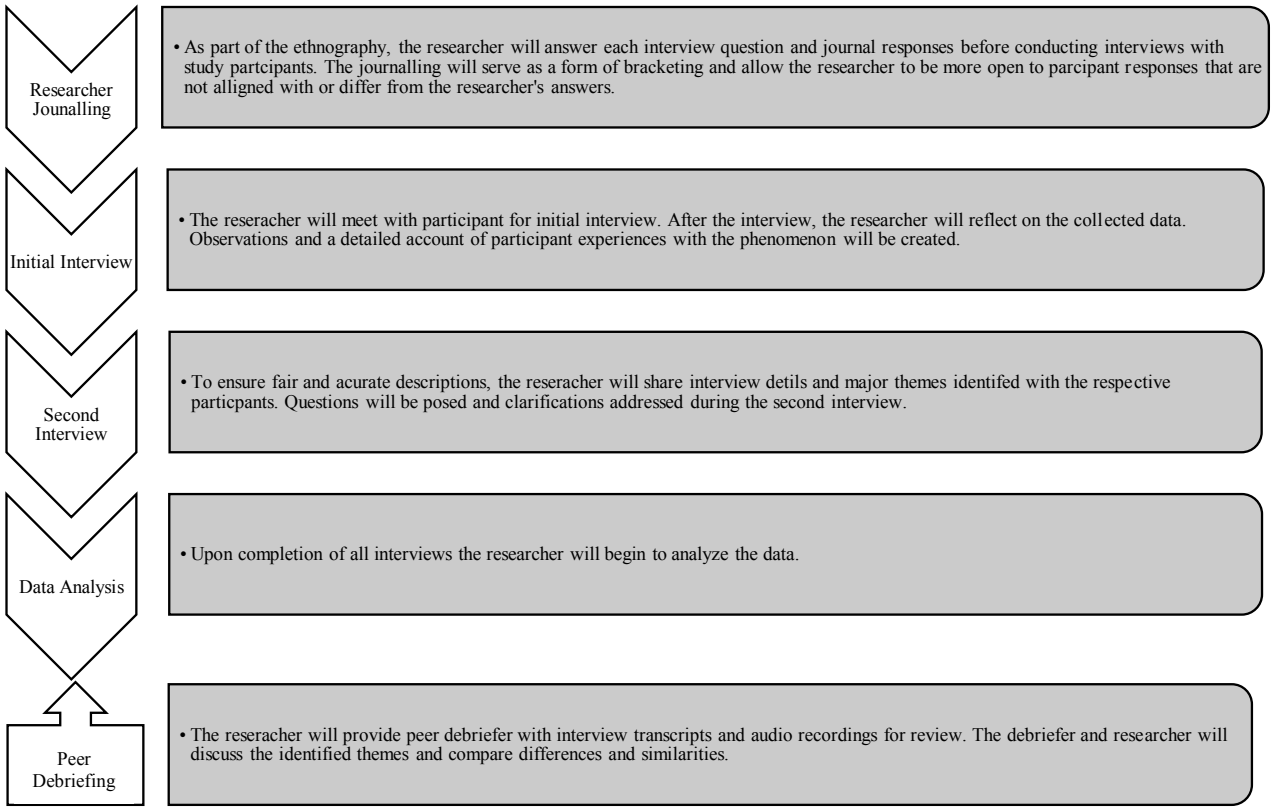
Teachers from other schools were involved in piloting the interview questions. The piloting process offered valuable feedback regarding the interview questions using a constructivist approach. Screening the interview questions bolstered the quality of the research. The method also helped ensure that questions were relevant to the study, easy to understand and addressed the research questions. I fortified content validity through piloting and confirmed participants had sufficient space to share their perspectives and stories. A series of preset questions guided the conversation for the first interview. The second interview provided an opportunity to clarify and verify the collected data from each participant.

Maxwell (2013) emphasizes that incorporating a structured approach can safeguard comparability across participants, times, and settings. The methods and questions were preset but remained flexible to address unforeseen or developing insights that required a different research

question, additional participant selection, or further data analysis. Each interview was audio recorded to ensure accurate data collection. The sequence of activities that I followed for the data collection process is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Data Collection Flowchart



Researcher Journaling Responses

The preset interview questions for teacher interviews guided narrating my experiences with school leadership, TDSA, and building relationships with students with EBD. I documented my responses to each interview question before conducting interviews with participants in my research journal. By answering each question in advance, I identified potential areas of personal bias and set aside my subjective views through bracketing. The bracketing process assisted in

preventing my presumptions from tainting the research. By recognizing my partiality, I could detach my experiences from the participants and consequently be more open to participant responses that differed from mine.

Audio Recording

All interviews were audio recorded to ensure that responses were accurately documented and transcribed verbatim before analysis and coding. Recordings were also time and date-stamped. The audio recording commenced after reviewing the informed consent at the beginning of each interview. The recording stopped at the end of the participant's response to the final prompt.

Initial Semi-Structured Interview

A qualitative inquiry captured the lived experiences and generated awareness of participant perspectives in working with students with EBD. A fundamental goal of in-depth interviewing is understanding the participant's lived experiences. As I engaged in open and dialogic conversations, information about how principals and teachers made meaning of their lived experiences was gathered. Rich dialogue and honest conversations between the researcher and participants provided data to understand the phenomenon better (Seidman, 2013). Open-ended questioning ensured that the interview was interactional and conversational. The preliminary interview with each participant lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face at a convenient location for the member. The developed interview questions were congruent with the study's research questions which explored leadership and teacher perspectives with TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD (Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2

Principal Interview Questions and the Relationship to Research Questions

Principal Interview Questions	RQ
1. **Q:** When did you decide to become a principal?	Background
2. **Q:** In your assessment, how does a career tech school experience for students with EBD differ from a traditional school? What is special or unique about a career tech school?	Background
3. **Q:** How do the school leaders support staff and students with EBD to build teacher-student relationships?	RQ2
4. **Q:** How do you build relationships with staff and students with EBD who display teacher-directed aggression?	RQ2
5. **Q:** What would you say are the fundamentals of building a relationship with your staff and students with EBD who display TDSA	RQ1
6. **Q:** To create a safe school for teachers and students, what strategies do you use to address student aggression?	RQ2
7. **Q:** In your opinion, how do relationships with students with EBD influence school climate?	RQ1
8. **Q:** What experiences have you had in your leadership role at XXXX with TDSA?	RQ1
9. **Q:** How do you handle a situation when a student with EBD demonstrates aggression towards you or a teacher? How do you reinforce the school rules, behavioral expectations, and discipline?	RQ1
10. **Q:** What systems are in place to manage teacher reports of TDSA?	RQ2
11. **Q:** How have your leadership skills evolved in dealing with TDSA and working with teachers and students with EBD?	RQ2
12. **Q:** To what extent do you allow teachers or students to be part of the resolution and healing process after an episode of aggression?	RQ3
13. **Q:** From your experiences, do you think there is a connection between maintaining high-performance standards and aggressive behavior?	RQ1
14. **Q:** Do you see a link between school climate and the emotional demands of teachers and students with EBD?	RQ3
15. **Q:** Has supporting staff and students to build relationships and prevent aggressive behaviors affected the emotional demands of the job for you?	RQ3
16. **Q:** How have the emotional demands of being a principal positively affected you as a leader and personally?	RQ3

Table 3

Teacher Interview Questions and the Relationship to Research Questions

Teacher Interview Questions	**RQ**
1. **Q:** Please tell me about yourself and how or when you decided to become a teacher.	Background
2. **Q:** Do you feel your qualifications prepared you to work well with this group of students?	Background
3. **Q:** What brought you to a career technical school to work with students with EBD?	RQ1
4. How does a career tech school experience for students with EBD differ from a traditional school?	RQ1
5. **Q:** Can you share some experiences and strategies you use to build relationships with students with EBD? How do you learn about the student in your classroom, their background, and their story?	RQ2
6. **Q:** Based on your experiences, what are the key ingredients to building a teacher-student relationship with students with EBD? Do you think students value the relationship?	RQ2
7. **Q:** Who in the school supports you in building relationships with students with EBD?	RQ2
8. **Q:** In your opinion, how does the teacher-student relationship influence the school climate?	RQ3
9. **Q:** Do you see a link between the school climate and the emotional demands of the job?	RQ3
10. **Q:** Can you tell me what experiences you have had with TDSA?	RQ1
11. **Q:** How do you address student aggression? What strategies do you use when you see it?	RQ1
12. **Q:** How do you create a safe space for your students? Is there something that you do routinely to develop that classroom climate?	RQ1
13. **Q:** What systems are in place for reporting TDSA?	RQ2
14. **Q:** How have your skills and proficiencies in dealing with student aggression and working with students with EBD evolved during your career?	RQ1
15. **Q:** How do you reset, start over, or adjust after an aggressive incident with a student with EBD? What does this look like for you – how do you reset, and is the student involved in that process?	RQ3
16. **Q:** In your experience, how does maintaining high-performance standards influence aggressive behavior? Do the policies and procedures support high-performance standards and impact the school community	RQ2
17. **Q:** How have your experiences with TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD affected the emotional demands of the job?	RQ3
18. **Q:** Can you tell me how the emotional demands have been positive and how they have affected you as a teacher?	RQ3

The two-part interview was the primary data source and was scheduled with participants in March and April of 2023. Unstructured interviews are the most popular interview method in phenomenological research (Vagle, 2014). The research questions guided the interview process, and with probing tactics, I endeavored to open up and maximize data collection (Vagle, 2014). At the beginning of the meeting, I recapped the purpose and rationale for the study. School and district permission was also affirmed to negate any confusion or apprehension about participating in the study. Reviewing study goals at the beginning of the interview provided participants with context and secured motivation to participate. I asserted that participation would contribute to the limited body of knowledge and potentially support school leadership, teachers working with students with EBD, and students with EBD. The study aimed to enrich the literature surrounding teacher experiences in building relationships with students.

Participants were communicative and transparent during interviews and knew that conversations were confidential. As Creswell (2014) recommended, in addition to gaining verbal consent at the beginning of each interview, I inquired if the participant had any questions regarding the study or procedures. Commencing the interaction with an informal exchange facilitated a connection between the researcher and the participant. The relaxed conversations provided context about the participant's personal and professional life. The interview commenced with questions to collect details about the participants teaching history, interests, and general life experiences. Participants were encouraged to provide background information regarding career experiences and trajectories.

The interviews were the vehicle to unveil the participant's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings regarding TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. As Leedy and Ormrod (2019) outlined, the researcher must maintain rapport and feelings of trust, closeness, and care

with the participant to obtain member insight. I used pre-established questions to begin the dialogue with all contributors to maintain consistency and focus. Participants were asked to elaborate on their ideas and meaning to help me enter the inner world of each participant and understand their perspectives and experiences (Johnson and Christensen, 2017). During the conversations, I used inquiry techniques such as "Please tell me more about that, "Go on," or "Please explain what you mean" (Shank, 2006; Vagle, 2014). As the participants expounded upon their stories, I was able to deepen the data collection. A myriad of school achievements and challenges were revealed by reflecting on teaching experiences, practices, philosophies, and trajectories.

Phenomenological research analyzes significant statements from which meaning is generated. Moustakas (1994) refers to the development as an "essence description." Creswell (2013) suggests that the impact of the "essence description" allows the researcher to combine data into five to seven smaller themes. Hand-written notes were recorded as reflective memos and served as written documentation. The interview transcripts provided the bulk of data used for analysis and interpretation. I identified specific comments and ideas relevant to the topic to understand the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. The participant's statements developed clusters of meaning and were organized into particular themes.

The interviewing process is a means to engage with participants to generate knowledge for the benefit of participants and researchers (Maxwell, 2013; Tolman & Brydon-Miller, 2001). The initial interview protocol (Appendix D and E) served as a tool to collect data; however, I was flexible with the structure to allow participants to elaborate and provide additional details relevant to the investigation. The interview questions maintained interviewing consistency; however, based on participants' experiences, some variation in questioning occurred.

I concluded the interview by asking if the participant had anything further to add. At the end of the interview, I stopped recording. The study illuminated teacher rapport-building experiences with students with EBD and developed a better understanding of the success, challenges, and outcomes. Administrators and teachers are paramount in creating and supporting a safe space for all students (Browne, 2013). The interview questions elicited principal and teacher strategies to achieve these outcomes. The questions uncovered how relationships influence aggression and outcomes for students with EBD and if and how school climate and the emotional labor of the profession are affected. The conversation and shared experiences revealed the layers and levels involved in connecting with students with EBD. According to Hopman et al. (2018), relationships can serve as a means to attain a safe learning environment and support prosocial and academic behavior.

Reflective Memos

I incorporated my reflective memos initiated from the first interview to member-check, validate, and verify the data collected from the initial interview. The reflective memos enhanced the study's qualitative credibility and ensured the participants' experiences were captured accurately. The memos recorded any ideas or questions arising from the preliminary interview. I documented bracketing activities to explore personal assumptions and potential biases. I articulated predispositions that may have influenced some participants' responses consistent with phenomenological research methods. Bracketing and making notes about the content gathered from the interviews and feelings regarding the process helped me to secure a reflective phenomenological mindset. With a contemplative approach, I analyzed the data, identified emerging themes, and provided a frame of reference using the member reflections for the follow-up interview.

Second Interview

Participants were given their transcripts to read before the second interview. During the follow-up meeting, the participant and I reviewed the transcript and confirmed that the shared stories from the first interview were accurately documented. Discussing member reflections validated and checked that I correctly captured and recorded the teacher's experiences. The second interview allowed participants to consider and deliberate their initial responses from the first interview. My notes facilitated a deeper dive into the lived experiences of each participant in developing a rapport with students with EBD. The second interview took approximately fifteen minutes to conduct. No additional interview questions were posed during the second interview. The second interview served as a means to member-check and clarify participant responses collected from the initial interview. The audio recording from the discussion was transcribed and combined with the data from the first interview. I closed the interview by asking if the participant wanted to add anything further. At the end of the interview, I stopped recording and thanked the participant for their involvement and candid conversations.

Data Analysis

Organization and data preparation for analysis was conducted from the transcripts of the recorded interviews and reflective memos. The analysis involved sorting the data into segments or paragraphs using the actual language used by participants. The data was sorted into codes based on the information gathered. As Creswell (2012) outlined, hand coding is suitable for less than 500 pages of data. I read through the data to compile an overview and documented details collected from the interviews. During the initial reading, I acquired general ideas to describe the tone of what the participants shared. I reflected upon the shared stories and discoveries and began the examination process. I engaged in creative and reflective activities to help further

interpret participant experiences. Hand coding could have been appropriate for this study; however, I used Delve, a computer program to help analyze the data.

The coding process commenced from the transcripts and journals. Coding is the method in which to organize and sort the data. A code in qualitative inquiry is a word or short phrase that assigns a salient, essence-capturing summation of language data. In vivo is a common term used for this form of coding and is also referred to as verbatim or literal coding, where the actual language of the participants is used (Creswell, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). The root meaning of "in vivo" is "in that which is alive," and it is an appropriate approach to analyze data that highlights and credits the participants' voices (Saldaña, 2016). The coding process involved organizing the data by bracketing common texts and representing each segment with a category title (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The coding evolved based on the emerging information collected and the use of predetermined codes grounded in the theories supporting the research. Using the various codes, I generated themes and subthemes. The thematic framework allowed me to make sense of the data and determine how it answered the research questions for the study.

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) emphasize that collected personal data must be kept confidential and the individual identity of all participants concealed. The data was coded to secure participant privacy by assigning pseudonyms for the participants and institutions. Once participant confidentiality and the coding of transcripts were completed, debriefers had access to Delve to investigate how the data was themed and coded. The peer debriefers were provided with the study's research questions and identified themes and sub-themes to support their analysis. Each peer debriefer reviewed transcripts from two participants and provided feedback. The peer debriefing involved deep conversations with the researcher to increase the validity of the findings and avoid researcher bias. Discussions with peer debriefers helped strengthen the study

and ensure that participants' perspectives were accurately considered, captured, and coded. The feedback from the peer debriefers helped the researcher extract the lived experiences from the data and identify a comprehensive essence or phenomenological model. From the collected data, I aimed to meet various standards that contributed to upholding research quality and reliability (Table 4).

Table 4

Standards of Collected Data

Indicators	Criteria
Strength	The text must hold a convincing capacity that represents the core intention of the understanding and meanings expressed by the research participants through their stories.
Richness	The aesthetic text quality articulates and narrates the meanings as perceived by the participants.
Depth	The research text penetrates and expresses the best of the participant's intentions.
Analytical rigor	The researcher pays attention to every case that either confirms or disconfirms the theme
Open-mindedness	Willing to modify hypotheses and interpretations when newly acquired data conflict with previously collected data
Persuasive account	Captures participant experiences and engagingly details them for the reader.

Creswell (2014) outlines seven steps in the analysis of data for phenomenological research: 1) Organize and prepare the data for analysis, 2) Read through all of the data, 3) Code the data, 4) Describe and identify themes, 5) Make the connections to advance descriptions and themes for the qualitative narrative, 6) Interpret the findings, and 7) confirm validity and accuracy. I honored all seven steps in the data analysis process and sought support from the methodological expert in qualitative research and interpretive phenomenology. The interpretive phenomenological analysis provided a detailed examination of an individual's lived experiences.

I explored and gained meaning from how participants viewed their personal and social worlds from shared experiences.

In step 1, the recordings gathered from two sets of data from each interview were synthesized to explore the lived experiences and the essence of the phenomenon being studied. The collected data was accurately transcribed, and I looked for emerging typologies. In step 2, I read and re-read interview transcripts and reflected upon the meaning of the participants' lived experiences. I considered the possible biases I held in an attempt to understand the participants' stories accurately. Once typologies were determined, I examined transcripts and coded the data line-by-line.

I assigned similar codes when appropriate and linked them to a typology. In step 3, I coded, re-read, and examined the data to identify patterns, themes, commonalities, and differences to ensure accurate data interpretation and analysis. In phenomenological research, significant statements will be analyzed to generate meaning units to develop an essence description (Moustakas, 1994). In step 4, I reflected on the essential themes through the art of reading, reflective writing, and interpretation. The contemplative practice upheld the rigorous application of phenomenology (van Manen, 1997). In step 5, I focused on identifying the repetitive and overlapping statements connecting the descriptions and themes to advance the narrative for the study. The explanations and themes were delineated, and statements were clustered into similar meaning units using the participant's words. I grouped the meanings to address the research phenomenon. In step 6, I identified the essence with a description of the underlying structures of the phenomenon. Based on the volume of data, a qualitative software program was employed for coding the data. Using Creswell's (2014) 7-step analysis process and rigorous examination of the data that captured the first-hand experiences as detailed by the

participants, I uncovered the study's essence. In the constructivist paradigm, the nature of knowledge involves interpretations from multiple intangible mental productions that are both social and experiential. Guba and Lincoln (1994) affirm that the realities that the researcher captures may be conflicting. Although I sought consensus through the analysis, I remained open to new interpretations.

Validity and Accuracy

In qualitative research, validity and accuracy refer to the measures the researcher takes to ensure correct findings and secure a consistent approach (Gibbs, 2007). The data analysis methods operationalized for the study were compatible with Creswell's (2014) and Maxwell's (2013) approaches to improve the credibility of the research and eliminate validity threats. The methods included triangulation, thick description, prolonged time in the field, respondent validation, descriptive data examination, researcher bias clarification, and peer debriefing.

Triangulation: Triangulation involves using a combination of methods to collect data. Using multiple data sources, I understood the intricacies of building TSRs with students with EBD and the impact of TDSA better. The data sources for the study included interview transcripts and reflective memos.

Thick description: The descriptions of the research findings were rich and detailed to ensure readers could fully share the experience. I included direct quotations from participants to show trustworthiness in my interpretations and reported my findings using comprehensive explanations to convey the context to the reader. Detailed descriptions of the setting and themes garnered from participant perspectives illuminated the findings and contributed to the validity of the results (Creswell, 2014).

Prolonged time in the field: I conducted two site visits for the face-to-face interviews. With a second interview, I confirmed a precise understanding of the participant's experiences and shared stories obtained during the preliminary interview. Scholars affirm that the more involved a researcher is with participants in their setting, the more accurate and valid the findings are (Becker & Geer, 1957; Creswell, 2014).

Reflective Memos: I used reflective memos to enhance the study's qualitative credibility to ensure an accurate account of participant experiences. The deliberative process allowed deeper and richer analysis through collaborative and reflexive elaboration between the researcher and participants (Tracy, 2010). According to Maxwell (2013), respondent validation is an optimal practice to prevent misinterpretation of participants' insight and shared stories.

Examining discrepant data: Data collected that did not align with identified themes was not ignored or dismissed. Maxwell (2013) sustains that negative cases and discrepant data support the rationale for validity testing in qualitative research. A thorough examination of supporting and disconfirming evidence helped identify bias and assumptions and check for methodological weaknesses. I reviewed the information that did not coalesce with identified themes, adding credibility to the research. Creswell (2014) states that presenting information that contradicts theme descriptions will make the account more realistic and valid.

Clarifying researcher bias: A researcher narrative of self-reflection identified personal preconceived biases from my experiences and insights as an educator as they relate to the study. By conducting semi-formal interviews with other educators, I acquired participant insights that garnered unique interpretations based on personal experiences of student aggression. Crotty (2015) poses that people engage with their world and make sense of it based on social and prior perspectives. Meaning can thereby be harvested from these various encounters.

Peer debriefing: I worked closely with the phenomenological methodologist and two peer debriefers. The debriefers are certified teachers and educational leaders trained in human subject research. The peer debriefers reviewed the transcripts and provided me with their feedback regarding the data summary and analysis (Appendix H).

Limitations

As Creswell (2012) outlined, identifying the limitations of a study is helpful in determining generalizability and for future research. The study aspired to find the essence of teachers' lived experiences working with students with EBD and the strategies and supports administrators use to mitigate teacher-directed student aggression at a career technical high in Ohio and Ontario. The study is limited to a small population of educators within two school districts. Due to purposive sampling and small sample size, the findings did not reflect the general population's perceptions. The personal experiences relating to TSRs were the underlying theme and focus of the study, creating another limitation. The degree and frequency of dealing with student violence and building rapport may create teacher bias and may or may not present limitations in the scope and knowledge of TDSA by students with EBD. Although these limitations represent a weakness in the study, student diversity, the student identification process, and special education programming is similar in each country.

Each school faces unique challenges and uncertainties when working with students with EBD. The narrative from the interviews determined themes and variances between principal and teacher perspectives surrounding TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. The study could be repeated with student participants identified with EBD to capture the insights from a different perspective. The findings could influence future intervention practice and

professional development research to bolster administrative leadership strategies that support and develop teachers and students with EBD.

Bias and Ethical Assurances

Maxwell (2013) confirms that research relationships are complex and changing. Incorporating mindful and genuine approaches helped to secure accurate and dependable data. A good interviewer must be supportive and open to listening to stories and experiences with sincere concern and validation. Creating a comfortable space helped participants to feel more relaxed and to speak candidly about their views, values, and experiences. Teaching is a challenging profession that is under constant scrutiny. I ensured that participants understood that the study's goal was not to investigate teachers' pedagogical abilities or classroom management style but rather their experience in building relationships with students with EBD and TDSA.

The Belmont Report identifies fundamental ethical principles for conducting research that involves human participants. The three basic principles of clinical trials include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (The Belmont Report 1974). The American Educational Research Association's (AERA, 2011) code of ethics guides educational research. The principles include professional competence, integrity, scholarly responsibility, respect for people's rights, and social responsibility. Approval from the IRB and the school sites was confirmed before collecting data from human participants. Privacy and confidentiality were preserved by de-identifying the data after the collection was obtained. Participants were assured that their names would remain confidential and that participation in the study was voluntary. As the Belmont Report (1974) outlined, informed consent demands that the conditions to participate in the study are free of coercion. The IRB consent forms were written in friendly and clear language to ensure comprehension and readability. Ethical principles and guidelines were observed

throughout the study. I maintained professional integrity, provided accurate data analysis, and developed an honest description of synthesized data.

Summary

In Chapter III, I outlined the study design, the sample population, and the data collection and analysis procedures. Limitations, researcher positionality, bias, and ethical assurances were discussed, in addition to validity and accuracy and the theories that steered the research methodologies. The conceptual framework facilitated an exploratory dive into principals' and teachers' lived experiences with TDSA. The study used in-depth interviews to gather data about participants' lived experiences. With the collected data, I used an inductive and deductive coding process to examine and triangulate the data. Qualitative research permits an iterative process where the data drives the study. I developed descriptive themes and essences of the phenomenon using rigorous methods outlined by Creswell (2014) and Maxwell (2013). The interactions between the investigator and participants allowed new knowledge to be generated in a constructivist paradigm. The conversations can shape meaning for all stakeholders to support advocacy and activism and better understand TDSA, an understudied area of research.

Chapter IV presents the findings, including details surrounding principal and teacher experiences, supporting and constructing relationships with students who display teacher-directed aggression. I thoroughly describe the participant's experiences with the phenomenon and explain the themes that address each research question. The methodology enables the researcher to discover if and how educators promote and build healthy relationships with students with EBD to prevent harmful interactions.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

Introduction

This phenomenological study aimed to 1) explore teacher perceptions of those who have experienced teacher-directed student aggression (TDSA) by students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) and 2) investigate how teacher relationships affect student outcomes, school climate, and the emotional demands of the profession at two career technical schools. In addition, the study was designed to explore how principals view their efficacy in supporting teachers and students with EBD to mitigate TDSA. This chapter outlines the findings from my autoethnography captured in my self-inquiry and twelve interviews with experienced educators who work with and serve students with EBD.

I used three philosophies to conceptualize the research. The foundational theories from Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of human needs, Starratt's (1991) ethical leadership, and Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism are the roots of the study. Integrating the three philosophies into one frame helped facilitate a deeper exploration into the motivations and value of building relationships with students with EBD who display teacher-directed aggression. The overlay of concepts creates a valuable framework that can contribute to understanding the significance of the TSR and the strategies to eliminate TDSA.

Through the Maslow, Starratt, and Vygotsky kaleidoscope, this study sought to comprehend the lived experiences of principals and teachers working with students with EBD. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are teachers' lived experiences in building relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder who display teacher-directed aggression?

RQ2: What strategies and supports do teachers and administrators use to mitigate teacher-directed student aggression?

RQ3: How do teacher relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder affect school climate and the emotional labor of the profession?

Participant Descriptions and Choice of Pseudonyms

I used purposeful sampling to recruit participants for my study. I intended to interview four teachers and one principal from each school. This selection process was appropriate and preferred, as participants could speak to their experiences of TDSA and in building a relationship with students with EBD (Maxwell, 2013). At each school, five teachers responded to my invitation. Given my timeframe, I decided to interview all the teachers who wished to participate. The principal from school A directed me to speak with the supervisor of student support systems, who is a part of the administrative team. The principal from school B suggested I connect with a vice principal. Both leadership positions respond to student aggression and work closely with teachers and students with EBD. Although the schools use different titles, the leadership roles are parallel. The school principal oversees and works closely with the supervisor of student support systems and the vice principal. The supervisor of student support systems from school A was interested and willing to participate in the study. The vice principal at school B was relatively new to the position and willing to participate; however, the vice principal felt that the principal had superior experiences and would be a more suitable participant. The principal of school B agreed to participate in the study. The leader participants do have different titles and responsibilities. However, they both have principal training and are licensed principals. For continuity purposes, I will refer to the school leaders participating in the study as principals moving forward. My role in the study was both researcher and participant. I felt that my

experiences with TDSA and building rapport with students with EBD could further contribute to the study. The Participant Interest Form (Appendix G) was given to each participant. The form allowed me to ensure that I had a diverse sample group who met participation criteria and could speak to the research topic. The demographic information collected included gender, age, teaching area, years in current position, total years of teaching, ethnicity, level of education, and a brief synopsis of the participant's experiences with student aggression.

The participants for this study included five male teachers (n = 5) and eight female teachers (n = 8). Each participant chose a pseudonym to uphold confidentiality. See Table 5.

Table 5

Participant's Pseudonym and Gender

Participant Pseudonym (n = 13)	Gender (M/F)
1. Bob	M
2. Dee	F
3. Elle	F
4. Gina	F
5. Heather	F
6. Jacqueline	F
7. Johnny	M
8. Kennedy	F
9. Liz	F
10. Paul	M
11. Principal Wally	M
12. Principal Wilbert	M
13. Lily	F

Note. M=Male, F=Female. Lily is the researcher for this study and represents the 13th participant.

The study's participant sample entailed 13 members aged 29 to 62 (M = 53 years). The age of the youngest teacher participant was an outlier in the group. Ten teachers and two principals participated in the research, and I was the thirteenth participant. The data generated from my autoethnography and the participant's shared stories sought to provide unique insights

into the experiences of TDSA, building relationships, and the demands of serving students with EBD. The years of experiences that principal and teacher participants had working with students with EBD varied from 3 to 32 years (M = 17 years). The principal participants from each school were male and had less than ten years of experience in their leadership role as school principals. The total years of practice in education for all participants ranged from 8 years to 33 years (M = 21 years). Additional demographics are exhibited in Table 6.

Table 6

Participant Demographics

Participant Characteristics	*n* = 13	%
Gender		
Male	5	39
Female	8	61
Age		
55+ years	6	46
41-55 years	6	46
25-40 years	1	8
Years in Current Position		
16+ years	7	54
10-15 years	2	15
3-9 years	4	31
Total Years Teaching		
16+ years	10	77
10-15 years	2	15
3-9 years	1	8
Content Area		
Math	1	8
Math/SPED	1	8
SPED	3	23
Career Tech	3	23
Career Tech/SPED	3	23
Leadership	2	15
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	9	69
Black	2	15
Bi-Racial	1	8
Other	1	8
Level of education		
Bachelors	7	54
Masters	6	46

Code Book

Code Book Evolution

Before collecting data at the career technical schools, I completed a self-inquiry using the teacher protocol in February 2023. The protocols helped to ensure consistency and maximize my understanding of the participant's experiences with TDSA. I audio-recorded my responses using

the Zoom platform, which offers a speech-to-text feature and then copied the Zoom manuscript into a Microsoft Word document. As I reviewed the transcript, I listened to the audio recording to ensure the responses were precisely documented and the dialogue content was accurately captured. Once the transcript was verified for correctness, I began to code the transcript with a predetermined coding schema. Code labels are created and assigned to categorize data extracts in qualitative coding. The coding process aims to secure research validity and provide a high-quality foundation for data analysis (Crosley, 2020). The initial codebook was developed using the research questions as a guideline to establish broad themes. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that developing a codebook provides reliability. I produced six codes for classifying and grouping similar data types using the deductive method. The initial codes I created aligned with my research questions and incorporated my conceptual framework of Maslow, Starratt, and Vygotsky's theories. See Table 7.

Table 7

Deductive Codes

	Initial codes
1.	Teaching Motivation
2.	Experiences in building relationships with students with EBD
3.	Strategies and supports
4.	TSR and school climate
5.	TSR and emotional demands: Positive and Negative
6.	An EBD perspective

I hand-coded the transcript from my autoethnography, assigning codes and documenting my reflective memos in the margins. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the coding method does not always involve identifying themes; it is also a process of naming and grouping similar data types to make the analysis more manageable. For exploratory research and when the topic is poorly understood, incorporating a hybrid approach with deductive and inductive methods is

suitable (Crosley, 2020). Accordingly, I used a combination of deductive and inductive approaches to analyze the initial transcript. With the inductive approach, the narrative from my self-inquiry could advance code development. Bingham and Witkowsky (2022) indicate that qualitative research is increasingly organized, rigorous, and analytically sound when the data analysis employs deductive and inductive techniques.

The inductive method involved a two-stage coding process, initial coding and line-by-line coding. The initial coding allowed me to familiarize myself with the data, identify broad themes, and understand the essence of the text. Adding to my deductive code set, I assigned eleven more codes after my initial review. However, the seventeen codes did not capture the depth of the qualitative data. Using the line-by-line approach, I developed brief descriptions of each text segment. As the coding intends to summarize responses, higher-level conceptualization or abstract interpretations are not required with line-by-line coding. The inductive approach helps to reduce the risk of researcher bias and allows for a deeper dive into the data (Crosley, 2020). I captured the text richness through line-by-line coding and generated 110 new codes. These codes were identified using text comments in Microsoft Word. Given the number of codes created with the initial transcript, I was unsatisfied with the hand-based coding approach. Consequently, I used Delve, a qualitative software program to organize and analyze the findings.

I completed the semi-structured and follow-up interviews in Ontario with five teachers and one school principal in March 2023. After each interview, I copied the transcript into Microsoft Word and reviewed each transcript while listening to the audio recording to ensure accuracy. I eliminated all identifiers before emailing the transcript back to the participants. At the follow-up meeting, I ensured participants were satisfied with the transcript. Following up with participants also provided an opportunity to clarify and confirm that the transcript reflected the

individual's shared stories and experiences with TDSA, building relationships, and working with students with EBD. Once participants verified and endorsed the transcripts, I began coding using the two-stage process using Delve software. I conducted my interviews in Ohio after coding the transcripts from Ontario. I completed the initial and follow-up interviews in Ohio in April 2023. I applied the same methodology to collect, review, and verify transcript accuracy. After member-checking with participants in Ohio, (using the same methods I employed with participants from Ontario), I continued the coding process and generated 207 codes. Extensive coding can help ensure that I captured the shared stories from the transcripts and developed a detailed understanding of the data. The line-by-line coding increased the validity of my findings and improved my coding technique (Crosley, 2020).

Code Categorization

By working with the data in various ways, patterns and consistencies developed. Similar codes with overlapping relationships were combined and organized. I compressed the number of codes and made new connections between different code groups. Going back and forth between the transcripts and the codebook was an iterative process of merging similar codes, which reduced the final code count to 119. Once all codes were nested and categorized, eight main themes emerged. While the interview questions were derived from the study's conceptual framework and research questions, the themes, sub-themes, and descriptions emerged directly from the interview transcripts and narrative summaries. To minimize reflexivity, I focused on the research data to develop explanations for all codes and themes. In the organization of codes, it became clear that the foundational theories and research questions were interconnected to the emergent themes. Linking the themes to the foundational framework and the research questions provided additional credibility as researcher bias was reduced. See Table 8.

Table 8

Linking Themes to Foundational Framework and Research Questions

Themes	RQ	Influencing Theorist(s)	Philosophy
1. Anchors to the Profession	RQ1	Maslow, Starratt, and Vygotsky	All three philosophies: refer below
2. Interactions with Students with EBD 3. Building Relationships with Students with EBD	RQ1	Maslow	Hierarchy of Human Needs (Physiological, psychological, and actualization)
4. School Supports 5. Interventions 6. Follow-up from TDSA	RQ2	Starratt	Ethical Leadership (Critique, Justice, and Care)
7. TSR and School Climate 8. Emotional Labor	RQ3	Vygotsky	Social Constructivist and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Final Codebook

The first three themes focus on topics related to participants' lived experiences of working in education with students with EBD, which relates to the first research question. The three themes: Anchors to the Profession, Interactions with Students with EBD, and Building Relationships with Students with EBD, show an array of lived experiences that result from interacting and working with this particular group of students. The next three themes focus on topics associated with efforts to respond to and mitigate TDSA. School Supports, Interventions, and Follow-up from TDSA link to research question two and flowed naturally from one theme to the next as principals and teachers strive to support students with EBD and prevent TDSA. The theme development naturally led to the last two themes, which concentrate on school and

individual wellness. The teacher-student relationship (TSR) and School Climate and Emotional Labor link to research question three and explore the positive and negative effects of TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. Questions must be asked to make adjustments and improve the outcomes for students with EBD, teachers, and principals. In so doing, all stakeholders and society at large can benefit. The themes and sub-themes generated from participant narratives are illustrated in Figure 5. The descriptions captured from participant stories are illustrated in Table 9. In the text that follows, each theme and sub-theme will be presented in full.

Figure 5

TDSA Themes

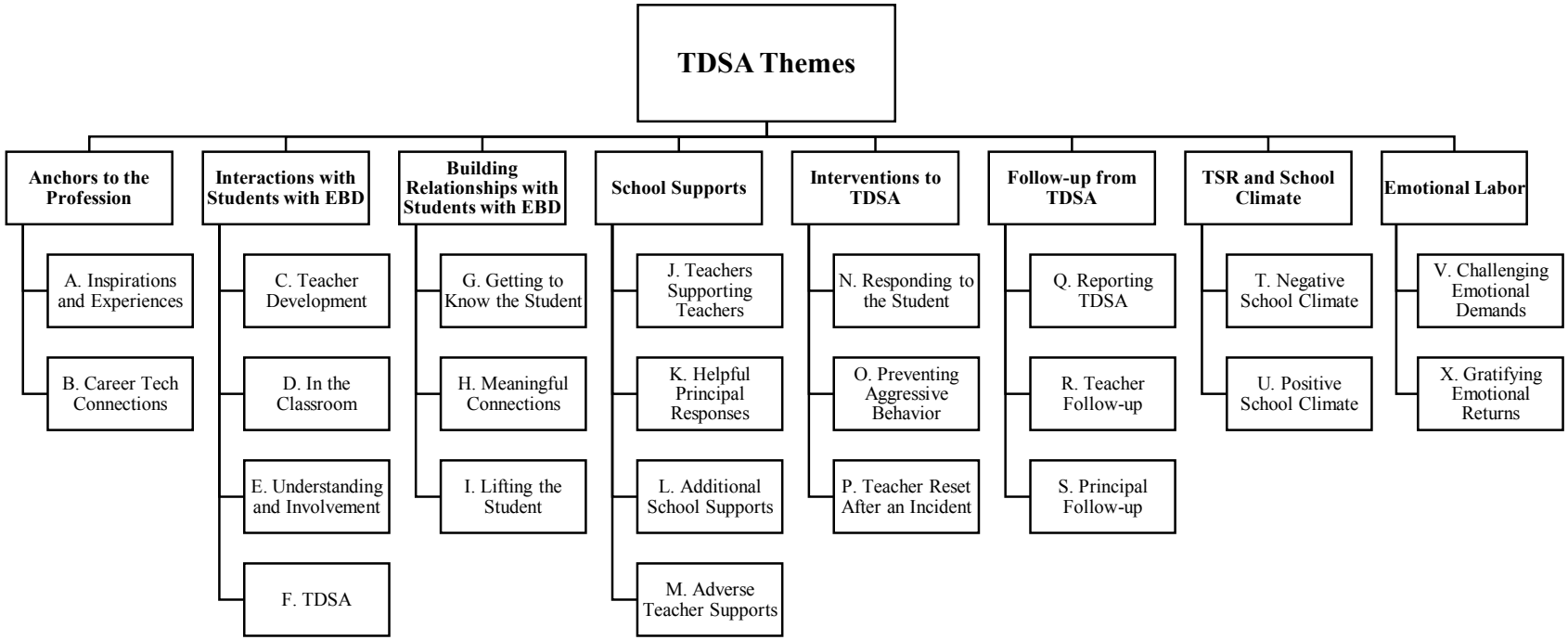


Table 9

TDSA Descriptors to Themes and Sub-Themes

A - B Descriptions	C - F Descriptions	G - I Descriptions	J - M Descriptions	N - P Descriptions	Q - S Descriptions	T - U Descriptions	V – Y Descriptions
A. Why teaching Pre-teaching Teaching area Years of teaching EBD students Teacher commitment Teacher motivation Becoming a principal leader **B.** Why career tech? CT approaches and attributes Trade Ready Holistic and hands-on	**C.** Teacher training Qualified not prepared Teaching Proficiency PD and workshops **D.** Isolating occupation Intense literacy instruction Differentiated Instruction Purposeful learning **E.** Repeated experiences of aggression Student behavior after an incident Experiences with TDSA **F.** Student value in building TRS EBD learning attitude and life experiences Student Success Speak to the student in crisis Learn from mistakes A School of last chances Working with and serving students with EBD Learner frustration A need to be patient and understanding Model behaviors	**G.** The power of touch Reviewing student files and speaking to staff Creating a safe classroom Students intervene Honest, Trusting, and Genuine Get to know the student Safe and Welcoming **H.** Listen to the student Respectful interactions and conversation Taking the time Making connections 1:1 support Teacher-student collaboration Care A Sense of Belonging Check-in and connect **I.** Extra-curricular programming support for EBD students Building student confidence Student Growth Problem-solve through conversations	No additional coding	**N.** Going beyond the behavior Alternate location Respond quickly to aggression Give space Calm Demeanor Being accountable and taking responsibility **O.** Motivate Consistency Adaptability Classroom management Keep students in class No audience Teacher takes ownership and responsibility Continual observation Coaching Convey expectations Clear expectations Reaffirming words **P.** Reflecting on the situation Speak with the student Self-talk Self-care	**Q.** Disincentives to Report TDSA Reporting Process Transparent Process **R.** A fresh start Healing conversations **S.** Accountability Admin Follow-Up	**T.** A lack of trust between teachers and admin **U.** Building school community Socialization in the class and beyond	Dealing with emotions

Anchors to the Profession

The anchors to the profession reflect what binds participants to the profession. Regardless of when participants became formal educators, all were passionate about teaching and were committed to working with students with EBD. Despite the myriad of challenges and even in the face of aggression, participants found a pathway to persist in serving students who struggle academically, behaviorally, and socially.

Inspirations and Experiences

Participants in the study were asked to speak about what attracted them to the teaching profession and working with students with EBD. It was interesting to learn that, for many participants, teaching was a career they wanted to pursue from a young age. Dee's desire to become a teacher presented when she was eight. Jacqueline was always the teacher when she played with her dolls as a child. She affirmed that she had great teachers throughout her schooling, detailing that the experiences affected her, "It seemed like a logical choice." Gina indicated that teaching had always been her pathway and "a family tradition."

Participants who worked in a different occupation before teaching realized how much they enjoyed facilitating staff development and training programs. Johnny, Paul, Lily, Dee, Elle, and Wilbert entered the teaching profession as a second career. Although many were inspired to teach at a young age, the opportunity to become a teacher did not present until later in life. Paul explained, "There was this thing in me that consistently said, I am supposed to be teaching, and I've always wanted to teach." Consequently, Paul began teaching in later adulthood as a second career.

Heather and Liz decided on a teaching career while in post-secondary school. They both had a passion and a talent that they wanted to share with others. The intrinsic motivation to

positively help people to grow was a common thread that unified all participants and served as the primary anchor to the teaching profession.

Participating teachers had diverse backgrounds and were teaching in an area for which they were qualified. Only two special education teachers, Bob and Elle, had the same role at school, although each participant had a unique student caseload. Many participants (n = 7) had worked in a career technical school with students with EBD for their entire teaching career. Other teachers (n = 4) began their careers in mainstream schools and chose to move to a career technical school. Elle had the least time working in a career technical school but had over 20 years working with students with EBD.

Making a Difference

Although participants had varied teaching experiences and sustained various displays of student aggression, they were passionate about why they got into education. Johnny explained that he got into the profession to make a difference. Elle and Lily echoed the sentiment of making a difference. Elle explained, "I want to help struggling students and help them learn things that can be of long-term benefit." Lily described her desire to work with students with EBD as a "perpetual yearning," affirming the commitment never to stop showing her "care." She declared, "Every moment is critical! That is what inspires and motivates me to make a difference."

Students with EBD are often rejected by their peers, schools, and society. The pain of not being able to establish good relationships and experience success in schools can perpetuate the needs and challenges for students with EBD. Principal Wilbert shared, "Students need to know you will honor your word and that the student is your number one focus – and the students don't always hear that, so it is valued." Through my conversations, it became evident that the

experiences of TDSA and the challenges of working with students diagnosed with EBD present a persistent issue. However, it also became abundantly clear that each participant was genuinely committed to serving, guiding, and supporting students with EBD.

Preparing Students for the Future

Principal Wilbert indicated, "If we can give them the tools to better self-regulate and develop emotional control, they will be more successful after high school. If we don't get it by then, who knows when it will happen!" Teachers equally saw the importance of their roles to help students cultivate supportive relationships, successfully self-regulate, and problem-solve. Gina explained that teaching students with EBD is much more than delivering the curriculum. She defended, "If students are not held accountable for doing the work or for aggressive behavior, then we are not really doing our job or preparing our students to survive in the real world."

Jacqueline explained that she came into teaching to help students with EBD get an education. She explains, "I want to deliver content and curriculum and make connections where it applies to the real world and help students with EBD build the skills that will help them be successful outside these four walls." Paul sees his role as something that is not quantifiable but rather something absolutely essential to the lives of young people, affirming, "Our role as educators is to lift these students so they can successfully move on." He explained, "My job is to teach, educate, and direct them. I strive to ensure that I create a pathway for students to explore and develop, to make mistakes, and to grow from their learning." Participants affirmed that the knowledge and learning experience students with EBD receive in school could help prepare this group of learners for the future.

Calling of Care

Johnny advocated, "Teachers and administrators must be stewards of the children at school who are in our care." Principal Wally defended that many students with EBD are accustomed to people seeing the behavior before seeing the student. He explained:

> The behavior is like a mask, and many students with EBD wear such a mask. But, when you demonstrate that you are not going anywhere when you express that you are interested in who they are and in supporting them, I find that the mask the student wears to hide their pain slowly begins to get pulled away.

The responsibility of being an educator and working with this vulnerable group of learners was a charge that no teacher took lightly. Lily explains, "The 'aha' moments are so special and amazing. I feel like teaching is my calling." Elle indicated that her pre-teaching career of twenty years made her realize that she wanted to work with young people and focus on special education. She referred to it as "a progressive calling!" Kennedy shared that her passion for becoming a teacher was also a calling, "I know there was a reason God sent me down this path, and I hope I make a difference in these kids' lives." The strong desire to make a difference and provide opportunities to improve learning and social outcomes motivates and inspires the participants to work with and serve students with EBD.

Unexpected Leadership

It was interesting to learn that both principals in this study did not plan to transition into a leadership role. Principal Wally reflects, "To be honest, it was something that was kind of thrust upon me." Principal Wilbert indicated, "I didn't want to become an administrator but was encouraged to do so by many colleagues and my principal." Both principals enjoyed teaching but decided to move into administration as leadership was needed. In preparing for the leadership

role, both principals took time and opportunities to help train for administrative functions. Although neither Wilbert nor Wally planned to pursue principalship, it was apparent from our conversations how committed they are to serving, supporting, and lifting teachers and students with EBD.

Career Tech Connections

Focusing on career tech schools was a fundamental aspect of the study. Many students with EBD who are not doing well in their home school socially or academically are encouraged to attend a career technical school as a viable means to earn a diploma. Conversations to attend an alternative high school are often discussed with guidance counselors or during a student's IEP meeting. The hope is to provide students with EBD new learning opportunities where they can experience success. For many high school students with EBD, learning frustrations and gaps are significant. Accordingly, a career technical school can yield new learning prospects. The career tech teachers participating in the study represented six career tech programs. See Table 10.

Table 10

Represented Career Tech Programs

Career Tech Programs
Hospitality
Cosmetology
Electrical
Welding
Animal Care
Health Care

With one exception, all of the career technical teachers worked in industry before pursuing a career in education. However, all participants indicated that career tech education (CTE) allowed teachers to fuse two passions. Paul revealed, "Going to teach at a career tech school was a normal transition because of my background." One of the special education

teachers owns and operates a seasonal company that connects him to various trades. Another special education teacher shared, “It was my own life situation and career philosophy that brought me to a career technical school.” Principal Wilbert also had a career in industry before getting into teaching, working as a supervisor for a Fortune 500 company. Liz revealed that her love of her teaching area and working with students with EBD made working at a career technical school a rational choice. She explained, “It all went hand in hand. We have a lot of students with EBD that have behavioral issues, and my program can offer an outlet for them, a therapeutic connection where they can build marketable skills and competitive competencies.”

Although a CTE can be a means to keep students with EBD in school, attending classes, and graduating, a CTE can also provide students with relevant and meaningful learning. Career tech schools create new chances for students with EBD to engage, as teachers incorporate different strategies depending on the student’s needs. Lily shared, “To prevent frustration and confusion, we meet the students where they are, try to find an area of interest, and then build from there!” Paul supported that “CTE is wonderful in an economy such as ours where skills are always in demand, and the need to employ people with a particular skill set is plentiful” For many students, CTE may not be an initial choice. However, CTE can be a new beginning for students with EBD who are not doing well academically and socially in the home school. Bob suggests, “The career tech experience can be a fresh start and where the student can do something they truly love for part of the day.”

Vocational schools can spark an interest and prepare students for the workforce. Heather affirmed that CTE “Gives students the opportunity to be job ready when they graduate.” Every participant agreed that hands-on learning is a good motivator for students with EBD. Elle went beyond the motivation and expounded:

> When students can do things hands-on and interactive, as opposed to sitting and writing all day, the brain functions differently. I've seen it consistently with my students with EBD. When they can physically move around and do something that they feel is productive, meaningful, and interesting, it helps them greatly to deal with their behavior, learning, and social frustration.

As teachers prepare students for the workforce by developing their skill set and confidence, students are becoming trade ready. In the development, students learn how to problem-solve, interact with others, and self-regulate. Kennedy affirmed that students must also develop soft skills, the handshake, the eye contact. She confirmed that students with EBD must learn to interact successfully with others. Kennedy upheld that "Career tech schools work hard on helping the student with EBD become emotionally well rounded so that they can go into that work environment and be prepared for whatever they come across." Career technical schools can be seen as the last stop for students with EBD, but they can also be viewed as a new beginning where students can explore, grow, and experience new learning opportunities.

Interactions with Students with EBD

To successfully serve and work with students with EBD, teachers must continue to hone new chances to bolster teaching proficiency and knowledge base. Formal training and continued education offered at the school or district level can provide educators with new opportunities and strategies to support classroom learning.

Teacher Development

Over the years, technology, student diagnosis, instructional strategies, assessment approaches, and effective leadership styles have evolved, demanding educators to continue with personal and professional development. With limited exception, all Ohio and Ontario teachers

are licensed educators who graduated from a faculty of education. Principals must take additional courses and earn an additional license to assume an administrative position within a school. In addition to staff having principal and teacher qualifications, schools and school districts offer professional development (PD) to ensure staff members continue to polish their practice. Participants engaged in school-wide workshops on social-emotional learning and differentiated instruction, providing productive resources to improve student success. Participants found training in the various pedagogical approaches to stimulate the unique interactions between teachers and students helpful.

Some teacher participants alluded that the admin teams are helpful with staff development. Bob indicated that at the school level, "Principals support us to learn what we need to know to be as effective as possible." Elle affirmed that there are many great resources that she takes advantage of on her own, and she participates in the training opportunities that the school provides.

Training Workshops

Many teachers felt that some of the PD provided by the school was not always relevant. Participants indicated that some aspects of teaching students with EBD could better equip all teachers to handle and manage challenging behaviors. Heather revealed that the training she received on addressing student behaviors was not extremely valuable, "It felt like it was very common and basic stuff that would be useful to a new teacher." Paul and Jacqueline described similar experiences. Paul explained that he would attend training workshops and seminars early in his career to support his development. However, it became apparent that the workshops and presentations did not relate to working with students with EBD and, like Heather, did not find the workshops beneficial. Paul affirmed, "The training did not focus on the kind of population we

serve." Gina, a seasoned educator, said, "We need school leadership to provide us with more concrete strategies to work with students with EBD, and we need more time to connect with other staff to share and learn from each other." Johnny said that training is sub-par with "one and done" workshops that do not offer ongoing support for teachers working with students with EBD.

Qualified but Not Prepared

Most participants emphatically agreed (n = 11) that principal and teacher training programs did not prepare participants to work with students with EBD. The lack of adequate training sets principals and teachers up for experiences that can be problematic and career-defining. Principal Wally explains, "Training is a huge issue; time is spent on curriculum documents, assessment strategies, and disabilities. But when the teacher walks into the classroom, the teacher is shocked, and without a good mentor, they are lost." Most participants felt that they were qualified but not prepared, and many indicated that they did not know what they were getting into when working in special education or that special education and students with EBD are an integral part of a career technical school. Paul affirmed, "The only thing I wasn't prepared for was the kind of students that populated my school."

The conversations with participants affirmed that most did not feel adequately prepared to work with students with EBD at the beginning of their careers. However, participants indicated that with experience, they have become more confident, effective, and understanding of how to work with and support students with EBD. Gina explained, "I have learned by watching other people and how they deal with different situations." Dee defined that the learning curve comes from experience, explaining, "Over time, I feel like I have learned how to handle situations and students with EBD more effectively." Jacqueline presented, "Sharing moments

with other teachers can help us learn about our students and ourselves – and how we deal with student aggression and volatile situations." What resonated from the analysis was that participants felt experience, sharing with colleagues, and observation improved proficiency in working with and supporting students with EBD.

In the Classroom

Teacher Isolation

Although participants indicated that collaborating and communicating with peers can support student interactions, many indicated or alluded to feeling secluded. Various comments were made: "Sometimes I feel like I'm an entity by myself;" "Teaching is an isolating occupation;" "I think we're all on our own;" and "Teaching can feel pretty lonely." Many participating teachers indicated that the work done in a classroom feels remote. Accordingly, principals and teachers must take the time to check in and connect with staff members to prevent feelings of solitude.

Style of Instruction

What and how teachers instruct can influence student engagement. Teachers must be responsive to learner needs to support and work with students with EBD. Accordingly, participants described the value of checking in and connecting with students. Jacqueline confirmed, "Many students with EBD have learning gaps and low literacy levels." Participants discussed the significance of having an understanding of what the student's needs are to prevent learner frustration and volatile outbursts. Heather and Gina discussed breaking down and scaffolding instruction to help students develop their knowledge, competency, and comprehension. Paul affirmed, "Concepts are broken down to make the learning meaningful and to raise student self-assurance." Lily suggested, "When we break things down, students don't

feel as intimidated. Participants agreed that when students with EBD can demonstrate their knowledge through mental and kinesthetic engagement, students become increasingly motivated. Dee and Johnny confirmed, “Students want to apply their knowledge and create.” One participant shared, “I truly believe in our school. If we don’t break it down, chunk it, and teach to the student's level, we will not see the success that we do.

Linking a Passion

Learning becomes meaningful for students as teachers and students work together, linking passion and purpose. Liz uses this interaction to steer her instruction and ensure that what she teaches is valuable and relevant to the student. She explained, “The conversations I have with students assist in discovering their interests, which helps open the door. I can talk to the student on a personal level. When I can find a common appeal, the student knows that I am genuinely interested in them.” Liz believed the interactions improved the students’ learning motivation and social relations. Lily spoke about feeding into a student’s genuine interest, validating that connecting with students on a personal level can bolster students’ buy-in, competency, and confidence. Bob added, “Students do not want to miss out on being able to create, build, and show their learning with hands-on activities.” When students are engaged in meaningful work and are successful, student behaviors can be more manageable. Principal Wilbert agreed: “When students with EBD make connections to future jobs, there are often fewer behavior issues and disruptions in class.”

Understanding and Involvement

Be Patient

Principal Wally described that in a career tech school, the needs of the students with EBD are very different, as is the relational piece. Learning how to work with and connect with

students with EBD takes time. Jacqueline felt it was helpful when she was reminded by her department head to be patient and not to take student behaviors personally. Dee affirmed that the students with emotional and aggressive issues who display violent and maladaptive behaviors are the students that need compassionate teachers. “These are the teachers who will go the extra mile.” The need to be patient and calm and give students a “voice” was discussed by all participants. Allowing students time and space to de-escalate was essential to working with students with EBD. Principal Wilbert explains, “You try and find out where they are coming from…you have to take the time, and maybe it feels like I take too much time…but in the long run, I think it is helpful.”

Paul reflected, “When the system is structured so that our students can fall through the cracks and we don’t patch up the holes to prevent the student from falling through again, it sets the student up for frustration and failure.” Participants explained that for many students with EBD, this is the last hope to graduate and earn a diploma. As teachers strive to close academic gaps, minimize learning frustration, and promote positive interactions with students with EBD, participants shared numerous strategies and approaches. Decrease distractions, modify and accommodate, consider the student’s maturity level, help students to problem-solve, and skillfully maintain high expectations were discussed strategies. Reducing learner frustration can help students to persevere and strengthen teacher interactions.

Engage in Dialogue

Learning about what the student is dealing with is vital to supporting the student. Participants discussed how they took the opportunity to speak with the student during class. The conversations enhanced teacher-student understanding and teacher-student rapport. Participants unanimously affirmed that conversing with the student was essential to reducing aggression

outbursts and getting to know the student on a different level. Principal and teacher participants felt that with a better understanding of the student's frame of reference, the adults could, when appropriate, provide a different perspective. Principal Wally affirmed, "This is when the relationship comes into play….I can tell which teachers have a relationship with students and those who do not, and if you want to be effective, it hinges on your relationship with your students." All teacher participants expressed the merit of talking to the students and learning about the student's interests and goals. The importance of sending explicit messages to students – in words and action was also affirmed. Kennedy and Jacqueline tell students, "I am here to support you and listen." Participants acknowledged how valuable the conversations with students are. Gina tells students, "I am not your enemy." She affirms, "I talk to the students, and they know they can talk to me."

Safe Space

Securing a safe space for students begins when students feel welcomed and valued. Moreover, in a safe classroom, students know they can make mistakes without fear of mockery or judgment. Lily elaborated, "In securing a safe space, students know they can make a mistake, be it a behavioral or academic mistake. They are encouraged to problem-solve and learn from the mistake." Gina reiterates the value of mistakes, "Students need to know they can make a mistake and that they can also get it right." Students with EBD need clear explanations, shown different approaches, and reminded that they can be successful. Principal Wally provided an example: "If I talk to a student about hitting. I show them you can't hit here, and I am very explicit." If the messages and the support are upheld, students can experience success in various areas and circumstances.

Celebrate Success

Success might be in the student's behavior and self-regulation or in understanding and demonstrating skills. Regardless, Gina asserted, "Successes that students experience must be celebrated and acknowledged. It is a big deal. No matter how little the progress is, it is growth, and we must recognize the effort and build up our students." Heather shared a story about a student with EBD with whom she had many challenges in class. Repeated displays of defiance and oppositional behaviors, she was concerned her strategies were not working. "Just the other day, he was working with a couple of students, teaching them how to do the work." The mentoring and 1:1 interaction between the teacher and student helped solidify the student's understanding of the material and confirmed behavioral expectations. In turn, his confidence and attitude improved, leading him to take the opportunity to support fellow peers. "It was a very positive and successful outcome that was important to celebrate." Consistently modeling the desired behavior can improve a student's self-regulation and assist a student when emotionally escalated. A calm and supportive voice may encourage the student to de-escalate. Modeling the appropriate behavior can help students with EBD to develop autonomy and improve social interactions. With clear and consistent modeling, the student can be encouraged to follow.

TDSA

The participants shared stories of working with students with EBD and experiences of student aggression. The aggressive outbursts occurred regularly for some, while physical TDSA was less frequent for others. The reports of students verbally attacking teachers were more prevalent. Regardless of the frequency, the experiences were upsetting, frightening, and sometimes dangerous.

Unpredictability

Participants confirmed that the events of TDSA were varied and unpredictable. Johnny shared, "Anything can happen, physical or verbal – you never know." Participants described many details of verbal attacks, insults, being called names or sworn at, ridiculed, berated, and threatened. Paul explained, "Over the years, I've experienced more verbal attacks than physical. But that doesn't mean I have not been attacked, punched, kicked, or had something thrown at me by students." Jacqueline emphasized, "When working with students with EBD who are aggressive, you are walking on thin ice and don't know when or what, if or how, a behavioral student will respond."

Emotional Charge

Many teachers in these emotionally charged situations report feelings of overwhelm, fear, and helplessness. It is perhaps in these moments that teachers feel most isolated and alone. During Johnny's interview, he revealed how raw and provocative students can be. He explains, "I am a target, and I can't respond, I can't stand up for myself – and if I do respond and protect myself, I can get charged with assault, and I am out of a job." Participants conveyed the impact of the verbal attacks by students: "I feel terrible;" "Being a target of student aggression is such a blow to my self-esteem;" "The attacks can be wearing;" "It's embarrassing, and it affects you as a teacher and as a human being."

Types of TDSA

Student defiance is another form of aggression teachers spoke about. In these occurrences, students may refuse to work, walk out of the classroom, or ignore the teacher. Jacqueline describes these incidents as "the most common and mildest displays of aggression but with the potential for it to intensify." Heather explained that she has also experienced all types of

student aggression, physical, verbal, and oppositional behaviors, sharing that, for the most part, verbal and oppositional behaviors are the two biggest challenges she deals with.

On the more extreme side of the student aggression spectrum, teachers recall occasions when chairs were thrown and desks were overturned. Johnny disclosed being physically assaulted four times during his career. Lily spoke about two operations she needed due to being thrown by a student. Participants reflected on being kicked, pushed, punched, and spat on. Principal Wally identified that aggressive outbursts occur more frequently in his school and attributes that to having a higher concentration of behavioral students. As participants shared their lived experiences of TDSA, it was discernable how intense, vivid, and emotional the participant's recollection was. Many of the participants were trained in crisis prevention and therapeutic crisis intervention. These programs offer strategies to de-escalate student aggression and provide knowledge and context to understanding aggressive behavior. The training is valuable for staff who work with students with behavioral needs. Student aggression is unpredictable and volatile; Principal Wally explained, "Even with training, people can still get hurt." In recalling an incident, "I gave him space, and he lunged forward and hit me in the face." Principal Wally affirmed that the training is vital but does not guarantee injury prevention.

Repeated Incidents

Some teachers spoke about repeated assaults by the same student. Concerns about handling such incidents were raised, as some participants reflected on personal needs being overlooked. Jacqueline affirmed that recurrent assaults by the same student were incredibly traumatizing, "It is frustrating and frightening because you are trying to help a student who cannot self-regulate." Being attacked repeatedly intensifies the emotions and the human experience. Several participants shared that despite the incident, educators are expected to

continue teaching as if the student's words or the confrontation had no impact. Johnny spoke about an occurrence when a student was returned to his class. The student verbally attacked the participant and used exceptionally provocative language. "After a little while in the office, the student returned to my class, attacked me again, and then spit in my face," Johnny explained that when there are repeated incidents and frightening experiences, the trauma that resides can continue to take hold.

The interactions with students with EBD and experiences of TDSA can be influenced by teacher efficacy, the classroom dynamic, and understanding of the student's needs. The pain and the roller coaster of emotions teachers endure from TDSA are real and captured in the participant's shared stories. Working with students with EBD is unpredictable, even with all the knowledge and experience. Participants revealed that one of the best tools can be found in the TSR. Principal Wally articulated, "Everything is connected, and without the relationship, the students will not engage with you academically or socially."

Building Relationships with Students with EBD

Building a rich and authentic relationship with students with EBD is the crux of supporting this vulnerable group of learners. Principal Wally presented, "So often, students with EBD have learned that people do not want to get to know them or they do not stay around for very long." Many students with EBD lack a peer group to spend time with because of social challenges. As students with EBD try to deal with feelings of rejection and skepticism, negative emotions can make building a relationship increasingly complex. However, the relationship represents a critical aspect of supporting students with EBD.

Getting to Know the Student

Getting to know students with EBD can help educators to prepare for classes and meet student needs. Some participants reviewed student files to learn more about a student with EBD. Participants explained that looking into student records can provide information on the student's history, needs, interventions, and how the student behaves when escalated. The insight can help establish rapport and contribute to procuring a safer learning space. Some participants accessed student files only if the interventions and strategies used were ineffective. Bob felt it was more important to get to know the student face-to-face, "For many students transferring to a career technical school is a fresh start, and the behaviors seen in their home school may not present here."

All participants expressed the need to develop the TSR and affirmed it goes a long way when students with EBD see the teacher making an effort. Lily has experienced throughout her career, "Once a rapport is established, students will come to you knowing they can trust and count on your support. Paul explained, "If I can communicate with my students, I can also lessen the possibility or the frequency of being a target of attack." The conversations have helped participants diffuse volatile situations with students with EBD, but it also provides teachable moments. Liz indicated, "Through conversations with the student, I can find out what interests them, where they want to learn and develop, and what kind of job they want to pursue." Getting to know the student is a starting point for teachers to continue building the relationship.

Participants incorporated many different strategies to learn about their students. Conversations, assignments, portfolios, and learner portraits were shared and discussed. Heather uses daily icebreakers to discover more about her students and to help students to feel more comfortable in class. Lily, Gina, and Dee open their classes to students during lunchtime,

explaining that providing various supports and creating opportunities to get to know students enhances the student's experiences in school.

Creating a safe and welcoming classroom was reported to be instrumental in building the TSR. Participants were mindful and worked hard to secure a safe learning space for all students. Daily routines were used by many participants who felt structure provided cues and communicated clear expectations to students. Consistency and flexibility were also discussed by participants, illuminating that a teacher may decide to defer a lesson if other student issues require attention. Life experiences can impact student behaviors and conditions, but Kennedy affirmed, "The safety of all other students cannot be undermined." A smile, a pat on the back, and affirmation of student effort all contribute to positive interactions and creating a safe space.

Principal Wally acknowledged that when the students know and trust a teacher, the teacher has earned the student's respect and created an environment where the student feels safe. Jacqueline defended, "Communication, clear expectations, validating, providing hope and reassurance are all part of getting to know the student. Getting to know the student is about building trust and being reliable. It is about being genuine and honest. When kids know you believe in them, they don't want to disappoint you. They will do everything and anything to show you that they can." To learn requires students to persist with effort and engagement, which can trigger feelings of doubt and vulnerability. The student will likely hesitate unless the classroom is safe and the teacher is welcoming, reducing student growth and potential.

Meaningful Connections

Making meaningful connections is integral to educating students. Principal Wally affirmed, "When you understand the value of being connected to the students, you will be an effective educator anywhere." Dee explained, "This has happened before. I face fewer

disruptions and maladaptive behaviors with students with EBD when I have made a connection and developed a rapport." Taking the time to build relationships with students with EBD may not always occur during class time. Some participants would connect with students during a plan period. Even with routines, participants report that no day is the same, affirming the need for daily conversations and connections. Paul expanded, "It has to be consistent, and it has to be honest. Building relationships and making meaningful connections takes time – one day at a time."

Listen

Teachers use various strategies to connect with students, which can serve them in moments of student escalation. Connecting with the student can help identify needs and affirm to the student that they matter. Taking the time to acknowledge, Kennedy clarified, "I might not understand how you feel, but I understand your upset." She asserted that showing the student compassion and care sends a strong, respectful, and validating message. Participants believed that when teachers are open to listening and helping students with EBD work through a source of stress or misunderstanding, the student's ability to self-regulate and problem-solve can improve. "It is a life skill." Lily declared, "It doesn't serve anyone to brush feelings under the carpet. We just need to talk about the problem respectfully." All participants affirmed the importance of checking in and connecting. A check-in can be a conversation, an observation, or a gentle touch.

Individual Connections

"Looking at their personal life," Liz avowed, "Sometimes the student just wants to talk, open up, and get your advice." Participants described constantly moving around the classroom, listening, watching, supporting, and working with the students. As teachers are aware of what is going on in their class, how students with EBD are engaging and interacting provides the teacher

an awareness that can prevent a volatile situation. Every teacher indicated that 1:1 support and interaction with students with EBD helped develop an authentic and meaningful rapport. Gina felt that by meeting with students individually, she could fill gaps, minimize frustration and build a better connection. Adapting a business model, Bob affirmed, “Communication is vital for any school, and where there are breakdowns in communication, there are going to be breakdowns in success.”.

Care

Participants' reference to care and belonging resonated throughout the data analysis. Principals and teachers indicated that students with EBD represent the school's population with the highest level of needs. In stabilizing the TSR, staff must affirm care and belonging to help students with EBD achieve academic, social, and emotional success. Elle upheld, “When students know someone cares enough to help them, they can progress more quickly.” Some teachers commented about caring too much but recognized that caring is integral to building relationships. The participant consensus revealed that to work with students with EBD, love, care, and sharing knowledge were the priorities Lily voiced, “Students with EBD need to know they are cared for, that they are important, that they have so much to contribute.” Gina acknowledged, “Sometimes they think I am annoying, but my intentions are well-meaning, and the kids know I will give each of them my time and attention.” When caring for your students, participants would become emotionally involved. Gina acknowledged, “This is when teaching becomes more than a job.” To that end, several participants indicated that if you are a teacher and do not care about your students or care for your students, then the teacher is in the wrong profession and should not be working with students with EBD.

Career Tech

Career technical schools offer learners unique programming that can help students with EBD today and in the future. However, skill development alone will not suffice. Students must also be able to interact with others productively. Developing the TSR and making associations can bolster a student's sense of belonging. Many students with EBD have struggled in school and find themselves in a career technical high school without a clearly defined passion or a social network. Lily explained, “So often, these kids don’t feel connected to anything.” Career technical schools offer a broad spectrum of learning, which can help students with EBD make social and emotional gains and allow teachers to work with students more effectively. Principal Wilbert explained that students with EBD typically have fewer outbursts when they are in their career tech courses. He identified that the organic part of the TSR is often with the career tech teacher.

The findings from the data revealed that when teachers are making meaningful connections standing shoulder to shoulder with students, role modeling, demonstrating and affirming that students can meet expectations and experience success, students thrive, and behaviors improve. Students can better identify and develop a passion with constant encouragement and exposure to new learning. Participants explained that a combination of the support plus feeling valued and cared for creates an opening for the adult to build a solid rapport with students with EBD. Participants confirmed that cultivating and sustaining the relationship can facilitate positive behavioral engagement and academic outcomes.

Lifting the Student

Emotions are part of the human experience. Paul explained that aggressive behaviors could escalate when students with EBD feel negative emotions. He advocates that helping

students manage the experience of adverse feelings can help students with EBD to self-regulate positively. Participants affirmed that self-regulation was an area of challenge for students with EBD. Many participants spoke about how problem-solving and troubleshooting together through conversations could help students calm down and reason. Once the student was de-escalated, a composed discussion about the student's behavior could occur, allowing the teacher and the student to develop alternative behaviors. Bob explained, "It is all part of the learning process, where students can grow from mistakes." Many participants made a point of connecting career tech to life after high school. Gina said, "In reality, when students leave school and are in the real world – it is not as forgiving." Liz explained, "The display of aggressive behaviors or hostile interactions can result in termination or criminal charges for students." Participants believed it was an important message for students to hear and understand.

Problem-Solving

Dee mentioned problem-solving together is an opportunity for everyone to learn. Working with students collaboratively to develop alternative behaviors is an approach that upholds a hierarchy of needs. Despite the aggressive behavior or adverse interaction, the participants continued to show love and forgiveness. Jacqueline explained the value of problem-solving through conversations, "When we encourage and support students to evaluate and assess poor responses or decisions, they become accountable for their actions and understand more clearly how their offenses have affected another person." Many participants talked about managing the student and the display of aggression in the class. Liz advocates keeping the student in the class can help reaffirm that the student has a place in the classroom, that mistakes can be made safely, and that, despite the incident, the student is still cared for and wanted. The teachers in this study also agreed that encouraging and supporting students this way can help

students to evaluate and assess how poor responses, aggressive conduct, and adverse decisions can affect others.

Beyond the Classroom

Developing the skills and behaviors during high school can help students to mature autonomy. Kennedy spoke about teaming up with a local hospital for an eight-week program to assist students in processing difficult emotions and handling conflict productively. "We meet once a week for a 50-minute class, and students learn how to get things off their chest and talk." With additional programming, students with EBD have other chances to engage beyond the class curriculum, building the TSR in a different context. Johnny affirmed that extra-curricular programming provides another opportunity for teachers to develop rapport with students with EBD. Gina remarked that various clubs and programs can help students to develop holistically. The programs can develop hands-on skills, offer additional academic support, spark new interests, and with the social interactions, create new friendships. Delivering programming to help students with EBD address mental health issues and well-being are also very valuable. Comprehensive and inclusive approaches to supporting students with EBD create meaningful opportunities to elevate students. Liz revealed the unique opportunities that students are exposed to in her program:

> In my program, we have a lot of students, so we do many activities outside of school. I encourage my students to participate in a fall camp I run. A lot of these kids don't want to because they have a wall built up. But we encourage them and tell them it is a good way to get to know your classmates and to get to know your teachers outside of the school setting.

Participants concur that when teacher-student interactions include positive role modeling, critical thinking, and problem-solving without judgment, a growth mindset for the adult and the student can be cultivated, affirming that human development can occur through action and interaction with trust, faith, and grace.

School Supports

Participants in the study expressed that, at times, teaching could feel lonely and isolating. Liz explained, "Sometimes you feel like you are in no man's land, and nobody has your back." To help overcome feelings of seclusion, participants identified various school supports that were extremely valuable when working with students with EBD and dealing with aggressive behaviors.

Teachers Supporting Teachers

When teacher participants were questioned about sources of school support, the responses affirmed that teachers greatly rely on their colleagues. Speaking with fellow teachers about problem behaviors or an aggressive incident allowed participants to generate ideas and strategies to prevent further outbursts. Sharing experiences with peers also developed an emotional support network for participants. Many members revealed that sharing and connecting with understanding colleagues who have experienced TDSA strengthened teaching practice, generated awareness, and developed camaraderie. Gina expressed that most of her support comes from other teachers within her department. Jacqueline explained that her relationships with teachers help her emotionally cope with working and connecting with students with EBD. Most teacher participants found listening, sharing, conferring, and voicing problems and experiences with their colleagues productive and fundamental to their development.

Johnny disclosed a different perspective. He agreed that teachers talk, but the dialogue among teachers is often venting:

> We may talk about problems or strategies, but we are not in a position to implement the solutions. We are in the trenches. We vent and release the emotional stuff, but at the end of the day, the cap goes back on after you vent, and over time, the pressure will build back up.

Johnny was not alone in stating that teachers need more opportunities to collaborate and problem-solve productively. Teacher support and mentoring were reportedly beneficial and seen to be career-defining for new teachers. It was evident from the collected data that the support and encouragement teachers provide each other can offer a variety of positive outcomes.

Helpful Principal Responses

How principals support teachers and students with EBD and respond to student aggression can significantly impact individual wellness and school climate. Teacher participants report that when a student with EBD is referred to the office or requests an administrator to attend their class, the student is typically escalated. Teacher participants felt that in the moment of crisis, principals reacted quickly.

Meaningful Conversations

A restorative circle is an approach that aims to build community and respond to damaging behaviors through dialogue. The technique seeks to build and restore relationships through sharing and listening. Although both principals spoke about the value of restorative circle, neither school uses that specific strategy. Both schools tend to focus on individual conversation and mediation. The principals work hard to build positive relationships with teachers and students with EBD. Principal Wally explained that focusing on the relational piece

for students can be used as leverage to change behavior and ideally result in fewer suspensions and detentions.

Principals spoke about listening, being responsive, accessible, and present. Understanding and addressing the teacher's needs is critical. Principal Wally acknowledged that TDSA is a source of pain and anguish for educators, especially newer teachers. In being responsive, providing learning and coaching opportunities can increase a teacher's comfort levels in dealing with student aggression. Principal Wilbert affirmed that professional development on de-escalation skills is essential for new teachers, but updating the training for all teachers is also imperative.

Accessible

In being accessible, Principal Wally spoke about celebrating and supporting staff. He explains, "If I need to wipe the floor, I will; if I need to clean up or go on a bus to assist a student, I will do that…I tell my staff that I will stand behind them, I will stand with them, and I will earn their respect in my actions. I am not here to pull them down. I am here to build them up." Principal Wally explained to teachers that he is committed to supporting and serving staff and admits that he will make mistakes: "Some of my best learning has been from mistakes." The principal's message to the teachers resembles the statement that teacher participants deliver to their students. Teacher participants affirmed that the office is called when a volatile situation develops and the teacher cannot de-escalate the student. The participants also declared that an accessible administrative team was critical support for staff and students. Principal Wilbert conveyed that being accessible for teachers can help minimize classroom commotion: "If a teacher sends a student to me, they can eliminate the disruption and continue teaching, and I can handle the student and the situation. I am here to support both the student and the teacher."

Responsive to Teacher and Student Needs

In being responsive to teachers' experiences with TDSA and their emotional needs, Principal Wally spoke about being mindful of scheduling the same student with the same teachers. The rotation of people can give staff some reprieve. However, student behaviors must still be addressed to find a substitute behavior. Principal Wally affirmed, "If we ignore the behaviors, then it communicates to staff that we don't care about them." After an incident, principals will investigate the events that took place and the mitigating factors. The consequence for student behaviors may not always be the same. However, both principals affirmed that accountability is critical, as is working on the relationship and rehearsing situations to help students with EBD develop alternative behaviors. The participating principals were committed to minimizing the intensity and the potential ramifications of aggressive behavior.

Maintaining open and honest communication lines helps teachers feel represented and supported. Principal Wilbert elaborated on the importance of connecting with and speaking to teachers. "The conversations validate educators as people and professionals. It can also be a teachable moment to provide additional resources for classroom management or PBIS interventions." Working closely with teachers can help to achieve consistency and build principal-teacher rapport. Principal Wilbert explained that a clear and consistent message reduces confusion among staff and students. Participant principals regarded the relationship with teachers as vital to their leadership role, safeguarding the school and upholding school policies.

Additional School Supports

Parental Support

All participants recognized that building relationships with parents helped them understand and deal with student aggression. Participants explained that establishing a

partnership at home can provide insight into a student's behaviors outside of school and how parents handle situations at home. Additionally, participants could also collect information concerning possible triggers. Many teachers agreed that connecting with parents was strategic and valuable to supporting students with EBD. Liz declared:

> Building a relationship with parents is really important because, typically, the parents know their kids better than anybody. Keeping the lines of communication open and informing the parents how their child is doing - if a student had a good or bad day, the parents are usually responsive and supportive, which can help me in the classroom.

Heather made a valid point, recommending that communication with parents should not always be negative. Parents of students with EBD may sometimes avoid school contact due to complex or contentious prior interactions. Accordingly, taking the time to celebrate student successes and achievements can be a welcome dialogue that helps maintain communication and improve the rapport between schools and families. Principal Wally explained that when looking at student behavior, the focus should not solely be on student conduct at the school:

> I don’t think this should be isolated to what is happening in the school, but we should also connect with parents and try to find out what is occurring at home. Understanding how situations are handled, how behaviors are managed at home, and how parents are supported can offer valuable insight.

All participants affirmed the importance of establishing a partnership at home. Without the knowledge, educators believed they could miss essential and valuable details that could support students with EBD and reduce student aggression - theorizing that if an approach works at home, it could also work at school. Keeping the home and school separate was seen to be a disservice to educators in building rapport and maximizing support for students with EBD.

In-School Support

Participants described a comprehensive multi-tier support system within each school, including clinical counselors, social workers, intervention specialists, guidance counselors, and the administrative team. The schools each have a sound infrastructure to support and offer opportunities for students to build rapport, self-regulate, and manage TDSA. Participants expressed that with a cooperative approach by several professionals, educators can develop a comprehensive understanding of the student and how to support the student best. Kennedy explained, "When I am confronted with chronic student problems, I report my concerns to the special education director." The special education director in both schools works closely with other in-school supports to prevent student aggression and allay hostile outbursts. Elle also identified a collective approach to helping students with EBD: "Our special education director and the entire administration team are amazing resources. Our mental health specialists and school counselors also work together, so everybody connects to support the student and eliminate adverse behaviors."

Adverse Teacher Supports

Development is an ongoing and fluid process where is always room for growth. Participants indicated that candid and respectful conversations could help to augment individual advancement, broaden awareness and increase understanding. However, a dialogue can be misconstrued and taken as an attack if uninvited. A few participants spoke about the needs of adults after an incident of TDSA "Teachers have needs too." The comment revealed a perceived imbalance of protection for students and teachers.

Lack of Support

When teachers experience repeat attacks by aggressive students, a safe school is not secured, and the emotions from prior incidents resurface. One participant described, "When the scab gets ripped off again, the pain is real, and the wound is raw - it hurts both physically and emotionally." Some teacher participants felt that there was a lot of support for student mental health and well-being, but the support for teachers' emotional wellness and health was lacking.

A few participants shared experiences of being verbally attacked by students with EBD daily. Students were challenging and criticizing, expressing vulgar insults and defiant behaviors. Participants affirmed that the experience could be very wearing and make teaching the class and keeping a positive and safe environment difficult. One teacher asked, "Is enduring the abuse from students with EBD part of the job and something we must get used to?" All participants wanted to be involved in the follow-up process after experiencing an incident with student aggression. Principal Wally agreed that checking in with the teacher after an incident is critical but admits that sometimes the conversation does not happen. Without the follow-up, participants felt that the investigation was incomplete, and several participants indicated that the omission of a follow-up conversation left participants feeling invalidated and silenced. Both principals recognized the merit and importance of connecting with teachers who have endured TDSA. Participants affirmed that when the follow-up is not timely or altogether missing, the core elements of trust, respect, and care become compromised, which damages rapport on all levels.

Professional Assessments

Maintaining professional integrity regarding student assessment and evaluation was an area of conversation where participant views seemed to diverge. Student success and achievement are important; however, teacher participants advocate that students must earn the

grade. Several members expressed frustration over granting credit or altering marks for students who chose not to engage in learning or completing assignments. All participants had discussions about holding the system and the student accountable. However, teacher participants who had assigned student grades adjusted for final assessments felt undermined and a lack of support from the leadership team.

Student Combinations

Participants affirmed that the classroom dynamic can become very challenging when there is a clash of student personalities. Dee reports, "It is a significant detail that often gets overlooked." When students are being timetabled, it is helpful, proactive, caring, and preventative for leadership to consider student behaviors to reduce chaos and aggressive outbursts. Collaboration between principals and teachers can help prevent inadvertently grouping a combination of students who do not work well together into one class. Lily explained, "When there is a blend of adverse behaviors in one classroom, every day can be an unpredictable challenge and derail your best efforts to manage the class. When that happens regularly, it can be very disheartening." During the interview, Principal Wally affirmed the importance of being aware of student combinations. "We must ensure that staff are not continually dealing with the same aggressive behaviors and hostile students. Adverse student combinations must be avoided to minimize teacher stress and maximize learning opportunities for students with EBD." Participants affirmed that a student mix of aggressive or oppositional behaviors makes teaching and managing the classroom exceptionally onerous. Some participating teachers shared that when they had a conflict of student behaviors in one class, they felt unsupported and left to handle aggression and hostile misconduct independently.

Interventions to TDSA

Participants valued the power of rapport and believed that relationship-building was central to the interventions for students with EBD. Vulgar, insulting, and provocative language is typical for an aggravated student with EBD. Participants understood that the outbursts were not a reflection of poor teacher performance but reflective of the disorder and that the interventions used could influence student responses and outcomes. The secret to the member's success as educators of students with EBD was predicated on the persistence of developing the TSR and using effective interventions to prevent aggressive behaviors from occurring or escalating.

Responding to the Student

Looking Beyond the Behavior

The participants at all levels spoke about moving beyond the behavior and recognizing that swearing and aggressive behaviors are common when a student with EBD is escalated. In supporting the student with EBD, Elle explained, "It is imperative to look at why the student is acting out and what is happening." Principal Wally said that educators can get distracted when focused on behavior. He explained that working with students with EBD calls for the adults to shift perspective away from the behavior and towards the person where the long-term goals of teaching the student take precedence.

Gina shared a recent story of a student swearing at her and being disruptive. The very behaviors that typically result in an office referral – the quickest escape for the teacher and student. For some students getting out of the class can avoid embarrassment if they are confused or do not understand how to complete the task. Or, it may be that the subject matter is irrelevant and of no interest to the student. In Gina's situation, it was clear that the student needed a break. But with the pause, she confirmed the expectations and said she would work with the student

individually. During the 1:1 interaction, the student told Gina he had to be in court the following day. The student was struggling to regulate due to feelings of stress and overwhelm. The worry of missing school, pending charges, and life uncertainty contributed to his escalated behaviors. However, in focusing on the student instead of the behaviors, Gina was able to support the student appropriately and advance a trusting rapport by providing academic and emotional support. Gina explained, "My students know I won't leave them stranded. They know I care and respect them."

Quick Response

There was agreement among participants that students with EBD can become heightened very quickly, and an unpredictably dangerous situation can develop for students and the teacher. Therefore, responding to student aggression must be swift and incorporate de-escalation strategies. Paul added, "If it becomes really dangerous or you think a dangerous situation is imminent, you must do your best to secure a safe space quickly." The rate at which a student can go from a baseline of calm to a highly escalated state varies. Accordingly, teachers must be aware and plan to respond to hostile situations to keep staff and students safe. Gina explained:

> I always want to ensure my classroom is safe for my students and me. I quickly try to de-escalate the situation when a student becomes aggressive in class. However, if my efforts don't work, I remove the agitated student from the classroom.

Heather affirmed that when she cannot de-escalate a situation in class, she will remove the student to ensure the other students are safe. Despite best-made plans, when confronted with an escalated student, procedures to remove the student are not always possible, as Jacqueline explained:

> The student picked up a chair and threw it at me, but I knocked it out of the air and avoided contact. The student was in total meltdown, and I had to evacuate my class to maintain the welfare and safety of others. At that moment, I was so confounded by what had just happened and why – it all transpired so fast.

Participants sustained that quick intervention is vital when aggressive behaviors are present to prevent the situation from worsening. Participants indicated that the teacher must swiftly consider the space and the student's expressive and non-verbal cues when analyzing escalating behaviors.

Provide Space

If approaches are ineffective, teachers were resolute in upholding a safe classroom which in some situations required the aggressive student to be removed from the class. In other incidents, participants discussed evacuating all the other students. Either way, the response gives the student space and eliminates an audience, which participants felt was valuable. The concept of space was discussed in various contexts:

> (1) A space to speak freely or say nothing. Principal Wilbert revealed that aggravated students often need space to express their minds, feelings, and perspective. "After the student vents their frustrations, the conversation can begin."
>
> (2) Space in time. If a student is not managing well, many participants discussed providing the student with space by discussing the issue later. Heather explained, "If a student is not being oppositional or making a huge production, then I give them time and space, and they can return to the task and a conversation later."
>
> (3) Space in solitude. Allow students to wear their headphones in intense moments. Jacqueline lets her students 'zone out' on their devices; she defended, "If they are

agitated, I will give them that space on their device, and then after the student has had time to decompress, I will speak with them.

(4) Space relating to the physical environment. An alternate learning environment or a quiet room may help the student decompress. Paul discussed various options for students when they need space from the classroom. He shared, "Students can go to the behavioral/calming room or the resource room; they may just need to take a break and go for a walk, and when the student returns to the class, they are less escalated."

Participants indicated that giving the student autonomy to choose provided a "space" option which was also helpful. Participants found space options combined with guidance and responsive listening efficient approaches in dealing with student aggression. Participants affirmed that escalated students often say inflammatory remarks that require the adults to de-escalate internally. Gina asserted, "When the adult remains calm, it can help turn down the temperature of the moment."

Accountability

Participants expressed the need to hold students accountable for their actions. Working on the relationship and rehearsing situations is an effective way to learn and apply a new behavior – the essence of teaching. Students are going to respond to problems in the way they know how. Changing the behavior starts with rapport and making good choices. When students are trained to react differently, Principal Wally asserted, "We need to be responsive, validating, and acknowledging the new behavior." Supporting growth to make good choices requires reflection and accountability. Jacqueline explained that helping kids to develop alternative behaviors sustains accountability and improves the student's self-control.

Preventing Aggressive Behavior

Modeling

Some participants reported their experiences of not handling an incident well and reacting to a student's provocation. Modeling accountability can affirm that what is expected of the student is also expected of the adult. Being accountable for one's conduct recognizes that people make mistakes which can create an opportunity to grow. If the adult's response to a situation is unsupportive, participants affirmed that the adult should be accountable. Detailing the rapport can be further destabilized without acknowledging how the adult handled themselves during an incident. Accordingly, participants report that they will apologize to the student or the entire class, depending on the situation. Gina says, "I am not perfect, and I am ready to take responsibility. I think that tells students that if we upset or offend someone, we must be accountable and say I am sorry." Participants explained that the "in-the-moment" experiences promote development and awareness to prevent TDSA.

Classroom Management

Participants explained that classroom management plays a credible role in preventing TDSA: classroom routines, engaging and meaningful assignments, differentiated instruction, high expectations, and scaffolded lessons that included task-oriented activities. Participants explained that balancing high expectations and learning frustration was vital. Liz elaborated, "If I water down my expectations, the student has fewer learning chances, and they can get bored." In her experiences, low expectations can fuel behavioral issues and limit the student's success. The social interactive aspect was also discussed and viewed as a critical aspect of classroom management. Participants found that the social interactions with students set a tone and allowed the teacher to proactively deal with behavior through student observation – gauging their facial

expressions and body language, tone of voice, and choice of words. Accordingly, participants emphasized that regularly connecting and interacting with students encourages learners to complete work and to take pride in the final product.

Consistency and Adaptability

Consistency and adaptability were two terms used throughout the interviews. When participants spoke about consistency, it was used in various circumstances, such as classroom structure, behavioral situations, student expectations, communication, and follow-through. Principal Wilbert agreed that students with EBD need consistency and explained it is a factor to consider regarding consequences, although he said other aspects also come into play.

When participants talked about adaptability, there was a coherent response affirming adaptability was a key influencer in working with students with EBD and preventing student aggression. Most participants expressed that being firm but flexible when working with students with EBD was helpful. Dee explained that sometimes a planned lesson must be postponed to the following day. There were no set rules, but adaptability was a critical tactic that participants used to manage student behaviors. Participants divulged adaptability might require the teacher to adjust a plan, a performance expectation, a seating arrangement, an assignment, a tone of voice, or an instructional approach. Kennedy indicated that the TSR is usually not very strong if a teacher is rigid and inflexible. She clarifies that managing the classroom and working with students with EBD requires being responsive to the student's needs, "So, it can't be black or white." She clarified that being prepared and organized can be instrumental when adapting and adjusting. In being adaptable, participants indicated that it also allowed students with EBD to make decisions and be accountable for their choices. Participants felt that when teachers are rigid and inflexible, it can raise tension in the class and limit teacher-student interactions.

Adaptability requires teachers to use various approaches when working with students with EBD. Participants' strategies to prevent aggressive outbursts or respond to hostile student behaviors were not predetermined or defined. Participants affirmed that utilizing different techniques was necessary and noted that an approach that works with one student might not work with another. Moreover, a process that works with a student with EBD today may not work tomorrow. Table 11 represents a list of approaches participants noted as helpful strategies to prevent aggressive behaviors in isolation or combination.

Table 11
Participant Strategies to Prevent Aggressive Behaviors

Strategies
Clear expectations
Re-affirmation with supportive words and actions
Coaching
Motivation
Consistency
Adaptability
Continual observation
High expectations
1:1 conversation without an audience

Teacher Reset After an Incident

Reflection

When speaking to participants about resetting after an incident of TDSA, they became quiet, sharing their stories of personal growth and commitment amidst hurt and frustration, care, and love. The conversations were captivating and confirmed how emotionally complicated TDSA is. Participants spoke much about reflection and self-talk to emotionally process an incident with an aggressive student. Identifying the feelings and revisiting the event helped members to look at the issue in an organic form. Not to dwell on the experience but to determine if there is room for improvement - to establish what could have been done differently. Lily

admitted that reflecting on a situation allowed her to reconsider how she responded to the student and to contemplate the incident's details. She recalled an incident that occurred early in her teaching career when she sent a student out of her class and the factors she considered after the incident:

> I questioned if my response contributed to intensifying the student's frustration level. Perhaps the student's behavior worsened because he had to sit in the office with other students who were in trouble, maybe the wait time and his impatience to be seen by a principal escalated his behavior, perhaps he was embarrassed by his behavior or felt betrayed by me for sending him to the office. The next day, I spoke to the student about how I handled the situation and how to move forward. It was an opportunity for both of us to learn.

Elle defended, "We can't know how we will react in various situations because our own emotions are involved." Reflecting on how a situation was handled allows people to grow from the experience, which can be empowering. Participants understood that to stay in the teaching profession, you must be able to bounce back, or you will do a profound disservice to yourself and your students. Harnessing a negative mindset or holding onto grudges will not advance the healing process that comes from within. Elle added, "The experience of student aggression often forces you to reflect on your own mental health and your own needs." Participants concur that to do a good job, you must take the time to think about what you can do better and for self-care. What self-care looks like was unique for each participant, but it helped members to reset and recover. A few participants revealed that if, in the reflective process, they felt they handled a situation poorly, they would make a point and apologize to the student. The participants were committed to being accountable and transparent and valued the TSR rapport. In an effort to clean

the slate, the participant would say sorry to the student. The humility and modeling approach sustained that making mistakes is acceptable and provides improvement opportunities.

Discussion

The need to incorporate a conversation with the student with EBD after experiencing TDSA was also part of the reset for participants. The student and teacher can discuss alternative behaviors and responses through interaction. The exchange is not a means to lecture or brood over the incident but rather a chance for a discussion, to maintain accountability and awareness, and to move forward. For participants to reset, move beyond the incident, and achieve a better tomorrow, feelings of fear, betrayal, anger, and melancholy must be validated and released through reflection and conversation. Despite the emotional complexity, Paul said, "We work through it together; we talk, and we start over."

Follow-up from TDSA

Reporting TDSA and conversations after an incident with the teacher and the principal was revealed to be an essential part of responding to TDSA. The follow-up helped maintain open lines of communication and assist students in identifying alternative behaviors. The conversations with both principal and teacher could convey a consistent message affirming that the student is valued and in a safe space to make mistakes. Mistakes can be turned into opportunities for all members to learn and grow.

Reporting TDSA

Principal Perspective

Both schools had different processes for documenting incidents of TDSA. Principal participants affirmed that reporting methods provide a transparent practice for following up after

an incident and conveying leadership's commitment to supporting students and teachers. Principal Wilbert explained:

> I encourage teachers to complete the behavioral forms, and I look at the mitigating circumstances when investigating or following up on a situation. I look at the individual student and the events that occurred, and in doing that, I have a better understanding and a bit more latitude with my follow-up.

Principal Wilbert described behavioral reports as a process to improve student behavior, seek resolution, and secure a safe school. The behavior reports document the teacher's description of the incident and allows the principal to investigate the circumstances further. The reporting practice also enables principals to track cases. The data can provide insight into student triggers or behaviors, which could generate awareness and prevent student escalation. Paul indicated, "Principal follow-up plays a role in working with students with EBD to prevent a situation from occurring or repeating." Each school had systems in place and methods to follow to report TDSA. Principal Wally explained:

> Typically, when something happens and a teacher needs an immediate response, there is an emergency code that will get an administrator quickly, or if there is something that a teacher sees, there is a code, and again the admin is directly informed. Teachers can also fill out an incident report form, and the administrator will follow up.

Participant principals encouraged staff to complete reports after an incident and when concerning behaviors are observed. Both principals indicated that staff sometimes misunderstand how a situation is handled in the office hence the need to maintain open lines of communication with staff.

Teacher Perspective

Teacher participants disclosed that communication from the administration was not always forthcoming. Some participants expressed that follow-up was inconsistent or not communicated at all. Other participants recounted occasions when documented notes about aggressive student behavior disappeared from the system. Frustration about students receiving token rewards after a display of TDSA was also shared during the interview. A few participants submitted that teachers were sometimes apprehensive about reporting because of their experiences surrounding student follow-up. Participants identified additional motivations for not reporting, "The responses are not as clear cut" or "Teachers are questioned if the student contradicts the report." Other reasons posed were to avoid inciting bad memories or worry of judgment.

Discipline

Principal Wally confirmed that the district wants fewer punitive suspensions and detentions, which he confirmed fails to improve student behavior. He explained that reduced suspensions keep students in school, which can help to prevent learning gaps. Conversations with teacher participants described that when the response to student aggression was insufficient or inadequate, it was a failure in the system. Many participants felt that the system focused more on protecting the student, irrespective of the behavior. Dee surrenders that after a recent incident of TDSA, she said to her principal, "I guess I am going to have to get used to the fact that admin is okay with me being verbally abused every day." Other participants shared feeling demoralized and disheartened by the lack of student discipline that followed TDSA. One participant shared:

> When a teacher is assaulted, and they are expected to fill out a report, and they are in pain and mentally drained because they have just gone through a traumatizing experience – with all that has happened, sometimes you give up. People do give up, as a matter of fact.

The pain and frustration in the participant's voice was palpable. It was not a sign of weakness but rather a reckoning that completing the report can be a struggle when a teacher is in pain and mentally drained due to a traumatic experience.

Not Reporting

Principal Wally explained that student misconduct could quickly create chaotic circumstances in a school without reporting because nobody in the office is aware of increased aggressive behaviors. Principal Wilbert stated that a safe school is everyone's business, and one principal cannot be everywhere. When teachers are not reporting, aggressive behaviors and destructive situations can be ignored because they are not seen. Principal participants acknowledged that teachers do not always see the escalating discipline or are part of the conversation with parents and students. Without detailed involvement, staff may feel unsupported or concerned that the student's behavior will not change and decide not to report. However, when school violations occur, participating principals affirmed that based on mitigating circumstances, the reports in the system, and the historical data, influence how a situation is handled, punitive or progressive, the responses factor in accountability and restorative care for both the teacher and student.

Teacher Follow-up

Participants confirm that student follow-up by teachers is part of the healing process. Participants explained that students need new chances and opportunities to correct behaviors. For students to grow and develop, participants affirm with their students with EBD that every day is

new and that what happened the day prior is in the past. Heather states that sometimes it is easier to do than to say, depending on the situation. Still, teacher participants felt that holding onto resentment and negativity was counterproductive for the student and teacher. Participants expressed that engaging in healing conversations was part of letting go of the negative emotion, identifying alternative behaviors, building trust and accountability, and improving the TSR.

Participants explained that as young adults, students need to understand that their actions have an impact and an effect. Teacher follow-up reinforces the classroom expectations and, through dialogue, helps the teacher and the student to reset and move forward. The conversations are sometimes difficult, but participants felt that being honest and candid was essential: "Students need to know that certain behaviors can result in getting fired;" "Students need to be culpable for their actions;" "We are not preparing them for the real world if we don't talk about it;" "If a student messes up, I don't pat them on the back and smooth it over;" "My job is teaching more than content." Participants reiterated the need for students to understand that they are not judged on being good or bad but are being supported to manage their emotions and express their feelings better. Participants felt that having a follow-up conversation helped students responsibly and productively participate in the solution.

Principal Follow-up

Principal follow-up requires due diligence to ensure students and teachers are supported and protected. Participant principals shared in their experiences that after an incident, once all the information is collected, a conversation with the student will take place. Both principals indicated that involving the parent helps to provide context and understanding of issues happening at home. The principal participants explained that once the student was de-escalated, participants could begin to unpack how to support the student with handling, responding, and

interacting with others. It is through conversations and observations to determine the next steps. At the center of the next steps was accountability and safety. Principal Wilbert explained that there has to be a consequence, and students must understand that the outcome is to prevent unacceptable behavior from reoccurring. Principal Wilbert affirms that when discussing equity, "equal" does not always mean "same." Principal participants take the time to comprehend the situation and listen with the intent to understand.

TSR and School Climate

School climate is not a fixed state but malleable to the conditions and experiences within a school. A positive school climate can improve teacher participation and student engagement. The participants from the study identified that school climate matters and can influence student achievement and behavior outcomes. Conversely, TDSA can contribute to a low school climate that exacerbates stress levels for educators and creates chaotic experiences for the entire school community.

Negative School Climate

The impact of TSR and school climate was well defined by all participants. Schools are tasked to help students grow and mature, but growth and development are not exclusive to serving only young learners. Schools can offer opportunities for adults to grow and develop as well. Schools that focus primarily on student behavior can deter staff from engaging particular students out of fear, resulting in a student remaining alone and hurting behind the "mask" according to Principal Wally. He explained that the internalized pain empowers the student to stay in a negative and counterproductive space, which will be damaging to students and staff. Principal Wally affirmed that the school climate is negatively affected when a school has a disconnect between the staff and students. Teacher participants identified a link between a hostile

school climate and the emotional demands of the job that negatively impacted the TSR. Johnny reflected, “When the school climate was low, teachers would not come out of their classrooms, and staff avoided the hallways.” Another participant mentioned that when the student behaviors were high, the job became more challenging, and the school climate suffered. Principal Wilbert affirmed that if student behaviors are not handled well, many disruptions will present throughout the day. He concludes that displaying aggressive behaviors is very hard on the school climate, the relationships, and the emotional demands of the job.

Positive School Climate

As damaging and contagious that an adverse school climate can have on the TSR and experiences of student aggression, a positive school climate can be infectious, solidify the TSR, and lift all community members. Bob believed that people in a positive school climate are more apt to work together, teacher to teacher, student to teacher, teacher to administrator, and administrator to student. Stating, “It goes a long way to creating a positive school climate.” Kennedy advocated, “When you incorporate fun into your day, that can improve the teacher-student relationship and the school climate.”

A discovery that emerged in the data analysis was that when people experience positive social connections, they feel part of something bigger than themselves. Most participants believed that their school worked hard on creating a powerful synergy by making meaningful connections with students with EBD in the classroom, the halls, and the cafeteria or through extra-curricular programming. As a result of the commitment to the TSR, not only did the rapport advance, but the school climate also developed. Participants felt that the relationship with students improved the school climate because the students were comforted knowing that someone in the building was there to support them in times of need and to celebrate in times of

achievement. Lily believed that a positive school climate improved student pride and was reflected in the student's work, behaviors, and commitment to be their best. Participants affirmed that educators could galvanize student success by encouraging and raising the proverbial bar to help the student grow. Participants shared stories confirming that when positive teacher-student relationships are sustained, the school climate is fueled, and the positive energy in the school becomes pervasive.

Emotional Labor

Dealing with the emotional demands of the job is real and requires continual attention. Experiences of TDSA are unique, and how people respond and process the incident is also individual. Based on participant responses, some teachers showed emotion, while others internalized sentiments. Some teachers dealt with their emotions privately, while others needed an outlet and wanted to discuss. Some teachers needed time off, and others wanted to remain in the classroom.

Challenging Emotional Demands

The participants were very transparent about sharing their lived experiences, affirming the delicacy and the demand of TDSA. Participants asserted that teachers are not machines but humans, and mistrust, betrayal, disrespect, and violation are normal human responses after experiencing TDSA. During the interviews, participants shared their pain and the toll of dealing with student aggression.

Some participants found the quiet on the drive home comforting and helpful in dealing with the stressful demands of the day. Other participants spoke about taking a power nap after school. An association between emotional labor and school climate was also apparent from the numerous comments on how the emotional demands worsened with an adverse school climate.

Jacqueline elaborated, “If the school climate is negative, the emotional demands intensify, which can have negative repercussions.” It was evident that the emotional expenditures that participants experienced in dealing with students with EBD were taxing. Some of the comments that participants revealed in the interview regarding the level of emotional saturation included: “I’m tapped out;” “It is hard to come to school when you are so exhausted;” “We are human and have feelings;” “TDSA has affected my family and marriage;” “I am emotionally drained but emotionally connected;” “I am jaded and scarred;” I’ve never been so close to going on stress leave;” “Sometimes, I feel like I am at a breaking point;” and “I am tired.”

Both schools are in the midst of many changes, which can affect the school climate and perpetuate the dynamic needs of the job. Some participants indicated that increased student behaviors during the 2022-2023 school year could be due to returning to school after the Covid-19 Pandemic or that program changes could be a cause. Other participants attributed the emotional demands of the job to the conflation of students in special education with cognitive and behavioral disabilities being served under one roof. Paul elucidated, “When many students do not have the skill set to socialize and self-regulate to be kind, the emotional demands intensify.”

Many participants found comfort in turning to their colleagues for emotional support. Liz admitted, “It is a huge check and helps me to figure out a plan for the next day.” All the teacher participants found value in discussing their experiences of student aggression and remarked on the detriments of not talking about it. Participants expressed concern for new teachers. Participants worried that novice teachers might not disclose their experiences for fear of judgment. However, participants affirmed that a lack of transparency could fuel a toxic mindset and lead to teacher fatigue and burnout. Experiences of TDSA are not something you can just get

over. Principal Wally shared, “The experiences of targeted aggression can really add up…it can take a toll and be very difficult. Despite the training and the understanding of the source, it is still abuse, and it takes a toll.” Understanding the impact of TDSA accentuates the need for all stakeholders to be well supported, listened to, and protected.

Gratifying Emotional Returns

All participants shared gratifying emotional returns that, for most, outweighed the dynamic demands of the job. Participants acknowledged that some days were not easy and progress was slow, but the effort to build relationships with students with EBD yielded a plethora of unquantifiable rewards. The same connections that, at times, can leave an educator physically exhausted and emotionally drained can motivate and confirm the bond to the profession. Principal Wally shared, “My place is in the school….I want to be in the school working with the kids every day.” Repeatedly from one interview to the next, the kids drew educators to return to work day after day, month after month, year after year. Kennedy affirmed, “I am doing what I love…and it is my pride and joy.” The level of commitment and grit that the participants have exhibited over the years was inspiring. Some participants laughed as they reflected on the emotional rewards of working with students with EBD: “I love puzzles;” “I love the kids;” “I do enjoy a challenge;” “I love the students;” and “I love teaching.”

Participants recognize that working with students with aggressive behaviors represents some of the most vulnerable kids in the system, who have been neglected and slipped through the cracks. However, participants explain that cultivating relationships, helping the students to succeed, and giving them the tools and the skills to problem solve and make good decisions is a mighty reward.

Participants accredited staff and colleagues to affect the emotional rewards of the job positively. Participants described co-workers as "family" and "friends" who continually help and support participants in times of heightened stress and overwhelm. Participants report that teachers who show compassion and responsiveness for the students also offer care and understanding to each other. Teaching is hard work; it is not easy, but it is clear that what keeps teachers returning to the classroom and principals returning to lead is the love of the job and the love of humanity. Principal Wilbert declared, "Hard work is good work." Specifying that any good you can put into building up another person makes it well worth the effort. One participant affirms, "The rewards offset the challenges," and another indicates, "The positives far outweigh the negatives." The stories were harrowing but fascinating, not only to learn how dedicated participants were to continue in the profession but how past experiences made understanding their purpose in the teaching vocation more apparent.

Some participants attributed faith. Others described it as a calling. Participants' gratification and fulfillment from working with and serving students with EBD affirmed their professional commitment. Many participants explained that part of the reward of working with students with EBD is that the needs and supports required by the student extend far beyond curricular obligations. Working with students with EBD is not for everyone and requires a special person who possesses patience and empathy and seeks to understand. As educators strive to fulfill the human needs of students with EBD and elevate student potential, the human needs of educators are also affected and satisfied, raising teacher capacity to a new level.

Validity

I took multiple steps to support the validity of my findings. The measures were to encourage accurate results and incorporate a consistent approach in the analysis process (Gibbs,

2007). Data triangulation was achieved using interview transcripts and reflective memos. The initial data collection was attained from a face-to-face interview that was audiotaped. The transcript created thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experiences with the phenomenon from the audio recordings. Transcripts were reviewed by participants and discussed at a follow-up meeting to endorse that I accurately captured the participant's stories. The interview transcripts and reflective memos were coded using a two-step process through Delve qualitative software. I conducted the initial coding process by assigning broad codes to data points. In this stage, I had the opportunity to review and familiarize myself with the text. The second phase entailed a line-by-line coding approach that allowed me to go deeper into the data. I paid close attention to the details and assigned additional codes accordingly. The process minimized researcher bias as the focus was on the participant's story.

The study's validity was enhanced using two peer debriefers who reviewed my themes, sub-themes, and coding process. Peer debriefers were encouraged to identify holes in my coding assignments to ensure that participants' perspectives were considered and coded appropriately. The peer debriefing process was significant as it allowed my thought processes and sense-making to be challenged. The debriefers confirmed that my coding was comprehensive and well-judged. However, it was brought forward that some data points could be double-coded. Upon review, it was interesting to see how some of the themes from the phenomenon were interconnected.

The peer debriefing process was confirming and allowed me to trust the coding procedures, the emergent themes, and the overall findings from the data. Engaging in supportive conversations with the debriefers provided additional perspectives that resulted in reassigning and renaming two subthemes. When reexamining the "Emotional Labor" sub-themes, "Self-

care" was relocated to the "Teacher reset after an incident" sub-theme. A sub-theme from "In-school support" was renamed "Adverse teacher support."

Summary

In Chapter IV, I presented the study's findings for the three research questions. The data from the experiences of two principals and eleven teachers provided valuable responses regarding the lived experiences of TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. The findings from the interviews revealed eight main themes. The first three themes (Anchors to the Profession, Lived Experiences Working with Students with EBD, and Building Relationships with Students with EBD) emanated from research question one. The following three themes (School Supports, Interventions, and Follow-up from TDSA) stemmed from research question two, and the final two themes (TSR and School Climate and Emotional Labor) connected with research question three.

As participants shared their stories, four overarching concepts presented centering around the complexity of supporting and developing students with EBD. The participant's narrative affirmed a high level of commitment to working with students with EBD. Participants also emphasized the importance of building rapport with staff, parents, and students with EBD to improve the school community. The need for ongoing professional development to facilitate professional growth and proficiency in working with students with EBD and aggressive behaviors was also stressed. Finally, the participants acknowledged the emotional connection associated with working with students with EBD. As participants continue to work with some of the most vulnerable students in the school, they are grounded and motivated to persevere in the hard work to support and develop students with EBD.

Chapter V discusses an explanation of the findings, proposes implications for leadership policy and practice, and provides suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of principals and teachers working in a career technical high school who have experiences of teacher-directed student aggression (TDSA) and building rapport with students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD). Recent research reveals that aggressive behavior compromises positive student development and impacts social interactions (Leggio & Terras, 2019; Wehby & Kern, 2014). A persistent display of violent and volatile behaviors among children and adolescents can propagate adverse experiences in school and lead to challenges experienced outside the school environment, resulting in joblessness and incarceration (Ogundele, 2018; Sinclair et al., 2005). Limited research exists on the experiences of TDSA or that explores the power of building relationships with students with EBD, especially at the high school level and within the career technical domain. However, abundant research supports that students with EBD receive higher rates of exclusionary discipline, peer rejection, and learning gaps (Brown, 2013, Fuchs et al., 2018, Wilkerson et al., 2016). Such outcomes can exacerbate disparities within the school community, contribute to hostile interactions, and lead to antagonistic relationships with teachers and peer groups.

Fusing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model, with Starratt's Ethical Leadership paradigm, in conjunction with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory, the present study found that building a relationship with students with EBD is complex and multifaceted emotional work. The dynamic undertaking calls for a significant understanding of the interrelationship and interdependence of caring, healing, learning, and leading. To frame the discourse in Chapter V, the overarching discoveries that weaved through the participant's narrative will be discussed, followed by an in-depth examination of the findings in relationship to the literature. The study

has several implications for policy and practice in leadership and higher education to serve and support students with EBD. Resource allocation, community engagement, in-school programming, and pre-service training will be examined. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Key Findings

The investigation identified themes experienced by thirteen participants resulting in rich experiential data relative to TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. Overall, the summary of key findings highlights eight central themes shared by all thirteen participants: anchors to the teaching profession, lived experiences working with students with EBD, the school supports, interventions, follow-up from TDSA, teacher-student relationship (TSR) and school climate, and emotional labor. Participants confirmed that teaching students with EBD is challenging, complex, and multidimensional work that necessitates knowledge of differentiated instruction, pedagogy, and disability diagnoses. The data from the present study suggest that the commands required to work with students with EBD involve many competencies. Four overarching concepts also emerged from the findings. First, all participants were committed to working with students with EBD. Second, building rapport with all community members to maximize support for students with EBD resonated. Third, participants acknowledged a desire for additional resources to advance teacher proficiency and knowledge base to improve outcomes for students with EBD. Fourth, participants affirmed an emotional charge from working with EBD students.

Commitment to Working with Students with EBD

Students with EBD demand patience and empathy. Participants believed that making meaningful connections by incorporating care and reflection into each interaction helps students

with EBD develop and learn. Whether the participant was a career technical, special education, or core subject teacher, each had an innate drive to work with students with EBD. One of the most critical shortage areas within special education is teachers of students with EBD (Prather-Jones, 2011). Still, every participant in their role was resolute in supporting students with EBD. A connection between participants and their devotion to working with students with EBD emerged. Every participant reinforced a genuine commitment to listen and to learn from others – students, colleagues, parents, support staff, and school leaders. According to Gage et al. (2021), positive school experiences for students with EBD are associated with emotional support and personal relationships with teachers. Participants explained that their desire to listen and learn from others fortified a deeper understanding and a more meaningful connection with students with EBD.

Additionally, participants expressed that listening and learning from peers enhanced a reciprocal support network. Teacher participants indicated that when administrators take time to listen and learn, it can significantly affect the school's climate and the emotional demands of the job. When principals recognize, validate, and respond to TDSA or other behaviors that do not align with school policies and practices, teacher participants feel supported by the administrative team. Supportive and understanding principals can positively influence school climate and indirectly alleviate teachers' stress (Farmer, 2020). Principal participants acknowledged high standards are upheld by providing a strong vision and commitment to all human resources, and the needs of students, teachers, and the school community are holistically met.

Building Rapport

The present study identified that principal and teacher participants valued their relationship with students with EBD. Leggio and Terras (2019) found that students with EBD

make the most academic and behavioral gains when supported by teachers who believe in their ability and have a positive attitude toward the students with EBD. The power of care and communication was a common strand that weaved through each interview. Communication is a tool humans use to exchange ideas, realities, and values. However, effective communication is more than transferring information; it is also about understanding emotions and intentions (Waldron, 2012). Participants affirmed that building relationships with students with EBD and other school members starts with effective and genuine interactions. Burke et al. (2015) assert that collegial support and productive relationships are essential to job satisfaction and effectively working with students with EBD. With care and respect for each other, participants also felt that the display of TDSA was less and school safety and school climate improved. The participants' impressions aligned with existing literature reporting that high levels of positive school climate are associated with advanced achievements and fewer instances of student aggression (Gage et al., 2021).

Professional Development

Cooper (2019) argued that students with EBD are the very students who demand the most highly skilled and effective teachers. All participants expressed the need for continual training to manage TDSA and work with students with EBD. Participants frequently commented that they were qualified but not prepared to work with students with EBD. Participants felt that additional professional development would improve teacher competency in supporting students with EBD academically and socially. Parallel to the findings, research affirmed many teachers feel inadequately trained to intervene and effectively manage serious behavioral and instructional challenges that students with EBD present (McKenna & Ciullo, 2016). As schools and educators contend with recurring behavioral difficulties, the need for teachers to use instructional practices

that supports students with EBD intensifies. Due to the complexity of problems that students with EBD experience and the various interventions needed, educators must competently and confidently incorporate multiple strategies and interventions to facilitate student success (Farmer, 2013). Participants indicated that training at all levels could also help ease the emotional demands of working with students with EBD.

Emotional Connection

Participants were motivated to pursue a career in education and remain in the profession because of a personal desire and an authentic disposition to share a passion. Although participants expressed deep gratification in their role, it was also conveyed that working with students with EBD was emotionally taxing. The impact of TDSA and student aggression can be long-lasting and take a toll on the health and well-being of educators. Santor et al. (2019) report that educators who face higher levels of harassment or physical violence experience diminished physical and mental health and lower job performance. Although participants acknowledged the emotional drain of teaching students with EBD, all participants reported a strong desire to continue working with students with EBD. Paul said, "The incentive for me as a teacher is huge. The longer I stay on the job, the more I find it rewarding." Leggio and Terras (2019) report that teachers' perceptions of and feelings toward students with EBD influence their affective responses and behaviors when working with students with EBD.

Teacher-Principal Disconnects

The identified differences mainly related to teacher and principal perceptions surrounding follow-up practices and reporting. Teacher participants indicated that follow-up procedures after an incident of TDSA are inconsistent and do not always attend to the teacher's needs. Some participants felt an imbalance of care between student and teacher, where the teacher's needs and

wellness were occasionally overlooked. Emotionally supportive principals who maintain open lines of communication and provide informational help to staff members improve job satisfaction and professional growth (Cancio et al., 2013). Principal participants echoed the importance and value of communicating with all stakeholders and acknowledged that directly connecting with the involved teacher is imperative but does not always happen. The principal participants explained the importance of deliberating mitigating circumstances when responding to TDSA. Espelage et al. (2013) affirm that consequences should deter recidivism, be reasonable to the student's unique circumstances and be proportional to the infraction level. While there was agreement on ideal responses to handling TDSA, there was some disconnect regarding how principal practices were perceived.

From this study, teacher participants identified reporting and outcomes as an area of incongruency. Some participating teachers questioned the integrity of the reporting processes due to experienced contradictions. After completing a report, Dee explained, "Nothing ever happened, there was no follow-up, and no one even came to my class after to talk to me about it." Some teacher participants raised concerns regarding missing documentation of student aggression and adjusting failing grades for students with EBD. Teacher participants revealed that when credit is given to a student who has not completed course competencies, professional pressure, and legitimacy are experienced. The relational trust between principal and teacher will weaken without exhibiting personal and professional regard for each other (Schneider, 2002).

The findings from the present study suggest that TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD are affected by the interrelationship and interdependence of people caring and healing, learning and leading. Educating students with EBD can be overwhelming and challenging, placing high demands on principals and teachers. The discoveries support the

existing literature about responsible leadership and the need to create a community through trust, care, and partnerships. Gage et al. (2021) report that TSR is central to teaching students with EBD and creating a positive school climate. Participant commitment to working with and supporting students with EBD was unmistakable, and the message was clear, "It takes a village." Fan et al. (2011) describe the school community as a multidimensional construct of shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students, teachers, and other school personnel, to set the parameters of acceptable behaviors and school norms.

The imperative for adults to lead and be united in building school climate affirms that school leaders must be committed to and demonstrate that all voices matter. "A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus" (King, 1967). With a strong vision and commitment to all human resources, principals and teachers can lead collectively to fulfill great expectations, maintain high standards, and avert TDSA. A holistic and communal approach can help secure meeting the needs of students with EBD, school principals, and teachers. Kouzes and Posner (2017) affirm that personal effectiveness and motivation can increase when an organization upholds shared values.

Discussion of the Findings

The data in this study suggests that continued training and voice are vital for educators working in the unique discipline area within special education. With recurrent instruction on EBD as a disability, a deeper understanding of the disorder can be realized to positively affect teacher practice and improve outcomes for students with EBD. With ongoing professional development, educators can become more proficient in effectively managing and working with students with EBD. EBD is a lifelong disability that can not be "loved" away. The TSR will not eliminate adverse student behaviors, poor self-regulation, or TDSA. However, it can offer a

space that allows students with EBD to access alternative behaviors and be accountable for misconduct. The relationship can help a student explore better ways to handle difficult situations and resolve conflict. The TSR can help students with EBD understand that they are in a safe space to make mistakes from which they can learn and grow.

Teachers' Experiences in Building Relationships (RQ1)

TDSA involves passive and overt acts of violent student behavior toward a teacher. The prevalence of violence perpetrated against educators has drawn attention to the magnitude and negative impact TDSA has on student outcomes and teacher wellness (Martinez et al., 2016). Violence in secondary schools has been reported to occur more often than in middle and elementary schools (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). The findings from this study provide new insights into understanding the impact of TDSA on principals, teachers, and the high school community. Moreover, the study carves new ground that links the TSR to positive academic, social, and behavioral outcomes for students with EBD.

Anchors to the Teaching Profession

Schools provide learning opportunities for students to facilitate knowledge acquisition and curriculum mastery. The educational system is designed to serve students and satisfy diverse potentials to help learners live productive lives, become good citizens, and obey society's social and legal rules. Participant responses in the present study corresponded that working with students with EBD is complicated and unpredictable. Still, the desire to make a difference and support students who are at risk fuels participant motivations and sustains job commitment. Educators assume a significant role in delivering and upholding curricular standards and the goals of the educational system. However, participants affirmed that the call to teach was more than providing lessons and instruction. It was about changing lives and mentoring students.

Parallel to the findings of the present study, Leggio and Terras (2019) assert that effective teachers of students with EBD develop an unconditional TSR that affirms the teacher's belief in the student's ability to succeed regardless of the setbacks. Many teacher participants were unaware of the special education demands within a career technical school. Yet, linking a passion, serving as a role model, helping students in need, giving back to humanity, and shaping future generations were all anchors to the teaching profession. All participants felt a moral duty to assist EBD students in overcoming obstacles, nurturing confidence, and self-regulation. With a cooperative and collective effort, participants were inspired to help students prepare for the world after high school.

Development

Florian (2014) reports that little is known about what best prepares teachers for the challenges in today's classrooms. As students with EBD display difficulty with authority, relationships, and autonomy, teachers are left to identify suitable interventions and develop best practices (Leggio & Terras, 2019). Participants declared that they had become increasingly proficient in working with and serving students with EBD. However, the growth was attributed to experience, not training. Being better trained and receiving ongoing development would build educator proficiency and competency for working with students with EBD. Consensus for more training was supported by all participants affirming the benefits would be gleaned by new and seasoned teachers to help students with EBD engage and self-regulate at school.

Aggressive behavior can compromise academic and social success for students with EBD and heighten the emotional demands of teaching. Walton et al. (2014) discovered that many teachers struggle with the knowledge and skills to teach in classrooms with diverse learners and learning needs. The appreciation for developing more concrete strategies to work with students

with EBD was unanimously voiced. Reddy et al. (2018) report that the rise of TDSA has been progressive and affecting schools across the globe. Training educators to effectively work with students with EBD can ensure that principals and teachers feel qualified and prepared.

Principals function as the school leader, and teachers serve as the frontline leaders in the classroom. Although teacher training and experience aim to prepare educators to meet students' academic and developmental needs, research indicates that many teachers do not feel sufficiently trained to work with students with EBD (Wheby & Kern, 2014). School leaders can facilitate additional training for teachers of students with EBD to bolster classroom management strategies and self-assurance. As revealed by McKenna et al. (2021), teachers need additional training and resources to differentiate instructional approaches for students with EBD successfully. Developing new techniques can help teachers secure a learning space that respectfully and inclusively meets the needs of students with EBD. Espelage et al. (2013) affirm that school leaders must provide adequate and ongoing training to prevent violence against educators and maximize learning outcomes.

Teacher practice can alter measurable results for students with EBD. Effective instructional practices matter and are essential for students with EBD (Cooper, 2019). Developing new approaches can contribute to securing a learning space that meets the needs of students with EBD respectfully and inclusively. Professional development in lesson design, implementation, and evaluation using evidence-based models can improve outcomes for students with EBD (Espalage et al., 2013). There are no sure things when working with students with behavioral challenges. However, through continued staff development, school principals can ensure that teachers are prepared to provide maximum opportunities for students with EBD to succeed.

Despite efforts to implement alternative approaches and use various instructional strategies, students with EBD continue to experience the poorest social and academic results compared to any other group of learners (Campbell et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2017). Collaboration between teachers and principal leaders must occur to improve the social and learning outcomes for students with EBD and reduce the emotional demands for educators.

Building Relationships

Creating meaningful interactions and upholding a positive school climate can construct an environment where staff and students feel safe, respected, valued, and engaged. A productive rapport has consistently been linked with positive outcomes that improve school connectedness and a sense of belonging (Ang et al., 2020). The teacher can be paramount in cultivating a school environment where students with EBD are inspired to reach their potential. The TSR may unleash the power that helps students with EBD experience an academic and social awakening. The TSR can deliver comfort and solace during high school that maximizes learning and developmental opportunities and prepares students with EBD for the adult world.

Participants in the present study expressed the importance of developing and nurturing a positive rapport with students with EBD. Moreover, participants confirmed that securing a respectful connection takes time and must be founded on trust and care. Student aggression is often complex and perplexing. Accordingly, developing a rapport with students who display aggressive behavior is not a clear-cut process. The key ingredients of trust, care, and respect can promote student growth and communicate to the student that the teacher is committed to student development and success. Mayeroff (1995) asserts that a person will be defensive and closed without trust, which can block or deny growth. The TSR sets the stage for perceiving and responding to the needs of students with EBD. When educators demonstrate in their everyday

practice that all students matter, the TSRs strengthen. Participants reaffirmed the importance of showing care through dialogue and modeling. According to Gaylin (1976), genuine caring takes place when people relate to others in a respectful and supportive manner where a healthy unfolding of all developments can occur. Through love and attention, the teacher can commit to helping students grow, actualize, and become responsible for their decisions. Noddings (2005) asserts that there is reciprocity in caring, and the student can also become a care agent. The TSR can quietly work behind the scenes and help students discover the many talents and gifts within. Participants shared countless stories of students with EBD showing care and commitment to the teacher after a caring relationship was established. In fact, for many, the rapport continued beyond the student's high school experience.

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs emphasizes that as shelter, safety, love, and belonging are satisfied, confidence, curiosity, and the quest for growth can be operationalized. A positive TSR can help students with EBD feel a network of support that bolsters learning and development and positively affects morality, problem-solving, and collaborating with others. Trust and faith are critical components in any relationship where real, meaningful learning is a goal. According to Freire (2018), "Faith in people is an a priori requirement for dialogue" (p. 90). When teachers show faith and commitment to building rapport and working with students with EBD, the basic human needs of security and respectful connections are upheld. Through teacher-student interactions, faith in the student's abilities and the desire to help the student grow can be affirmed. Faith can also fortify trust between the teacher and the student. More importantly, having faith in students can instill a genuine and profound sense of self-worth, inspiring students with EBD to value their ability, their desire to contribute to society, and the significance of authentic rapport.

It is essential to amplify that all participants affirmed that the relationship with school personnel, parents, and students with EBD was foundational to participant success. Teaching students with EBD can be increasingly challenging and less effective without the connection and the relationship with the students. The takeaway magnifies the need for educators to be well-trained in building relationships with students with EBD, not only in educator preparation and teacher induction but also continually reinforced through ongoing PD. Assessment practices, instructional strategies, and curricular outcomes change over time. Yet, relationships are timeless. With the knowledge of EBD as a disability and the power of relationship building, educators must be steadfast to continue practicing and polishing the art of building relationships and understanding their students with EBD.

Strategies and Supports to Mitigate TDSA (RQ2)

Interventions

Starratt's (1991) ethical leadership model proposes that when justice, critique, and care are incorporated into our daily conduct, educators can nurture and experience the positive power of TSRs. Participants used multiple interventions and approaches to connect with students with EBD. Participants talked extensively about utilizing various strategies to mitigate TDSA and de-escalate students when they became agitated. Expanded awareness of interventions can bolster teacher practice and effectiveness when responding to student aggression and working with students with EBD (Harry & Klingner, 2014). When behaviors escalate in the classroom, the teacher participants emphasized the need to look beyond the behaviors and consider possible causal triggers. Using highly effective evidence-based intervention is necessary when working with students with EBD; however, it also involves employing social, emotional, and behavioral support (Campbell et al., 2018). Critical reflection can bring awareness to what the student with

EBD is experiencing and help the teacher determine a suitable response. Espelage et al. (2013) reported that incorporating social and behavioral instruction at the classroom level can allow students with EBD to develop skills to resolve conflict, manage emotions, and advance social and behavioral proficiencies. Participants explained that when learning opportunities were meaningful and relevant, students with EBD were motivated to participate.

Scott et al. (2012) reveal that an effective teacher depends on the mediation and strategies used, but it is also measured by the fluency with which the interventions are applied. The findings from the study revealed that continual observation through interaction and listening was an essential intervention to acknowledge a hostile situation quickly. Space and autonomy were other tactics that participants used. Participants explained that space in terms of time or location gave the student a pause from the emotional charge. The approaches allowed the student in crisis to step out of an escalated situation. Participant principals affirmed that every case of TDSA was unique and, depending on the student and the circumstances, would influence which and how many strategies were required.

School Supports

Dealing with TDSA cannot be addressed in isolation. Participants acknowledge the importance of having support staff within the building to connect with after experiencing student aggression. Burke et al. (2015) agree that collegial support and trusting relationships between teachers allow peers to seek advice from each other comfortably. Collegial support relates to teachers' care and assistance to other school members. Positive relationships within a school setting can promote professional collaboration and emotional encouragement. The interactions can help teachers deal with aggressive behaviors better and work with students with EBD more effectively. Speaking with a peer who understands the complexity and the volatility of working

with students with EBD provided comfort and reassurance to teacher participants. Through the interactions and conversations with colleagues, many participants indicated that their supportive peers had become close friends and someone they could freely turn to for emotional support. Kouzes and Posner (2017) reveal that seeking and valuing feedback from others sincerely and authentically can secure supportive interactions. Participating teachers in the present study appreciated administrative involvement and office support, especially when the aggression was a recurring problem and when teacher strategies were not effective. When a teacher requests office support due to student aggression, participating principals affirm that a quick response is paramount.

Principal participants believed being accessible and responsive can help secure a safe school and facilitate a caring culture. Starratt (1991) avows that administrators must be steadfast in creating an environment conducive to learning and where prosocial behaviors are displayed. In the leadership role, both principals in the present study understood how quickly a situation can shift and believed restorative discipline and behavioral interventions were critical for healing, resolution, and accountability. Participating principals endeavored to build supportive relationships with teachers, students, and parents, to reinforce a consistent message that develops all stakeholders. Interpersonal relationships can broaden individual mindsets as ideas and knowledge are viewed differently. Covey (2020) refers to this process as a paradigm shift that enables leadership to view new possibilities and realize organizational outcomes that are significantly greater through a collective effort.

Being mindful of others and the environment is vital to good leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2017) reveal that leaders must stop, look, and listen to increase creative solutions to problems. Participating principals work hard to maintain open lines of communication to ensure

a comprehensive understanding of what and how people feel. Participating principals felt that being accessible and willing to listen and understand expressed needs was vital to responsive leadership. Fullan (2011) argued that effective leaders "…actively participate as learners in helping organizations improve" (p. 5). Participating principals identified that completing everything in a day was challenging but felt that accessibility and responsivity to the school community was a time-consuming precedent. Hence, participants highlighted the significance of prioritizing and empowering others. Kouzes and Posner (2017) affirm that leadership entails a relationship between those who aspire to lead and people who choose to follow. Safeguarding collaborative actions can strengthen the school community, and through modeling appropriate behaviors, students with EBD can develop suitable responses to negative emotions and triggers.

Follow-up from TDSA

Accountability for actions and behaviors was an important strategy that participants used to help students with EBD develop new behaviors. Starratt (2005) affirms that moral and responsible leadership is imparted when principals and teachers work to meet human needs by holding people accountable for behaviors. Through the accountability lens, as principals, teachers, and students celebrate successes, transgressions can be revisited to help students develop and grow new responses and improved behaviors. The ethical paradigm of justice, critique, and care can help students with EBD make meaningful connections with teachers and peers that prepare students for life and the adult world. With a community of caring adults that include teachers, other support staff, and parents, collective reflection and discussion surrounding the successes and challenges of TDSA can ensue. Participants found that through conversation and mediation practices, voices could be heard, and students could be supported.

Although some teacher participants brought forth concerns regarding principal follow-up and reporting, the participant's commitment to work collaboratively with the administration remained. Participating principals conceded that there had been times when dealing with TDSA, people or their needs had been overlooked. The acknowledgment can help others understand that error is part of being human. The leadership displayed by principal participants aligned with the findings that leadership practices must be rooted in an ethical perspective to enhance moral education, promote self-knowledge, and secure community awareness (Branson, 2010). Maintaining interactions and engagement at the principal and teacher levels can help educators find solutions to handle TDSA and nurture a 'we' mindset instead of an 'us' and 'them' mentality. If there is a crack in solidarity between teachers and principals, trust and faith wane, which can directly impact students. The ramifications of a fractured system would be felt and experienced by the entire community. The participants felt that the support for teachers and administration was reciprocated and was essential to secure a thriving school community that people were proud to be part of.

Good participation can safeguard liberties, secure justice and equality, and improve life quality (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). The desire to contribute and positively affect others can energize a collaborative and caring culture within the school community. Communication is an integral component of leader-follower relationships (Waldron, 2012). With a cooperative mindset and open communication, future outcomes can be optimized to support students with EBD and mitigate TDSA. When principal leadership interacts with staff regarding TDSA, authenticity and regard for justice and care are displayed to teachers (Starratt, 2005). Care is at the root of any relationship; without it, healing and growth are curbed. As principals and teachers take action, through conversation and mediation, to correct the injustices caused by TDSA,

students will be held accountable. The message will communicate to the school community that safety and well-being will not be compromised. Without leadership resolve, it is impossible to preach what is not practiced.

School Climate and Emotional Labor (RQ3)

Educating secondary school students with EBD can be an unpredictable and overwhelming charge. However, studies affirm that higher-quality TSR predicts reduced student aggression. According to Gage et al. (2021), positive adult relationships have been reported to increase prosocial behaviors for students with EBD. Participants affirm that when an authentic and meaningful relationship is cultivated with students with EBD, the display of student aggression is reduced. The findings support prior research by Newberry (2010), confirming that while the TSR takes time to develop, it is central to teaching and working with students with EBD. Vygotsky's (1978) theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition, crediting that community plays a chief protagonist in "making meaning."

School Climate

Participants articulated that TDSA has a profoundly negative effect on school climate and can destroy a sense of community. Researchers affirm that student aggression erodes school climate and intensifies teachers' emotional labor (Santor et al., 2019; Yao et al., 2015). Principal and teacher participants report responding to TDSA through restorative conversations and mediation, which fortifies caring, healing, learning, and leading approaches. With the mindset to learn and grow from experiences, participants remained resolute in guiding and helping students with EBD to develop academically, socially, and behaviorally. Teachers do not suppress negative thoughts or feelings that student aggression causes. Instead, the emotional demands of

dealing with TDSA and the effects of aggressive behavior are handled to send a clear message, build the school's climate, and positively affect the professional emotional labor.

The reported emotional burdens of working with students with EBD align with previous findings in which teachers described their work as a source of pleasure entangled with negative emotions due to conflict (see, e.g., Hargreaves, 2001). It is understandable for TDSA to cause frustration, fear, and anger; however, participants affirm that the positive feelings that result from working with students with EBD surpass the negative. Kariou et al. (2021) suggest that teachers who are empathetic and caring towards their students may gain additional gratification from their job and experience less exhaustion. The findings suggest that the TSR can uphold genuine purpose, carve a compassionate path, and be an effective coping strategy to eliminate stressors caused by TDSA to improve school climate and emotional demands.

Vygotsky's theory submits that if social interactions are harmful and students with EBD display TDSA without consequence or accountability, it can be misinterpreted and embolden a student to continue exhibiting aggressive behaviors. Teacher participants' experiences and observations indicated that chaotic situations in school occur when aggressive behaviors are ignored. Participating principals assert that when aggressive behaviors are not reported, the behaviors are ostensibly ignored. Participating principals agreed that the school climate is negatively affected when aggressive behaviors are overlooked. The perspective emphasizes that addressing and responding to TDSA is everyone's responsibility, affirming that it takes a village.

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory avows teachers can be knowledge providers and role models for students with EBD. Participants implied that when students with EBD are in a space where they feel safe and valued and where behaviors are fortified by modeling and positive reinforcement, individual capacity is developed. Mcleod (2022) reports

that a secure environment can create opportunities for collaborative dialogue and opens the door to cognitive development. Accordingly, with meaningful connections and exchanges, the amount of information and skills a student with EBD can acquire potentially increases. Social associations can also enhance higher-order mental functions, such as formal reasoning and problem-solving (Mcleod, 2022). When students are successful in learning and interactions are constructive and encouraging, people tend to feel better about themselves and their abilities. The shared experiences from principal and teacher participants declared that the TSR reinforced a positive school climate in which people and feelings matter; from that, the community takes shape. Vygotsky asserts that critical growth can be experienced, and knowledge can be co-constructed through social interactions with a skillful tutor. As teacher participants collaborate with students to identify a passion and develop the student's gifts, research findings indicated an enhanced school climate.

Emotional Demands

The educational experience is fundamental to ready students to become contributing community members through prosocial behaviors, skills development, knowledge acquisition, and learning experiences (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). The participant's experiences with TDSA revealed that verbal aggression and defiant behaviors are the most frequently experienced acts of student aggression. Experiencing verbal hostility is associated with many adverse teacher outcomes, such as emotional distress, guilt, diminished job satisfaction, anxiety, depression, teacher engagement, and somatic problems, such as fatigue and problems (Moon et al., 2015).

Human relations are central to school operations. Findings support recent research that student aggression is a growing workplace problem that intensifies job stress levels, mental health, and employee efficacy (Sguera et al., 2016). Study participants affirmed that work-related

stresses surge when contentious relationships with students with EBD prevail. The need to respond to and productively heal from TDSA is imperative. Gilmour and Wehby (2020) affirm that suppressing negative emotions perpetuates emotional labor, compromises TSRs, and damages teacher efficacy. Participants indicated that a deeper understanding and awareness developed when sincere exchanges occurred following an aggressive encounter with a student with EBD. Healing conversations with students, colleagues, principals, or other supports following an aggressive encounter facilitated a reset and an opportunity for participants to reconcile. Waldron (2012) explains that when bonds of caring are combined with shared professional and personal convictions, human interactions can become emotional. Although emotional connections can lead to relational manipulation, human associations are a powerful tool to galvanize and solidify purpose and work affiliations (Waldron, 2012). As stakeholders genuinely participate in discovering and implementing school-wide solutions to prevent TDSA, all voices can facilitate a culture and climate that secures community engagement.

In Vygotsky's development theories, social interactions are the influencing source to heighten individual learning and growth. Vygotsky presents that if a child is left alone, development will occur but will not be maximized. As schools respond to aggressive behaviors, classroom removal is typical, which may limit student learning, contribute to learner frustration, and may exasperate hostile behaviors. Student aggression may become more prevalent if a student with EBD feels abandoned, unwanted, or marginalized. Mihalas et al. (2009) indicated that when students with EBD recognize less social support, they engage in increased problematic behaviors. Participants affirmed that keeping the student in the class and trying to de-escalate the situation was their first approach to dealing with student aggression.

The data from the present study suggest that teacher competency and self-efficacy in working with students with EBD was evolutionary, affirming that many participants did not feel prepared to support students with EBD. As teachers develop through practice, teachers may inadvertently reinforce expressed student behaviors with reciprocal negative teacher-student interactions, such as exclusionary discipline. Although teacher participants indicated a desire to deal with student aggression and hostile situations in the classroom, it was not always possible. Participants reported increased proficiency in de-escalating aggressive students over time. Participants believed that with an improved understanding of EBD and teacher competency, students with EBD remained in class more often.

Principals are experienced in many areas pertaining to teaching and educational leadership. Teachers are experienced with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Students with EBD are experienced with having EBD and dealing with the adverse academic and social outcomes that accompany the disability. As "competent partners," participants affirmed the value of making opportunities to learn with and from their students with EBD. Through conversation, people have an equal opportunity to participate, generate ideas, and learn together. Engaging in critical discourse is how adults move from an argumentative mindset to an empathetic understanding to seek knowledge and awareness (Covey, 2020).

Participants spoke expressively about the emotional demands of working with students with EBD, affirming mental drain and inner fatigue. Taking the time to interact with students with EBD, to understand and learn about the student's life situations and learning experiences, can help teachers to establish the TSR and generate knowledge. Moreover, the interactions can help to alleviate the emotional demands of working with students with EBD. Waldron (2012) explains that emotions are often reactions to violations of expectations and can be positive or

negative. The need to confer with others to develop a comprehensive awareness of expectations is critical. As competent partners, all community members can become motivated and empowered to grow through caring, healing, learning, and leading. Care has been defined by Noddings (2005) as a moral ethic that supports the needs of another. Specifically, if a person cares for another, the person tends to acknowledge how the other feels and determines what specific needs require attention. Participants shared strategies and approaches to cultivate the relationship with students with EBD supporting that it was an ongoing, iterative, and evolving practice.

The data from the present study suggest that the progress students make at the career technical school is often inspirational as learners develop a shift in perspective that leads to an "I-can" mindset. Participants report that as the TSR matures, changes often occur in students' standards, self-regulation strategies, and their desire to be accountable – fulfilling the school's assignment and parental expectations to help prepare students with EBD for their next life journey. Byrk and Schneider (2002) report that the TSR is strengthened when forged through trust and regular social exchanges that authenticate connections and expectations through action. Conversely, Byrk and Schneider (2002) reveal that relational trust will atrophy, creating barriers without an affirming TSR. Participants explained that when students develop confidence in the rapport and feel cared for by the teacher, the display of aggressive behaviors tends to subside. Conversely, without faith in the relationship and if feeling marginalized or unwanted, aggressive behaviors intensify.

From the heart, participants explained their desire to share a passion and work with some of the system's most at-risk and in-need learners, explaining that the emotional returns surpass the demands. The rewards of witnessing and being part of the student's development and

successes represent an enormous reason participants were encouraged to work with and serve students with EBD. Connecting Vygotsky's views of human development through social interaction supports that the display of TDSA can be lessened as students with EBD develop values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with supportive school staff.

The combination of collegial and leadership support corroborates that most participants are where they need to be. Without a doubt, the positive human interactions were significant for all participants, but the emotional drain was also genuine. A couple of teachers were considering a school change. One participant noted, "Staying in one place for an entire career is not always good." Many participants affirmed that a change was necessary to honor the profession if the drain was too much or rippling into their practice and wellness. Every participant was persistent in teaching, serving as a role model, helping students in need, giving back to humanity, and shaping future generations.

Vygotsky refers to the gap between actual and potential learning as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). He argues that the gap can be bridged only through collaboration with adults and other learners. The traditional ZPD assumes that one person is more competent than the other. Vygotsky does not consider symmetry and equality between the partners. However, with a community outlook, learning from others is possible. With trusting relationships and authentic connections between leadership, teachers, and students, participants shared stories of how classrooms and schools can become powerful spaces to overcome obstacles and realize formidable outcomes. As Waldron (2012) outlined, emotional connections and conversations are powerful tools to secure purpose and define a meaningful working life. Strong leadership can inspire members to continually develop and grow individually and collectively.

Developing authentic relationships create new opportunities for success. Kouzes and Posner (2017) reveal that seeking and valuing feedback from others sincerely and authentically can secure supportive interactions. Moreover, interpersonal relationships can broaden individual mindsets when ideas and knowledge are viewed differently. As principals and teachers are open to and see the value in making meaningful connections and learning from the students with EBD, the TSR moves towards a transactional ZPD. With a willingness to lead and be led – leading by following, educators can learn and perceive the world from an EBD perspective - An outlook that fosters learning and an understanding of the diversity within a student with EBD.

Recommendations for Leadership, Policy, and Practice

Student aggression is complex and challenging and can jeopardize a person's physical safety. The primary role of leadership is to influence others by developing a vision that focuses and motivates a collective action by followers (Burke, 2014). Principal leadership is central to such developments. The data in the present study revealed that current school leadership practices broadly support teacher educators by responding to TDSA quickly and with the intent to resolve. Participating principals recognize the need and the desire to work collaboratively with teachers to prevent and manage student aggression and determine practical approaches to serve students with EBD. Despite best efforts, TDSA continues to occur at both schools, affecting school safety and climate and impacting the emotional demands and the well-being of the entire school community. If current policies and practices are not working well, Kraft and Furlong (2018) suggest they should be reconsidered.

In a recent study conducted by Carrell et al. (2018), observing a disruptive peer in childhood has implications and long-run consequences for educational attainment and subsequent earnings in adulthood. Results indicate witnesses of student aggression in school

reduce annual earnings at ages 24 to 28 by 3 percent (Carrell et al., 2018). The negative implications of exposure to student aggression are far-reaching. Accordingly, it is imperative for school leaders to be attentive and responsive to TDSA.

The qualitative phenomenological study conducted here contributes to the limited research by exploring educators' experiences of TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. The study used three theories relating to care and relationships using Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, Starratt's ethical leadership model, and Vygotsky's social constructivist philosophy. The opportunity for school leaders, together with other key stakeholders, can use these results to improve academic, behavioral, and social outcomes for students with EBD. Based on the discussion of the findings, the following recommendations are offered for school districts, building principals, and pre-service teacher training programs. These recommendations include allocating sufficient resources; family, school, and community engagement; developing distinct programs to address in-school violence and aggressive behaviors; and broadening programming to include behavior management for all teacher candidates.

Resource Allocation

The first recommendation involves allocating sufficient time, people, and financial resources for professional development. All participants raised the need for quality training to support students with EBD and deal with aggressive behaviors. The training should provide stakeholders with knowledge and skill to mitigate TDSA and the opportunity to interact with colleagues. Professional development requires human and financial resources. Leadership must be steadfast in securing the means necessary to develop human capital and positively affect the outcomes for students with EBD. A genuine relationship is an essential factor when responding

to student aggression and being able to support a student with EBD holistically. Teacher practices should be continuously developed to ensure that approaches and responses to working with students with EBD are aligned with student needs. Without consistent training, teachers are ill-equipped to handle TDSA and supportive relationships with students with EBD.

Goodwill of Teachers

The compelling and authentic conversations with participants conveyed the impact of TDSA and working with students with EBD. Participants spoke about being drained but emotionally connected. Although the comments varied, it was unmistakable that the ongoing challenges of working with students with EBD took a toll on all participants. Yet, the findings also affirmed that participants found a pathway to persist. Results present that what kept the participants coming back day after day, month after month, and year after year, were the same challenging students. Working with an at-risk student population offered powerful rewards that have changed how participants view life, their calling as educators, and working with students with EBD. The participant's desire to continue educating and supporting a vulnerable group of learners remained.

All participants in this present study displayed the goodwill and perseverance to continue teaching and developing students with EBD despite the challenges. The educational system cannot rely on the benevolence of educators committed to working with students with EBD. The flawed model needs to be more sustainable and effective. The demand for teachers continues, yet the supply to meet the growing demand is decreasing. Teacher turnover is costly from a fiscal perspective but also compromises student learning. Cooper (2019) affirms that the most predominant teacher shortage within special education is among educators working with students with EBD. Given the diverse needs that the EBD disorder presents, students with EBD require

instruction from highly trained and effective teachers. Scott et al. (2017) revealed that students with EBD are often taught by emergency-certified or alternatively licensed teachers who have minimal experience with effective instructional practices for students with EBD. Despite best intentions and perhaps the desire to support students with EBD, the system must rely on something other than the goodwill of people. EBD is a disability, a chronic and persistent condition. With an enriched awareness of the disorder, educators will be better prepared for the successes and setbacks of working with students with EBD.

Educators and the system must rely on something other than the goodwill of people to work with a vulnerable and challenging student population who do not sit in seats, take tests, and do well academically or behaviorally. If educational leaders evaluate the demands of working with cognitively and physically difficult students, better alternatives may be identified to support further educators who work with students with EBD.

EBD is a complicated disability area, as children and youth with EBD often present like many other students in the class. Students with EBD do not typically have a physical impairment that suggests the need for a particular accommodation. Yet, without provocation, students with EBD can present hurtful, aggressive, and intimidating behaviors. The need for all teachers to understand EBD as a disability is vital. Instead of reacting negatively to aggressive and defiant behaviors, teachers must know that the violent and hostile behaviors are, in fact, the child's disability that requires accommodation. EBD is a life-long condition that cannot be eradicated. As teachers reinforce effective interventions and supports, students with EBD can develop strategies and alternative behaviors that improve student development and social interactions. To support teachers in meeting the needs of students with EBD, professional development relating to instruction, interventions, and EBD as a disability is critical.

Community Engagement

A second recommendation is for school leaders to endorse and facilitate an opportunity for community engagement to enhance school-based efforts in responding to TDSA. Although schools play an essential role in student development, involving teachers, students, families, and community members can improve the effectiveness of school-based initiatives. Educators often treat parents and families as bystanders rather than partners (Weiss et al., 2010). Today, schools strive to prepare students for the twenty-first-century demands. Preparing students cannot be realized if the educational experiences for students with EBD sacrifice the educational experience for staff and students. Wilson et al. (2011) report that although student verbal aggression is the most common form of teacher-directed aggression, it may also be an antecedent to physical violence (Geiger & Fischer, 2006). The efforts to secure a school community are moral acts that nurture people and relations through collaborative work and common goals.

Innovative leaders must judiciously participate before action or change can occur (Freire, 2017). Initiating a school coalition where families and community members collaborate to address and overcome school violence can nurture supportive relationships and overcome school-wide challenges. “A leader must have the ability to bring out the best in others – to enable others to act. In fact, new research is revealing that the ability to enable others to act has become the critical differentiator between success and failure” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 30). Uniting the school community with shared values and a reason to care will secure consensus and mobilize mutual expectations that uphold school and societal expectations. Inspiring a shared vision that school members feel part of can build momentum, bolster the school climate, augment job satisfaction, and encourage success, confidence, and hope in each student.

In-School Programming

Resolute leadership that adopts effective interventions and offers supportive programming can help manage TDSA with improved success and better mitigate student aggression. The magnitude and unpredictability of student violence can create a chaotic and unstable school atmosphere where the dignity and self-worth of community members are at-risk. TDSA presents a dire situation for schools and requires leadership action. Without swift interventions to better moderate TDSA, relationships can be strained, trust can be compromised, and participation endangered. The data revealed that student aggression perpetuates a low school climate, empowers hostile student behaviors, and reduces teacher engagement. The leadership imperative is critical and must respond to eliminate a toxic and dangerous environment. Staff must be assured that they matter and are vital in securing a safe and successful school.

When an administrator embraces a focus that encapsulates the benefit of the whole school, moral qualities become evident (Fullan, 2003). Followers expect leaders to have a sense of direction, and since TDSA violates the school's mission, the leader must be compelled to take action. Implementing school-wide social and emotional learning programs could increase adult and peer support, school climate, and safety. Comprehensive programming can foster developmentally appropriate skills to help students with EBD practice prosocial behaviors and improve communication, conflict resolution, problem-solving, decision-making, and anger management. Progressing these competencies take time and an opportunity to practice. The design of school-wide programs should be co-produced with student involvement to ensure programs are acceptable and provide sufficient space to develop proficiencies. Kouzes and Posner (2017) believe honesty, competence, inspiration, and forward-looking are the top four

leadership attributes. Implementing programs to reduce student aggression must be a priority that can improve TSR, school climate, and academic, social, and behavioral achievements.

Pre-License Training

Another recommendation is for teachers' pre-service training programs and principals' licensure programs. Many teacher and principal preparation programs provide limited training on effective instructional practices for students with behavioral challenges (Freemen et al., 2014). In serving students with EBD in the least restrictive environment, special education and general education teachers require more knowledge and training to work with behavioral challenges. All participants in the present study indicated that their teacher training did not provide enough instruction on student aggression and hostile behavior. Principal participants also noted that administrative training lacked sufficient resources to work with aggressive students and respond to TDSA to support the school community. Providing additional courses for teachers and school leaders to assess and address challenging and aggressive behaviors can help educators effectively work with students with EBD. Without comprehensive pre-service and licensure training, many good educators will be subject to heightened stress and potentially volatile circumstances.

EBD is a disability within the giant sphere of special education, and participants affirmed naivety in educating and supporting students with EBD. Incorporating more exposure in the pre-licensure training programs could generate awareness and understanding of the intricacies of working with diverse student populations. Recommendations for teachers and principals to have placement experiences with students with EBD could draw more educators into this specialized field of practice. Field placements in diverse settings can provide educators with practical strategies and interventions for working with students with EBD who display aggressive and self-defeating behaviors. The knowledge and awareness can support new leaders and educators

to work within the special education domain effectively. Preparing, recruiting, and retaining educators is paramount, as is the need to lessen the emotional drain that may contribute to teacher shortages. According to Theoharis and Fitzpatrick (2013), a revolving door of educators hampers student achievements, learning, school climate, and culture. An educator preparation program that reinforces EBD as a disability and provides authentic experiences working with students with EBD can improve awareness, understanding, and teacher efficacy. Cooper (2019) yields that academic content and behavior are intricately linked. If a teacher is going to be successful in delivering content, they must also be effective at managing and responding to student behavior. The awareness and understanding of how to support students with EBD and react to challenging behaviors are imperative.

Smaller Class Sizes

As reinforced by Vygotsky's findings (1978), schools can employ several tactics to support teachers and students with EBD. Recommendations for smaller class sizes may improve outcomes and experiences for teachers and students with EBD. Securing a learning space with fewer pupils offers students with EBD additional opportunities to participate in classroom learning. McDuffie et al. (2008) report that students with EBD are notorious for aggressive behaviors with peers and teachers. With smaller class sizes, students may feel safer and more inclined to make meaningful connections with teachers and fellow peers and a tight-knit classroom community can be realized. The dynamic can also help teachers better cater to the unique needs of students with EBD and offer more individualized feedback. A classroom set-up with fewer students can improve student comprehension and 1:1 interaction, fortifying engagement and learning outcomes.

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching as a standard practice is another recommendation that could provide teachers with classroom partners. Two educators who know and understand the student's needs and are invested in the student's success can create a learning community that could benefit teachers and students with EBD. Although many co-teaching models exist, the arrangements can offer additional instructional options and reduce the teacher-student ratio (McDuffie et al., 2008). A recommendation to staff classrooms with two educators may help educators maintain high expectations for both academic and behavioral performance. Basso and McCoy (2007) reveal that co-teaching increases student accountability and provides educators with more individual and small-group instruction opportunities. A positive role model of cooperation is displayed through co-teaching, and educators can enrich teaching and reteach concepts to small groups needing additional support. With innovative teacher and student appointments, school leaders may discover that co-teaching arrangements enhance outcomes for all stakeholders. The expense of co-teaching is apparent, as is the cost of teacher attrition. Creativity is needed to minimize teacher fatigue, improve job satisfaction, and moderate the teacher shortage. School principals may decide that a co-teaching model may be worth the investment in particular classrooms to improve outcomes for teachers and students with EBD.

School-Family Alliances

Participants indicated that career tech education provides opportunities for students to develop learning abilities and generate a post-secondary transition plan. Partnerships with community organizations, health clinics, and local businesses reinforce community engagement. However, the training experiences offered by schools can extend beyond students, curriculum, and industry vocations. Schools can enhance community engagement by providing learning

opportunities and additional support to parents of students with EBD. The study's participants identified many benefits from developing a trusting rapport with parents of students with EBD. A recommendation to offer seminars on EBD as a disability can help families learn about the disorder. The sessions can inform parents about different strategies and behavioral challenges teachers experience in the classroom. The workshops can unite parents and teachers to work collaboratively and support students with EBD holistically. Meaningful workshops could benefit families at home and enhance learning at school. A collective effort could nurture rapport and alliances between families and schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study was designed to explore principal and teacher experiences with TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD. The results have added new knowledge which may benefit school leaders and higher education institutions that offer licensure and pre-service programs to teachers and principals. The results have highlighted where future research is warranted.

This study was from two career technical high schools, one in Ohio, United States, and one in Ontario, Canada. Principal and teacher participants alike have been affected by student aggression in various forms, intensity levels, and frequencies. Participants confirmed that rates of verbal aggression by students with EBD occur with greater incidence than physical attacks. However, many participants shared that verbal aggression can quickly advance to physical assaults. The study could be replicated in other districts and traditional schools to understand how the challenges of TDSA are experienced by teachers and leaders in different settings. Further investigation is warranted to understand teachers' experiences of TDSA, the events that

trigger students with EBD, and how these incidents are addressed in school to prevent reoccurrence.

Participants in the study affirmed the value of a positive rapport with all school community members, suggesting that the relationship helped support participants in working with students with EBD. Future research to explore the lived experiences of teachers who have exited the field of special education and who no longer work with students with EBD could broaden awareness of what led them to different lines of work, either in or out of education, and could lead to a better understanding of whether teachers who are no longer working with students with EBD were able to build relationships with students with EBD. Using a different sampling strategy to recruit participants who have recently left working with students with EBD may reveal a different story about rapport building, policies, procedures, and due process. Gaining the perspectives of people who have not persisted in working with students with EBD could offer insights that counter the voices of teachers who have.

Another suggestion for future research stems from a proposition that time in the field matters to developing an understanding and sensitization for working with students with EBD. Based on the emergent data, participants substantiated that they became more confident in their practice over time, positively affecting interactions and outcomes with students with EBD. This finding is consistent with the results from Martinez et al. (2015), in which educators with more teaching experience reported less violent outbursts and difficulty managing aggressive student behaviors. The present study found that experienced educators working with students with EBD used multiple strategies that they believed were critical to their success. A study investigating educators with various levels of teaching experience could reveal if veteran teachers are more effective in working with students with EBD due to “on the job” development. A study exploring

whether veteran teachers have an improved capacity to work with students with EBD could have important implications for new teachers.

Early recognition of problem behavior is critical to improving short and long-term outcomes for students with EBD. Schools could better assist students with EBD through early identification and holistic support that improves outcomes and prevents learning gaps. Studying TDSA and the value of building rapport in preschool and elementary settings would be helpful. With earlier interventions, students may have fewer challenges by the time they reach high school, which can render improved life outcomes.

While this study involved principal and teacher participants to triangulate the data, future research should also focus on the lived experiences of students with EBD. The participants in this study spoke very passionately about student growth and a shift in student engagement and achievement. Future research to capture the lived experiences of students with EBD who display TDSA and build rapport with teachers at a career technical school could contribute to professional learning and development.

Career technical schools aim to prepare students to transition to the workplace or continue post-secondary learning successfully. To facilitate a smooth passage, career technical participants incorporated a variety of connections with the industry, including co-op placements and apprenticeship opportunities. Participants reinforced employability and problem-solving skills into daily instruction and created opportunities for students with EBD to self-regulate and soar. Future research is warranted to examine how career technical schools are helping students with EBD transition from high school. Future research could provide insight into how career technical schools could improve programming and better support students with EBD to navigate in the adult world.

Despite a strong ethic of care displayed by teachers to students in both schools, data from the present study indicated that experiences of TDSA were more widespread in School B. School A serves students in grades 11 and 12. School B serves students from grades 9-12. Approximately 28-33% of the student population receive special education at School A, compared to more than 90% at School B. A higher concentration of students in special education and serving a broader age range in one building may suggest that TDSA is affected by the age and concentration of special education students. Career technical programming offers unique hands-on learning experiences that can help students identify and develop a passion. Future research is warranted to determine if aggressive behaviors are affected in frequency and intensity at career technical schools by student age and the concentration of students in special education.

Finally, aggressive behaviors remain to prompt most disciplinary actions for students with EBD that often lead to in and out-of-school suspension. Pfleger and Wiley (2012) affirmed that punitive consequences do not change student behavior or improve classroom learning opportunities. The participants at both schools found merit in incorporating conversation and mediation to support students with EBD in developing alternative behaviors and averting aggressive outbursts. Moreover, participants ensured that students with EBD had opportunities to discuss and practice alternative behaviors. Participants explained that restorative conversations allowed the adult and the student to learn from and with the other and from the incident. Participants indicated that the interaction usually strengthened the bond between the teacher and student. Further study is warranted to explore if restorative conversations can be a proactive practice for students with EBD to optimize class time and prevent exclusionary discipline.

Final Observation

In reflecting on the original conceptual model created for the present study, Maslow's hierarchy of needs was viewed as the central hub of the framework reinforced by Starratt's ethical leadership paradigm and further supported by Vygotsky's social constructivist theories. As I executed the study and moved through the data, it became apparent from the participant's stories that Vygotsky's hypotheses of social interactions and individual development were more dominant than initially predicted. As I applied the three theories to the results, relationship-building and personal growth were prevailing principles that emerged. Through Vygotsky's social constructivist approach, educators served as knowledge providers and role models to support students in developing capacity in a safe space where students with EBD felt valued. The TSR evolved through social interactions and partnerships that served all community members favorably. It was the rapport that allowed principals and teachers to meet the basic and growth needs of students with EBD, and it was the relationship that upheld the ethic of justice, care, and critique. Although the conceptual model does not change, understanding that the outer sphere of Vygotsky's social constructivist theories represents a quintessential shell that allows Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Starratt's ethical leadership paradigm to be realized.

TDSA and building relationships epitomize opposing emotions, yet positive TSRs can create a space for growth. Learning can be amplified when students are educated in an environment with care, love, and positive social interactions. Similarly, principal and teacher leadership can be maximized with the same components. With the investment of time, energy, and financial means, school districts can elevate human resources to meet the unique needs of students with EBD.

Educators continue to reflect on the question, "What difference do I make?" The opportunities are now. "Education is an act of love and, thus, an act of courage" (Freire, 1976, p. 38). Educators can become leaders of change and help shape the implementation of new policies, procedures, and practices that impact all stakeholders (Fullan, 2011; Kraft & Furlong, 2015).

A genuine and supportive school community can thrive and make a difference in many lives if principals, teachers, students, and parents have the necessary leadership and learning opportunities nested in care and understanding. Collaboratively, schools must continue to make a concerted effort to question and take action to eliminate learning and social obstacles for students with EBD. Through engagement, schools can facilitate equal access and opportunity for all community members to develop and grow into life-long learners and contributing members of society. We, the human race, with trust, grace, and faith, must embrace the beauty in diversity and take time to understand through interactions that incorporate caring and healing, learning, and leading.

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APPENDIX A. SUPERINTENDENT / PRINCIPAL LETTER

Monique Gill
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403
(740) XXX-XXX
moniqus@bgsu.edu

SUPERINTENDENT / PRINCIPAL LETTER

Hello, my name is Monique Gill, and I am a doctoral student pursuing an EdD in Leadership Studies at Bowling Green State University. For my qualitative dissertation, I am seeking a school principal and four teacher participants from XXXX to voluntarily share their lived experiences in building relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder who display teacher-directed ~~a~~aggression.

I am a special education career technology teacher with twenty-one years of teaching experience with XXX. During my teaching profession, I have assumed various leadership positions to support student and staff wellness and positively influence a healthy environment in which to learn and work. I believe that good leadership and quality relationships can improve individual performance and enhance organizational achievement, where an infinite amount of possibility and growth can manifest.

This study will explore principal insights and teachers' perceptions who have experienced teacher-directed student aggression at XXXX. Investigating how teacher relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) affect school climate and the emotional demands of the profession will also be examined. The results should be of interest and value to leadership teams and educators, as findings can align teacher development and professional learning with student success.

Attached are the recruitment and participant interest letters with more information regarding the study, the participants' criteria, roles, and estimated time commitment.

Interviews will be arranged with your support. Follow-up or written communication will be conducted through the participant's personal email rather than the school's email to ensure confidentiality. All responses will be kept confidential. During the study, data will be stored electronically on a personal computer that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, collected data will be held in a locked desk/cabinet and destroyed after six months. A transcript will be provided to each participant to ensure accuracy. Individual participants or institution names will not be associated with the research findings, and some transcripts will be peer debriefed by a certified educator trained in human subject research.

I will share a summary of the findings with you upon completion of the study, which will be before the end of June 2023. Your participation in this study is extremely valuable for determining how to mitigate teacher-directed student aggression and build a school climate that promotes the well-being of all members of the school community.

There are psychological risks to conducting research with staff members who have experienced student aggression. To minimize risks, potential participants will be provided with study details in the Recruitment Letter, the Informed Consent Letter, and the Participation Interest Form. Interviews will be conducted in a private environment that is welcoming and safe to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, I will empathetically listen to the participant's experiences and provide them with space and support to share their stories. Participants will have the option not to answer a question, to take a break, or to stop the interview at any time.

All participant responses will be kept private, and confidentiality will be maintained.

If you could kindly confirm whether or not you permit this study to be conducted at XXXX, I would be grateful. If you have questions about the study, I can be reached by email at moniqus@bgsu.edu or by phone at (740) XXX-XXX. You may also contact my Advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, by email at paukenp@bgsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-2550.

Sincerely,

Monique Gill

APPENDIX B. PRINCIPAL PARTICIPATION RECRUITMENT LETTER

BGSU College of Education and Human Development
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

PRINCIPAL PARTICIPATION RECRUITMENT LETTER

Hello, my name is Monique Gill, and I am a doctoral student pursuing an EdD in Leadership Studies at Bowling Green State University. For my qualitative dissertation, I am seeking a school principal and four teacher participants from XXXX to voluntarily share their lived experiences in building relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder who display teacher-directed ~~a~~ggression.

The study will explore how educational leadership practices support relationship-building with teachers and students. The study will explore principal insights and teachers' perceptions who have experienced aggressive behavior by students with an emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) at XXXX. How leadership sustains school climate and responds to the emotional demands of the profession to uphold the performance of administrators, teachers, and students with EBD will also be examined.

Four teacher participants and one school principal will be invited to participate in the study. Personally identifiable information is requested for research purposes and will be asked on the Participant Interest Form to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. The principal participant can be either the school principal or vice principal. The results should be of interest and value to leadership teams and educators, as findings can align teacher development and professional learning with student success.

You will be contacted in XXX 2023 to arrange a time for an interview. Interviews will be scheduled at a convenient time and location. The initial interview will take no longer than 60 minutes, and I will ask your permission to record the interview. If you do not consent to be recorded, I will take notes instead. I will contact you for a follow-up interview that will last no longer than 15 minutes. A transcript will be provided to you to verify accuracy and to correct or change if necessary. Individual participants or institution names will not be associated with the research findings. Some transcripts will be peer debriefed by a certified educator trained in human subject research.

During the study, data will be stored electronically on a personal computer that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, collected data will be held in a locked desk/cabinet and destroyed after six months. Any written communication will be conducted via personal email to ensure confidentiality.

I will share a summary of the findings with you upon completion of the study, which will be before the end of June 2023. Your participation in this study is extremely valuable for determining how to support the mitigation of teacher-directed student aggression and build a school climate that promotes the well-being of all members of the school community.

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To minimize risks, potential participants will be provided with study details in the Recruitment Letter, the Informed Consent Letter, and the Participation Interest Form. Interviews will be conducted in a private environment that is welcoming and safe to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, I will empathetically listen to the participant's experiences and provide them with the space and support to share their stories. Participants will have the option not to answer a question, to take a break, or to stop the interview at any time.

All responses will be kept private, and confidentiality will be maintained.

If you could kindly confirm whether or not you permit this study to be conducted at XXXX, I would be grateful. If you have questions about the study, I can be reached by email at moniqus@bgsu.edu or by phone at (740) XXX-XXX. You may also contact my Advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, by email at paukenp@bgsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-2550.

Sincerely,

Monique Gill

APPENDIX C. TEACHER PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

BGSU College of Education and Human Development
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

TEACHER PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Hello, my name is Monique Gill, and I am a doctoral student pursuing an EdD in Leadership Studies at Bowling Green State University. For my qualitative dissertation, I am seeking four teacher participants from XXXX to voluntarily share their lived experiences in building relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder who display teacher-directed aggression.

The study will explore principal insights and teacher perceptions who have experienced teacher-directed student aggression at XXX. Investigating how teacher relationships with students with an emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) affect school climate and the emotional demands of the profession will also be examined.

Four teacher participants and one school principal will be invited to participate in the study. Personally identifiable information is requested for research purposes and will be asked on the Participant Interest Form to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. The results should be of interest and value to leadership teams and educators, as findings can align teacher development and professional learning with student success.

You will be contacted in XXX 2023 to arrange a time for an interview. Interviews will be scheduled at a convenient time and location. The initial interview will take no longer than 60 minutes, and I will ask your permission to record the interview. If you do not consent to be recorded, I will take notes instead. I will contact you for a follow-up interview that will last no longer than 15 minutes. A transcript will be provided to you to verify accuracy and to correct or change if necessary. Individual participants or institution names will not be associated with the research findings. Some transcripts will be peer debriefed by a certified educator trained in human subject research.

During the study, data will be stored electronically on a personal computer that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, collected data will be held in a locked desk/cabinet and destroyed after six months. Any written communication will be conducted via personal email to ensure confidentiality.

I will share a summary of the findings with you upon completion of the study, which will be before the end of June 2023. Your participation in this study is extremely valuable for determining how to support the mitigation of teacher-directed student aggression and build a school climate that promotes the well-being of all members of the school community.

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To minimize risks,

potential participants will be provided with study details in the Recruitment Letter, the Informed Consent Letter, and the Participation Interest Form. Interviews will be conducted in a private environment that is welcoming and safe to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, I will empathetically listen to the participant's experiences and provide them with the space and support to share their stories. Participants will have the option not to answer a question, to take a break, or to stop the interview at any time.

All responses will be kept private, and confidentiality will be maintained.

If you have questions about the study, I can be reached by email at moniqus@bgsu.edu or by phone at (740) XXX-XXX. You may also contact my Advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, by email at paukenp@bgsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-2550.

Sincerely,

Monique Gill

APPENDIX D. PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Researcher beginning script:

Hello, welcome, and thank you for your interest in participating in this study on, Teacher-Directed Student Aggression: Principal and Teacher Perceptions In Building Relationships With Students With Emotional Behavioral Disorder. The Challenges, The Implications, and The Outcomes. I am Monique Gill, the principal investigator of this study. It's a pleasure to meet you, and I look forward to hearing your stories.

As a reminder, the purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of principal's experiences with teacher-directed student aggression and held perceptions in building relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD). This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I will ask your permission to record the interview. If you do not consent to be recorded, I will take notes instead. After transcribing the data, I will schedule a follow-up meeting to review your shared stories. In discussing your reflections, I can validate and check that I have accurately captured and recorded your experiences.

Personally identifiable information was requested for research purposes and asked on the Participant Interest Form to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. However, a pseudonym will be used to identify individual subjects, which will be utilized in the data analysis and for direct quotes to ensure confidentiality.
Scheduling this interview indicated consent to participate in the research study. Myself, the project advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, the methodologist, and two peer debriefers will have access to the research data. During the study, the interview data will be stored electronically on a personal computer that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, collected data will be held in a locked desk/cabinet and destroyed after six months. Deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship you may have with Bowling Green State University. Participating is entirely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time.

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To minimize risks, study details were provided in the Recruitment Letter, the Informed Consent Letter, and the Participation Interest Form. Our interview location is private and secure to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, I will empathetically listen to your experiences, providing you with space and support to share your stories. You have the option not to answer a question, to take a break, or to stop the interview at any time.
Do you have any questions? Do I have your consent to participate in the interview?
Do I have your permission to audio record the interview?

I want to thank you for participating in this school and district-endorsed study. I hope to contribute to the limited pool of research regarding TDSA to bolster support for teachers working with students with EBD and improve outcomes and experiences for students with EBD. I look forward to our conversation.

Principal Interview Questions
1. **Q:** When did you decide to become a principal? **Q:** Were you drawn to leadership roles early in your professional career?
2. **Q:** In your assessment, how does a career tech school experience for students with EBD differ from a traditional school? What is special or unique about a career tech school? **Q:** Are students motivated to engage socially and academically? **Q:** Can you share some of your experiences with students with EBD when they come to this school?
3. **Q:** How do school leaders support staff and students with EBD to build teacher-student relationships? **Q:** Are there in-school supports and opportunities? **Q:** Do you think some supports are missing or lacking that could better serve teachers and students with EBD?
4. **Q:** How do you build relationships with staff and students with EBD who display teacher-directed aggression?
5. **Q:** What would you say are the fundamentals of building a relationship with your staff and students with EBD who display TDSA **Q:** How do the current student discipline practices affect relationship building?
6. **Q:** To create a safe school for teachers and students, what strategies do you use to address student aggression? **Q:** How do you support teachers to mitigate TDSA: classroom management and student behavior? **Q:** In your training to become a principal, was there a focus on using the student-teacher relationship to improve student achievement?
7. **Q:** In your opinion, how do relationships with students with EBD influence school climate?
8. **Q:** What experiences have you had in your leadership role at XXXX with TDSA? **Q:** What types of student aggression do you deal with most often (verbal, physical, hostility)? **Q:** How often does it occur?

9. **Q:** How do you handle a situation when a student with EBD demonstrates aggression towards you or a teacher? How do you reinforce the school rules, behavioral expectations, and discipline? **Q:** Can you describe a time you were dealing with an aggressive student and how you handled the situation?
10. **Q:** What systems are in place to manage teacher reports of TDSA? **Q:** Are teachers encouraged to complete incident reports when there is an incident of TDSA? **Q:** Are there disincentives for reporting?
11. **Q:** How have your leadership skills evolved in dealing with TDSA and working with teachers and students with EBD? **Q:** Was working with students with EBD and preventing TDSA part of your principal training?
12. **Q:** To what extent do you allow teachers or students to be part of the resolution and healing process after an episode of aggression? **Q:** Can you describe what this may look like? **Q:** Are there other ways you help teachers and students reset after an aggressive incident?
13. **Q:** Do you think there is a connection between maintaining high-performance standards and aggressive behavior? **Q:** How do you build a high-performance organization where staff and students with EBD are working towards academic and behavioral goals?
14. **Q:** Do you see a link between school climate and the emotional demands of teachers and students with EBD?
15. **Q:** Has supporting staff and students to build relationships and prevent aggressive behaviors affected the emotional demands of the job for you?
16. **Q:** Leadership is challenging, and working with the multifaceted demands of the job (staff, students, parents, community) can make your work very hard and emotional. **Q:** How have the emotional demands of being a principal positively affected you as a leader and personally? Tell me, what keeps you coming back? **Q:** Has it affected your professional goals or development trajectories?

Researcher ending script:

[Participant's name], thank you for allowing me to interview you today to explore your experiences with teacher-directed student aggression and your perceptions in building relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD).

As a reminder, personally identifiable information was requested for research purposes and asked on the Participant Interest Form to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. However, a pseudonym will be used to identify individual subjects, which will be utilized in the data analysis and for direct quotes to ensure confidentiality.
Myself, the project advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, the methodologist, and two peer debriefers will have access to the research data. Participating is entirely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time.

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To mitigate risks, study details were provided in the Recruitment Letter, Informed Consent Letter, and Participation Interest Form. Our interview location was private and secure to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, as I empathically listened to your experiences, I aimed to provide you with the space and support to share your stories. What you do is hard work. In reflecting on the many positive experiences, I hope you feel proud of your leadership work and that your confidence for the future is strengthened. You make a difference.
Deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship you may have with Bowling Green State University. The interview data will be securely stored on my personal computer, to which I will have exclusive access. Scheduling the interview indicated consent to participate in the research study.

If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact me at moniqus@bgsu.edu. Further questions may be directed to the project advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, at paukenp@bgsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-2550. For questions regarding participant rights, contact the BGSU IRB (Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board) at 419-372-2294 or 7716 irb@bgsu.edu.

APPENDIX E. TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Researcher beginning script:

Hello, welcome, and thank you for your interest in participating in this study on, Teacher-Directed Student Aggression: Principal and Teacher Perceptions In Building Relationships With Students With Emotional Behavioral Disorder. The Challenges, The Implications, and The Outcomes. I am Monique Gill, the principal investigator of this study. It's a pleasure to meet you, and I look forward to hearing your stories.

As a reminder, the purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of principal's experiences with teacher-directed student aggression and held perceptions in building relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD). This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I will ask your permission to record the interview. If you do not consent to be recorded, I will take notes instead. After transcribing the data, I will schedule a follow-up meeting to review your shared stories. In discussing your reflections, I can validate and check that I have accurately captured and recorded your experiences.

Personally identifiable information was requested for research purposes and asked on the Participant Interest Form to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. However, a pseudonym will be used to identify individual subjects, which will be utilized in the data analysis and for direct quotes to ensure confidentiality.
Scheduling the interview indicated consent to participate in the research study. Myself, the project advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, the methodologist, and two peer debriefers will have access to the research data. During the study, the interview data will be stored electronically on a personal computer that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, collected data will be held in a locked desk/cabinet and destroyed after six months. Deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship you may have with Bowling Green State University. Participating is entirely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To minimize risks, study details were provided in the Recruitment Letter, the Informed Consent Letter, and the Participation Interest Form. Our interview location is private and secure to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, I will empathetically listen to your experiences, providing you with space and support to share your stories. You have the option not to answer a question, to take a break, or to stop the interview at any time.
Do you have any questions? Do I have your consent to participate in the interview?
Do I have your permission to audio record the interview?

I want to thank you for participating in this school and district-endorsed study. I hope to contribute to the limited pool of research regarding TDSA to bolster support for teachers working with students with EBD and improve outcomes and experiences for students with EBD. I look forward to our conversation.

Teacher Interview Questions
1. **Q:** Please tell me about yourself and how or when you decided to become a teacher. **Q:** Is there something or someone that led you into teaching?
2. **Q:** How long have you worked with students with EBD? **Q:** Do you feel your qualifications prepared you to work well with this group of students? **Q:** Does the school or Board provide you with staff training to work with students with EBD?
3. **Q:** What brought you to a career technical school to work with students with EBD?
4. **Q:** How does a career tech school experience for students with EBD differ from a traditional school? **Q:** How are career technical schools affecting students with EBD in terms of their behavior, their social interactions, learning engagement, and their academic progress?
5. **Q:** Can you share some experiences you have had in building relationships with students with EBD? How do you learn about the student in your classroom, their background, and their story? **Q:** Is there a particular process or strategy that you use to build the rapport?
6. **Q:** Based on your experiences, what are the key ingredients to building a teacher-student relationship with students with EBD? Do you think students value the relationship? **Q:** Are there any in-school programs that can help build or nurture the TSR?
7. **Q:** Who in the school supports you in building relationships with students with EBD? Are your colleagues, your department, and your administration helpful with providing personal development? **Q:** Are there other supports or opportunities that could help you better meet the needs of students with EBD?
8. **Q:** In your opinion, how does the teacher-student relationship influence the school climate?

9. **Q:** Do you see a link between the school climate and the emotional demands of the job? **Q:** Can climate affect the demands of the job and student behavior?
10. **Q:** Can you tell me what experiences you have had with TDSA? **Q:** Does it happen often? **Q:** Do you experience one type of aggressive behavior more frequently (Verbal vs physical)?
11. **Q:** How do you address student aggression? What strategies do you use when you see it? **Q:** Can you recall a time when you were dealing with an aggressive student and how you handled the situation? **Q:** How do students typically respond to you and your strategies?
12. **Q:** How do you create a safe space for your students? Is there something that you do routinely to develop that classroom climate?
13. **Q:** What systems are in place for reporting TDSA? **Q:** Are there disincentives for reporting? **Q:** What does the process and follow-up look like when you report TDSA?
14. **Q:** How have your skills and proficiencies in dealing with student aggression and working with students with EBD evolved during your career? **Q:** Has your tolerance or intolerance level to student aggression changed or shifted?
15. **Q:** How do you reset, start over, or adjust after an aggressive incident with a student with EBD? What does this look like for you – how do you reset, and is the student involved in that process?
16. **Q:** In your experience, how does maintaining high-performance standards influence aggressive behavior? Do the policies and procedures support high-performance standards and impact the school community

17. **Q:** How have your experiences with TDSA and building relationships with students with EBD affected the emotional demands of the job? **Q:** Has your experiences with TDSA and building rapport with students with EBD influenced your goals?
18. Day after day, you return to the classroom ready to teach and connect with your students with EBD. Teaching is hard work and can be very emotional. **Q:** Can you tell me how the emotional demands have been positive and they have affected you as a teacher? **Q:** Can you tell me what keeps you coming back or what motivates you to work with students with EBD?

Researcher ending script:

[Participant's name], thank you for allowing me to interview you today to explore your experiences with teacher-directed student aggression and your perceptions in building relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD).

As a reminder, personally identifiable information was requested for research purposes and asked on the Participant Interest Form to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. However, a pseudonym will be used to identify individual subjects, which will be utilized in the data analysis and for direct quotes to ensure confidentiality.

Myself, the project advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, the methodologist, and two peer debriefers will have access to the research data. Participating is entirely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time.

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To mitigate risks, study details were provided in the Recruitment Letter, Informed Consent Letter, and Participation Interest Form. Our interview location was private and secure to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, as I empathically listened to your experiences, I aimed to provide you with the space and support to share your stories. What you do is hard work. In reflecting on the many positive experiences, I hope you feel proud of your work and that your confidence for the future is strengthened. You make a difference.
Deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship you may have with Bowling Green State University. The interview data will be securely stored on my personal computer, to which I will have exclusive access. Scheduling the interview indicated consent to participate in the research study.

If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact me at moniqus@bgsu.edu. Further questions may be directed to the project advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, at paukenp@bgsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-2550. For questions regarding participant rights, contact the BGSU IRB (Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board) at 419-372-2294 or 7716 irb@bgsu.edu.

APPENDIX F. INFORMED CONSENT

BGSU College of Education and Human Development
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT

Summary & Key Information:

This consent form is being given to you for a research study. Consent to participate in this study is voluntary. The present study aims to explore principal and teacher experiences with teacher-directed student aggression and held perceptions in building relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD). You will be invited to participate in two interviews: an initial conference and a follow-up interview. Your responses will be kept confidential, and no individual or school name will be detailed during the interview.

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To minimize risks, potential participants will be provided with study details in the Recruitment Letter, the Informed Consent Letter, and the Participation Interest Form. Interviews will be conducted in a private environment that is welcoming and safe to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, I will empathetically listen to the participant's experiences and provide them with the space and support to share their stories. Participants will have the option not to answer a question, to take a break, or to stop the interview at any time.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please read the information below.

Introduction & Purpose:

As a doctoral candidate pursuing an Ed.D. in Leadership Studies at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), I am conducting a study for my dissertation to explore the lived experiences of teachers working with students with emotional behavioral disorder who have encountered aggressive student behavior. I am inviting you to participate in this valuable study.

The study is titled *Teacher-directed student aggression: Principal and teacher perceptions in building relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder. The challenges, the implications, and the outcomes*. The study will explore principal and teacher perceptions from XXXX in supporting and constructing relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder who display aggressive behavior.

Literature speaks to the importance of teacher-student relationships for the general student population. However, limited research reinforces the potential benefits of teacher-student relationships for students with emotional behavioral disorder. Given the challenges, implications, and outcomes currently experienced by students with emotional behavioral disorder, this research aims to explore potential interventions to mitigate teacher-directed student aggression and maximize student outcomes. The results should be of interest and value to leadership teams and educators, as findings can align teacher development and professional learning with student success.

I have obtained permission to conduct this study from the Superintendent and School Director. One principal and four teacher participants from XXXX will be invited to participate in the study.

There are no direct benefits from your participation in this study. Your involvement is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. Deciding to participate or not will not impact any relationship you may have with BGSU.

Procedures & Confidentiality:

During the second semester of the 2022-2023 school year, you will be contacted to arrange a time for an in-person interview.

Participating teachers must be over 18 years of age. Personally identifiable information is requested for research purposes and will be asked on the Participant Interest Form to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. Your name and identity will not be associated with research findings in any published or presented form; instead, a pseudonym will be used. We will schedule the interview at a convenient time and location. The initial interview will take no longer than 60 minutes, and I will ask your permission to record the interview. If you do not consent to be recorded, I will take notes instead. I will contact you for a follow-up interview that will last no longer than 15 minutes. A transcript will be provided to you to verify accuracy and to correct or change if necessary. Individual participants or institution names will not be associated with the research findings. Some transcripts will be peer debriefed by a certified educator trained in human subject research.

During the study, data will be stored electronically on a personal computer that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, collected data will be held in a locked desk/cabinet and destroyed after six months. Any written communication will be conducted via personal email to ensure confidentiality.

I will share a summary of the findings with you upon completion of the study, which will be before the end of June 2023. Your participation in this study is extremely valuable for determining how to support the mitigation of teacher-directed student aggression and build a school climate that promotes the well-being of all members of the school community.

If you have questions about the study, I can be reached by email at moniqus@bgsu.edu or by phone at (740) XXX-XXX. You may also contact my Advisor, Dr. Patrick Pauken, by email at paukenp@bgsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-2550. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may call BGSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (419) 372-7716 or email at irb@bgsu.edu.

Documentation of Informed Consent (Please read carefully):

You are now deciding whether or not to participate in this research study, and you agree to the following statements: I have had the chance to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project. My questions, if any, have been answered. I am prepared and consent to participate in the research project described above.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please complete the Participant Interest Form, and I will contact you to discuss scheduling the initial interview.

- The benefits of the study include adding to a sparse literature base that may serve to advance the experiences of teachers working with students with emotional behavioral disorder
- The interviews will be audio recorded with participant permission and transcribed verbatim. If the participant does not consent to be audio recorded, notes will be taken instead
- All data collected from interviews will be securely stored and accessible only by the researcher
- Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of all participants

Establishing an interview day/time acknowledges your consent to participate in the research study.

You will be asked for your verbal consent before beginning the interview. Please keep a copy of this document for your records.

APPENDIX G. PARTICIPANT INTEREST FORM

BGSU College of Education and Human Development
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANT INTEREST FORM

Introductory Message

Thank you for your interest in this study on *Teacher-directed student aggression: Principal and teacher perceptions in building relationships with students with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD). The challenges, the implications, and the outcomes*.

Completing and returning this form indicates your wish to participate in the study.

The study requires a diverse group of participants; thus, a sample of interested volunteers will be chosen. Completing the Participant Interest Form does not, therefore, imply that you will be selected. As the quantity and qualifications of participants are limited, completing this form is for recruitment only. If contacted, establishing an interview day/time acknowledges your consent to participate in the research study.

Participant confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. For research purposes, personally identifiable information is requested to ensure "maximum variation" sampling and diverse member recruitment. Pseudonyms will be assigned to identify individual subjects in the data analysis and for direct quotes, ensuring confidentiality.

During the study, data will be stored electronically on a personal computer that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, collected data will be held in a locked desk/cabinet and destroyed after six months. Any written communication will be conducted via personal email to ensure confidentiality.

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. Even so, talking about topics such as student aggression may be distressing. To minimize risks, potential participants will be provided with study details in the Recruitment Letter, the Informed Consent Letter, and the Participation Interest Form. Interviews will be conducted in a private environment that is welcoming and safe to eliminate distractions and maintain confidentiality. Participants will have the option not to answer a question, to take a break, or to stop the interview at any time.

Please complete the reverse side of this page to provide demographic details and return it to me via phone or email.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Email: _____ Teacher Gender: M or F

Phone Number: _____ Age: _____

Teaching Area: _____ Years in Current Position: _____

Total years of teaching experience: _____

Ethnicity: Caucasian Latino

Black Asian

Bi-racial Other: _____

Level of Education: Associate/Diploma Bachelor's Masters Other: _____

If selected to participate in the study, please indicate below the pseudonym you would like to use.

_____

I have experienced teacher-directed student aggression Yes No

I have experienced verbal aggression by students with EBD Yes No

I have experienced physical aggression by students with EBD Yes No

In a typical week, how many times do you experience some form of TDSA by students with EBD? _____

Concluding Remarks

Thank you for your feedback and interest in participating in this study!

APPENDIX H. PEER DEBRIEFER CHECKLIST

Process	Complete
The researcher will objectively inform the debriefer(s) about the research context and the debriefer's role and time expectations. Each peer debriefer will review two interviews (initial and follow-up) with 2 participants.	
The researcher will inform the debriefer of the research questions	
The researcher will provide the instruments used to guide the interviews	
The researcher will provide the debriefer with an anonymous interview transcript and audio for analysis from two different interviews	
The debriefer will critique the interview and identify prevalent themes pertinent to the research questions	
The debriefer and researcher will discuss the identified themes and compare differences and similarities	
The debriefer will look for areas where the researcher potentially overlooked the participant's perspective	

The role of the *debriefer* is to help the *researcher* uncover errors, detect biases, and *improve the quality of the research*!

APPENDIX I. PARTICIPANT FOLLOW-UP RESOURCES (SCHOOL A)

BGSU College of Education and Human Development
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

If, after our interview on Teacher-Directed Student Aggression, you feel any distress or unrest and would like additional support, please know that the employee assistance program is accessible to you. Confidential intake service is available Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm at 1-800-XXX-XXXX.

I want to thank you kindly for sharing your stories and experiences in building relationships and working with students with EBD.

I greatly appreciate your transparency, your time, and the hard work that you do!

Warmest Regards,

Monique Gill

APPENDIX J. PARTICIPANT FOLLOW-UP RESOURCES (SCHOOL B)

BGSU College of Education and Human Development
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

If, after our interview on Teacher-Directed Student Aggression, you feel any distress or unrest and would like additional support, please know that the school's assistance program is accessible to you. Confidential intake service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-XXX-XXXX or online.

I want to thank you kindly for sharing your stories and experiences in building relationships and working with students with EBD.

I greatly appreciate your transparency, your time, and the hard work that you do!

Warmest Regards,

Monique Gill